

COMMUTING TO MIDDLE SCHOOL IN THE FAMILY CAR:
STUDENT AND PARENT PERCEPTIONS OF WHAT OCCURS
AND HOW IT INFLUENCES SCHOOLING

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By

Frances J.C. Wong

Dissertation Committee:

Marilyn Taylor, Chairperson

Anne Freese

Helen Slaughter

Deborah Zuercher

Violet Harada

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capital

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By

Frances J.C. Wong

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My husband

Jack

My children

Anne and Aaron

The participating parents, students, and teachers

ABSTRACT

This qualitative case study explored ten middle school students and their families, who commuted to one small private school in Honolulu, Hawai'i, in the family car. The lengthy drive to and from school, at least forty-five minutes each way, was the consequence of home ownership coupled with the desire to pursue a private school education. Although there has been an increase in new students who commute to school, in general, there have been few interventions in place that have spoken to adolescent needs and bolstered student success in school. The primary aims of this study were to discover parent and student perceptions of the commute, how commuting families adapted, how the long road times affected home and school life, and what types of assistance schools could provide to support commuters.

Data were gathered from individual one hour interviews with ten commuting students and their parents. Follow up interviews were conducted a few months later. Teachers were also interviewed in order to gain a perspective of commuting students' needs and strengths, and commuting students' blogs on five consecutive days described their immediate impressions of daily experiences.

Findings indicated that long distance commuters had developed their own culture and that resiliency factors were reflected in both students and adults. The car emerged as an extension of the home and served as an environment conducive to the continuation of family life while on the road. Substantial parent involvement at home, in the car, and at school was central in maintaining normalcy despite the challenges of long travel times. Unless commuters were specifically identified, teachers did not notice a difference between commuters and non-commuters in their classes. Among the most notable identified areas of support for commuting students in school were the provision of early

morning supervision on campus; afternoon study halls open to all students; the use of hands-on and collaborative instructional strategies to keep students focused and engaged; and increased communication between school and parents.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In Hawai'i, private schools have been a popular alternative to public schools. In 2008, 18% of the students in the state attended private schools, ranking the 50th State the second highest in private school enrollment in the nation (Essoyan, 2008). On Oahu most private schools tend to be centrally located in Honolulu, the state capital and population center. These private schools, however, often serve a student body that comes from distant communities, not just their immediate surrounding districts. Recent housing developments on Oahu in Mililani, Kapolei, Kunia, Waikalele, and Ewa Plains, once agricultural plantation lands, have hosted a whole new generation of home owners. These new sub-divisions, established in response to the great demand for single family homes at more affordable prices, were constructed quite a distance away (by island standards) from the center, Honolulu. Although public schools have recently been built in these new communities, many families continue to favor and pay for a private school education. However, the well established private schools have remained permanently rooted in Honolulu, with no real plans of moving or branching out to meet the needs of these distant communities. If parents chose a private school education, there has been no alternative but to commute – and very often over long distances, on overcrowded freeways, and in slow traffic.

Originally a small parochial, missionary established school, Ascension (pseudonym) had been financially supported by Ascension's church parish. Today, no longer parish funded, this school has provided a Catholic education to students from various religious denominations and has been financially dependent upon tuition.

Members of its student body have come from different areas of the island. The housing developments in the outer reaches of Oahu have been evident in the growing number of students who have commuted the distance from outlying communities to Honolulu, where Ascension School has remained on its original foundations. What increased the attractiveness of enrolling students in Ascension Elementary and Middle School was that a student could continue her education at Ascension High School. The school has been the longest standing co-educational Catholic PreK-12 School in the state.

The Problem

What used to be rare cases of commuting to Ascension has become a familiar pattern. In a typical scenario, the commuting child is up as early as 5:00 a.m. and in the family car. The drive to town was forty-five minutes or more. Parents drop their children off at school by 6:30 a.m. and the child waits for school to start at 7:45 a.m. In the afternoon, students have enrolled until 5:00 in after school care or have engaged in extracurricular activities until parents who have finished work in town pick them up. Some students do not reach home until 7:00 p.m. or later. By the time commuting students ate dinner and took a bath, realistically, homework and family time are limited. If these young adolescents were to have the recommended nine hours of sleep (Carskadon, 1999; PBS Frontline, 2002), prior to rising the next morning at 5:00 a.m., then they should be in bed by 8:00 p.m. Even if homework demands did not exceed the suggested one to two hours for optimum academic benefit (Cooper, 1989), school assignments added to the time crunch – even more so if adolescents are struggling academically. Despite these conditions, some commuting students have been extremely

successful with homework completion, are highly motivated, and involved in extracurricular activities. Yet others have not been.

This qualitative study explored the commuting experience of eighth grade adolescents and their families with the intention that findings generated might assist families and educators to make informed decisions that promote commuting students' success in school and healthy development. It was also hoped that the study would provide insight into families' decisions to choose the private school alternative when commuting by family car was involved. As such, the study was an applied research design, with the purpose of "illuminat[ing] a societal concern" (Patton, 2002, p. 213).

Purpose Statement

This study investigated the commuting experience of young adolescents and their families from one private parochial school, Ascension Middle School, in Honolulu, Hawai'i, in order to learn of its impact on middle school students' experiences and healthy development. The participating students who were eighth graders, traveled to and from school in the family car for at least forty-five minutes each way. The researcher studied the commuters' environment at home, in the car, and at school and examined the way the participants' personal characteristics influenced these environments. The researcher had previously conducted pilot studies (Wong, 2006) with three parents and one student (see Chapter 2, Literature Review for detail) which suggested that commuting families developed adaptive life styles, including outfitting for personal comfort, cultivating communication skills and dialogue between and among students and parents, and devising parent support strategies for challenges students faced relative to commuting schedules. The results of the pilot study provided initial evidence that

commuting students and their families formed their own culture and a resilient way of life that has not been thoroughly investigated. In the current study, the researcher sought to uncover the kinds of coping strategies developed by students and their families which, whether positive or negative, impacted the adolescents' development, health, learning, and academic achievement in school.

Significance of the Study

Existing studies concerning commuting have focused on students being bussed to school in rural United States. In a 1998 study by Zars, 60% of all school aged children were reported to ride a school bus to and from school. This translated to twenty-three million children who traveled a total of twenty-one million miles every school day. Further, Zars indicated that 75% of the commuting miles represented rural students who attended schools considerable distances away from home. These statistics did not include students who traveled to distant schools in private family cars.

Based on the review of the literature, standard recommendations suggested the acceptable length of a one way student commute as follows: thirty minutes for elementary children; forty-five minutes for middle school students; and an hour for high school students (Jimmerson, 2007; Spence, 2000a). Parents and teachers had raised concerns over lengthy school commutes that extended beyond these times. These issues included the lack of sleep (Fox, 1996), inattentiveness in class (Fox, 1996), limited involvement or no involvement in extracurricular activities (Jimmerson, 2007; Spence, 2000a), and decreased family time (Fox, 1996; Spence, 2000a). Long commutes also seemed to dampen student motivation and academic achievement, (Spence, 2000a). These concerns, raised for students who rode school buses for lengthy periods of time to

and from school, had relevance for student commutes in family cars. An additional dimension in student commutes in family cars was the presence of parents en route. It was important to understand how they shaped the commuting experience or influenced the use of time before and after the commute.

There has been a lack of literature on family “road time” and none that discussed the different ways students coped or how coping strategies impacted students’ school experiences. Hamlin (1999) studied parents who commuted long distances to and from work in cars, and how the time loss, stress, and anxieties that occurred from the lengthy drives impacted home life and their relationships with young adolescents.

A discussion of children riding in the car with their parents was absent. Conducting such a study was necessary to discover the needs of a school’s commuting population, who might experience similar stresses. In this way the school could address the concerns of these students and their families.

The researcher also looked into school accommodations for commuters at a number of private middle schools in the geographic region of this study. Informal conversations among teachers and one cafeteria manager employed at three private middle schools in Honolulu revealed that there has not been a great deal of research at these schools to identify concerns or responses to meet the needs of commuting students in their student populations. Two of the schools explored were large private schools while the third was a parochial school similar to Ascension. On all campuses, a breakfast service was available for students who arrived at school early, yet the services met only some students’ needs as students did not make healthy food choices (See Appendix A for additional detail on services available).

Supervision in hours before and after school was limited. Offering a place of safe harbor was strictly voluntary on the part of the teachers. On one campus, the Dean of Students roamed the grounds before school, but he did not start at 6:00 a.m. when some of the earliest students arrived at school. At Ascension School, an adult oversaw the playground before school, beginning at 7:00 a.m.; however, some parents dropped off their children by 6:15 a.m.

As far as coping strategies to enable students to manage their academic responsibilities, and health and socialization needs, these teachers indicated that it was primarily the responsibility of the family to help their adolescent navigate through the challenges of the long commutes. Addressing time management, organization skills, and prioritizing may have been handled in some middle school advisories, but not all. No requirement existed for advisors to undertake these concerns.

Finally, whereas new commuters were enrolled in these schools every year, the teachers interviewed reported that there was no official school support system to help these students and their families prepare for the commute or adjust to it. As middle schools, concerned about the needs of the whole child, should there be? If coping with the daily grind of road travel was primarily in the hands of the students and their families, what factors influenced or explained the strategies, whether successful or counterproductive, that commuters employed?

Theoretical Framework

As a middle school educator committed to the education of the whole child, the researcher recognized the importance of exploring the challenges confronting the ever growing population of commuting students. The researcher examined the commuting

experience of adolescents and their families in the hope of understanding how the time before, during, and after the commute was used and how this outside of school experience impacted students' in-school experiences and healthy development. In order to fully understand the experience of commuters, it was important to explore the ways that eighth graders influenced their environment (how they managed the commute, home life, and school life), and the ways that the behaviors of the parents influenced both the commuting environment and the young adolescent.

The study generated new understandings about the ways students and their families either successfully or unsuccessfully shaped their commuting experiences. In a practical sense, it identified both impediments and models for success useful to families new to commuting or considering a private school choice that required lengthy road time. Such insights might also benefit teachers and school administrators in their efforts to design and implement school support for these long distance travelers.

Operational Definitions

Commuters to school: In this study, young adolescent students, who traveled to and from school in the family car with their parents and siblings. The families were on the road for at least forty-five minutes per one way trip. This length of time was determined by literature describing the maximum acceptable times for rural middle school students to ride a school bus (Jimmerson, 2007; Spence, 2000a).

Middle School: As opposed to intermediate schools or junior high schools, the middle school was organized and operated under the middle school philosophy. Developmentally appropriate for adolescents, it guided teachers and administrators in

their efforts to support the students' physical, social, emotional, and cognitive or academic growth in 6th, 7th, and 8th, grades (Jackson & Davis, 2000).

Parent/family involvement: This term referred to the various ways that parents became involved with their children either at home or while on the road as it related to their school experience and healthy development. Involvement included, but was not limited to, how parents shaped the commuting experience for their children both at home and in the car.

Success in school academically: A successful academic performance was defined as a minimum passing grade point average of C (2.0 or 73%). This grade point was chosen because at Ascension, academic deficiency letters were sent home at mid-quarter to all students averaging a C- and below. Other indications of academic success included the eighth grade student's ability to attend to academic demands, for example: complete homework and be appropriately supplied for school. Furthermore, successful students were perceived as alert, attentive, and active participants in class.

Success in school emotionally and socially was defined as students who had developed positive peer and adult relationships. These students were involved and engaged in positive and healthy ways in most aspects of school life.

Young adolescents: Students in this study were in eighth grade between the ages of 12-14 years and commuted with their families to and from school daily.

Research Questions

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the commuting experience of young adolescents and their families from one private parochial school in urban Honolulu. Research questions included:

1. What is commuting to school in the family car like for eighth grade students and their families at one private middle school?

Student perceptions?

Parent perceptions?

2. In what ways do families adapt to challenges that emerge while commuting to school in the family car?

Student adaptations/level of success?

Parent adaptations/level of success?

3. In what ways does commuting change families' day-to-day lives at home and school?

Families' home life?

Students' school life?

4. What support do parents or students perceive they need from school or teachers?

Teachers' perceptions of problems/support needed

Parents' perceptions of problems/support needed

Students' perceptions of problems/support needed

Methods

This study's qualitative design explored 10 commuting parents' and 10 eighth grade students' perceptions of their experience commuting to school, the ways they influenced that commute, and the ways that the commute influenced them. It examined their level of success as commuters and investigated connections between that success

and their personal capabilities, characteristics, and their learning from others. The inquiry drew upon a constructivist theoretical tradition of research.

How have the people in this setting [of commuting] constructed reality? What were their reported perceptions, “truths,” explanations, beliefs, and world views? What were the consequences of their constructions for their behaviors and for those with whom they interact? (Patton, 2002, p. 132)

The research utilized an applied ethnographic approach to attain insight into the commuting culture using the interpretive perspective of the students and families who experienced it (DePalma, R., Matusov, E., & Smith, M., 2009). It also drew on the perceptions of teachers and reports of student success socially, emotionally, and academically in the middle school context.

Qualitative data collection methods (Patton, 2002, p. 4) included an hour interview with 10 commuting eighth grade students and separate interviews with 10 parents who drove them to school. Students and their parents were the primary data sources. Follow up interviews with parents and follow up individual interviews with students were conducted later in the school year. Another data source was student blogs. Participating commuting students had volunteered to record brief, live, periodic updates by blogging throughout the day for a period of five days between the two rounds of interviews. Student participants blogged on-line by responding to the researcher’s daily prompts on a private, asynchronous Moodle website for one week of school. Teachers’ and counselors’ general observations about commuting students during the school day and researcher reflections were the other sources of data. These multiple data sources yielded triangulation that promoted credibility of the findings (Patton, 2002, p. 254).

On the following pages, Chapter 2 discusses what the existing literature had to say about students who commuted to school and describes different lenses through which the commuting experience can be viewed.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Not every youngster attended a school that was conveniently located within walking distance of her home. Some parents have opted to send their children to private schools far from their place of residence. Such was the case for many students who attended Ascension School (pseudonym), a small, private, parochial school located in the heart of Honolulu, Hawai'i. For some of these families, driving long commutes was a normal, everyday occurrence. With the arrival of adolescence and the powerful demands it made on these young adults, it was important to understand how middle school students and their families, perceived and coped with the daily commute. Time was a precious commodity, and travel to and from school consumed a fair sized portion. The purpose of this literature review is to explore key issues relevant to adolescent school commuters. The following topics are discussed: national trends in commuting, private school preference in Hawai'i, adolescent development, middle school philosophy, and coping strategies for dealing with the challenges of being on the road.

National Commuting Trends

Twenty years ago, most Americans did not engage in lengthy commutes to work or school nor did they conceive the possibility of doing so (Howlett & Overberg, 2004). That times have changed, was indicated by *USA Today* (2004) statistics reported by Howlett and Overberg, (2004):

- The national average length of a daily one way commute to work was 25.5 minutes.

- According to the Census, more than nineteen million commuters exceeded forty five minutes.
- 3.4 million drove “extreme commutes” of ninety minutes or more one way to work.

One of the strongest motivations to endure lengthy daily commutes to work has been affordable home ownership. Additional miles in a commute translated into reduced price tags on a home (Howlett & Overberg, 2004; Barack, 2008). Some conceived commuting as a way to make the acquisition of the American Dream possible.

However, savings in mortgage payments were costly in other ways. A sizable number of public postings and discussions on Internet Chats and Blog sites have attested to commuter concerns. In 2009, Google alone yielded 1,290,000 for the key word search of “lengthy car commutes to school in the United States.” Adding the key word “Chat” to the same search phrase, 112,000 sites appeared, and substituting “Blog” for “Chat” yielded 296,000 sites. Clearly the topic of commuting has been of interest to many.

In her on-line posting, one parent referred to a University of California at Irvine study which spoke of bodily changes, including increased blood pressure and the release of stress hormones brought on by commuting and the morning rush (Credo, 2005). She also mentioned the danger of increased exposure to high levels of air pollution on commutes of 18 miles or longer (Credo, 2005). There were worries about nutritional issues such as the importance of eating breakfast and tips on how to cope with commutes, which began with preparation at home (pre-packing clothes and lunches for example), and continued with suggestions during the ride (Credo, 2005).

Another parent, Renee (2007), suggested thinking about the enrollment of children in a private school that involved commuting, and expressed concerns about inadequate sleep due to earlier wake up times. Renee also raised the question about long commutes having an impact on students' academic performance. Children arrived irritable to school and behavior problems were possible. Could students learn well when they were not in the right frame of mind?

In another discussion posted on "Street Lawyer" via a Wiki by the National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty (2008), homeless students are entitled to transportation to their school of origin, under the McKinney-Vento Act. However, "A commute so lengthy as to be harmful to the child's educational achievement will weigh against placement in the school of origin" (p.2). Under such circumstances, an alternative school may be found. The placement of students in distant schools was an advocacy issue that questioned the wisdom of bussing homeless students to their original school if the long drives have a detrimental effect on the child. Thus even for this student population, a long commute and the challenging consequences produced by it called for consideration of school enrollment.

In a health related arena, researchers' postings explored the increase of obesity in youngsters and noted the drop in students walking or biking to neighborhood schools as a wellness concern. Shorter commutes to school furnished physical exercise opportunities to a young population that was overweight, provided the distance was a reasonable 2.5 miles or less, one way (Nelson, Foley, O'Gorman, Moyna, & Woods, 2008). Students involved in longer road travel did not have this avenue to add physical activity to their daily regimen.

The 50th State has also been concerned about the number of adolescents who were overweight. According to a 2009 survey conducted by the Center for Disease Control (CDC), 14% were obese as compared to 12% nationally. In addition, 30% of the local adolescents described themselves as “slightly or very overweight” versus 27% across the nation (CDC, 2009).

Locally, Hawai‘i has followed the commuting trends of its mainland counterpart. Crowded freeways and plans to build a rail system to alleviate rush hour traffic from the outlying suburbs have attested to the growing number of daily commuters. Being a small island state, land has been a limited commodity. Affordable housing for many young families, particularly on the island of Oahu, has been out of the question unless families considered purchasing homes some distance from Honolulu, the state’s capital, the center of business and government, and the site of most of the state’s private schools. Many families found themselves on the road because of the desire to own a home and provide their children a private school education.

The Private School Preference in Hawai‘i

In her book, *Going Against the Grain: When Professionals in Hawai‘i Choose Public Schools Instead of Private* (2009) Ann Bayer deconstructs the attitude that the only “good education” in Hawai‘i is private. She explored the island mentality that “Public schools are failing. Private schools are succeeding. Send your children to private schools” (p. 5). Bayer’s investigations found this belief to be so prevalent that the Aloha State boasted to have the second highest percentage (18%) of students in the nation who attended private schools (Essoyan, 2008). The fact that most private schools were located in Honolulu and that the cost of tuition was substantial have not deterred parents

from seeking admission to these schools. At Ascension Middle School, the site for this study, the tuition listed on the school's website for the 2010-2011 school year was set at \$12,730.

In her study on why some professional adults have opted to send their children to a public school rather than a private learning institution, Bayer (2009) unearthed and discussed the many biases against public school education that have been held by some Hawai'i residents. Her discoveries provided insight as to why some parents traded the option of sending children to district public schools for the option to enroll in and attend private schools that required long commutes.

Historically, the higher status of attending a private school began even before the arrival of the missionaries when the children of Hawaiian royalty were educated separately from the children of commoners to reflect their future life's work in the community. This separation continued when the missionaries came, over one hundred fifty years ago and persisted with the later waves of migrant plantation workers from such countries as China, Japan, Portugal, and the Philippines. It was clear, at the time, that children from different ethnic and social class groupings (plantation immigrants, native Hawaiians, missionary children, and the children of Hawaiian royalty) would attend different schools. Over the years, public education became associated with students of the working class. White businessmen and plantation owners were often descendants of the missionaries; their children attended the more exclusive schools (Bayer, 2009, pp. 155-158). Progressively, the ability to afford a private school education indicated membership in the higher class and it also evidenced an increase in affluence from the prior generation (Bayer, 2009, p. 155).

Another reason why parents committed themselves to a private school education was expressed by one mother who participated in Bayer's study: "I think there's another strong influence. It's the belief that if you send your child to a private school, you're giving your child a better chance to succeed later on in life – that the child will be better prepared and will have an advantage later on" (Bayer, 2009, p. 87). There has been an underlying conviction of some that a child would not receive a high quality education in a public school, and that associating with students of the same socio-economic class or better provided opportunities for the future via professional networking.

Finally there has been peer pressure for upwardly mobile, career established parents to seek private school admission. As one father in Bayer's study expressed, "I got peer pressure put on me. You know, 'Why are you sending your kids to public school? You should be sending your kids to private school, like we all are.' So it's peer pressure. Kind of like them giving you the feeling that you should send your children to private school" (Bayer, 2009, p. 88).

Although the parents in Bayer's study were well aware of the strong local bias which favored private schools, the participants enrolled their children in public schools. During the course of the interviews, these professional parents shared many positive education experiences that their children encountered in public schools, which included "good teachers, an academically challenging curriculum and effective administrative leadership" (p. 35).

Most importantly, these parents "value[d] the diversity found in public schools" (Bayer, p. 7). According to Bayer, the adults:

“...articulated their belief that the opportunity for their children to go to school with children different from their own socioeconomic and ethnic groups promotes empathy, respect for difference, and flexibility – traits they believe will continue to benefit their children as adults when interacting with diverse groups in their personal and professional lives. (p. 8)

The fact that public schools were “inclusive” (p. 8) gave students a true experience of the real world, and parents felt that, along with academics, this was a vital part of their child’s education. What the findings showed was that public school was a viable choice for parents who sought to provide the best education for their children – in keeping with their family values and the diverse society in which they lived – and one that was close to home.

What made it difficult for public schools to override their underdog status, was the continuous talk, or as Bayer termed it the “incessant conversation,” (p. 123) that promoted a negative image of public schools. These informal occasions of small talk occurred among family members, friends, neighbors, peers and professional colleagues, and were further supported by media, such as local news papers that often portrayed public schools in an unfavorable light (p. 124).

Although in this democratic society it is important to offer parents a choice of schooling for their children, the strong bias in favor of private school education has inadvertently produced an unhealthy divide in the community, one that emphasizes differences in socioeconomic status, a “two tier society that they [parents in Bayer’s study] believe currently exist...made up of the ‘haves’ and ‘have-not’s” (p. 249). Such a system, said one parent “creates divisiveness in the community, creates resentment in the

community, and that detracts from the ability of a democracy to govern itself effectively” (p. 250).

The education climate in Hawai'i is unique. It is important to understand the relationship between private and public schools in order to more fully appreciate the choices parents make in regards to the education of their children – especially when the exercise of school choice involves commitment to a long commute. In summary, for many Hawai'i residents, the acceptance of lengthy commutes to school may have come from the desire for home ownership, the interest in rising in social class, and the aspiration, based in both realities and biases, of providing a private school education for their children.

Pilot Studies

During the years 2006-2007, the researcher conducted three interviews with adults and one interview with a seventh grade adolescent. Although the participants were chosen because of convenience, each participant was also a commuter with two way travel times of forty-five minutes each way or longer in the family car. All interviews were transcribed and permission was granted from the participants to share their information in this dissertation.

From the analysis of the data acquired, families who commuted seemed to have developed similar adaptive life styles. The car, for example, was often stocked with supplies so children would be comfortable along the route. One mother of young children, had a port-a-potty packed into the trunk of her van to avoid on-the road “accidents.” Siblings made compromises about sharing possessions and choosing radio stations. A high degree of parent involvement emerged to help each child adjust to the

demands of road time and the demands of school. Finally, concerns for the healthy development of the adolescents surfaced, with lack of adequate sleep being the foremost worry.

While no other formal studies have focused on families' experience of island bus or car commutes to middle school, there have been a number of national studies about college commutes and rural commuting by bus. Both have bearing on this study.

College Commutes

Several studies have compared the commuting college student population (commuter campuses) versus students who lived in dorms (residential campuses). Although an inquiry by Dressel and Nisula (1966) found that commuting had no impact on college student performance, and a more recent investigation by Bonifacio and Sinatra (1991) confirmed there was no significant correlation between student achievement and commuting, Moore (1981) learned that some colleges have established special programs on behalf of commuting students. Offerings have included advocacy, research, and services such as tutoring and counseling. These programs acknowledged that commuting students have special challenges to overcome in order to be academically successful.

Long ago, Vaughan (1974) described an innovative college program developed to help commuters en route in which transport buses were outfitted with materials, supplies, and needed equipment to allow students to study while on the road. More recently, a study by Cantrell, Dell, and Fishbaugh (1996) examined the implementation of "transfer guides" to aid college students, transferring from rural areas to adjust to a new campus. These guides provided helpful information for student support. Commuting from distant

areas was mentioned as a possible consideration that affected academic success in a larger college.

Another group of researchers discussed some of the problems that commuting college students faced. For example, McJunkin (2005) suggested that the long drive, in concert with such factors as working and adjusting to a diverse student population, discouraged some students from continuing their education. Another concern was the inability of college commuters to participate in on-campus activities that could be educational, social, and developmental (Peterson, 1975; Sloan & Wilmes, 1989; Wilmes & Quade, 1986). Lack of involvement was a disadvantage, particularly in the area of personal development.

Jacoby and Garland (2004) found that the retention of commuting students was strengthened by the design and implementation of strategies based upon what was known about commuting. An alternative to commuting was to offer distance learning opportunities (Coombs-Richardson, 2007; Jensen, 1980) to reduce travel time. However, if few or no alternatives were put into place, it was the student's willingness to drive the distance in the pursuit of higher education that possibly overcame the strenuous daily travel (Donhardt, 1996).

From the literature on college commuters, several key issues have informed the current study of middle school commuters. First was the concern of commuters not being able to participate in campus life and meaningful social activities. Secondly, some colleges recognized the need to have special programs or services on campus and en route to support commuters and their learning. College commuting literature was informative and served as a basis for this study for a number of reasons. If adult students

found the daily grind on the road a challenge to their education, it seemed quite possible that commuting might have important and negative impacts on students of younger ages. Further insights about impacts of commuting emerged from a literature review on K-12 students' rural bussing.

Rural Bussing

The practice of bussing has not been a recent phenomenon, nor has it always been a choice. Studies on desegregation, violence on buses, busing inner-city school students to outside city schools, safety, and bussing to integrate social classes have been conducted. Other research related to bus commutes examined student tardiness, effective bus schedules, or the cost of bussing and maintenance. More recently, the impact of rural bussing on children due to the closure of small, isolated schools, has raised concerns.

As early as the 1900s, bussing emerged in response to the consolidation of small rural schools (Zars, 1998). These community schools, no longer practical to manage (Spence, 2000a), were shut down, and the students were bused to larger schools further away from home (Howley & Howley, 2001; Spence, 2000a). Later bussing also became the means by which desegregation laws could be implemented (Zars, 1998).

The goal of providing a better education to rural students at larger, better equipped schools (Spence, 2000a; Spence 2000b) and the aim to racially balance student populations (Zars, 1998) came with a price: long bus rides for students.

Travel Time

West Virginia has one of the most costly rural bussing systems in the nation due to the closing and consolidation of public schools. Spence (2000a) reported that at least a

quarter of the state's public schools were shuttered because it was believed that small schools were not "efficient to operate" (p. 4) and larger schools would save tax dollars.

According to the state's guidelines, elementary children should not be on the school bus for more than thirty minutes on a one-way trip. Middle school children were limited to a forty-five minute ride while high school student commutes were to be no longer than one hour (Title 126, 2008, p. 34-35). These same guidelines were in existence and cited by Spence (2000a) when public hearings were held in 1999 to gather information concerning the actual length of travel times for children's daily school commutes. Evidence collected by Spence (2000a) from these hearings revealed that many students of all ages exceeded the recommended travel times.

Researchers also investigated the impact of lengthy rural school commutes that exceeded the recommended times. (Howley & Howley, 2001; Jimmerson, 2007; Zars, 1998). Fox (1996) and Spence (2000a) viewed bus time as unproductive. One parent who was interviewed by Spence (2000b) had calculated the wasted time in monetary terms: if each child were paid \$5.50 for every hour on the road traveling to and from school, it would have amounted to \$990.00 a year. This calculation brought home the value of lost road time for youngsters on the bus. Another parent figured that students who commuted daily as long as two hours each way wasted over a thousand hours in unprofitable non-activity each year (Spence, 2000b). None of the studies mentioned any positive aspect to these school commutes. Additionally, Whitham (1997) called this loss "opportunity cost" (p. 6) not only for students, but also for the parents who could have been at work instead of driving their children to bus pick-up and drop-off points or who could have had their children helping on the farm instead of sitting on a bus.

The review of the literature on rural commutes also uncovered four themes which focused on the negative impacts on students of spending so much time on the road: lack of sleep, limited participation in extracurricular activities, disrupted family life, and problems with homework completion and academic achievement.

Sleep

Students who had an extended school day lost sleep because of the need to be up as early as 5:30 a.m. to catch a 6:30 a.m. bus then commute for thirty to forty-five minutes or more (Spence, 2000a). The reverse process was repeated for the return home. For a *Challenge West Virginia* publication, Spence (2000a) presented testimonials about long commutes from students and their families. She found the early wake-up call and the tiring rides left students sleepy and inattentive in school (Spence, 2000a). In addition, students were often tired because of the lengthy period of sitting during the bus ride, followed by even more sitting in their academic classes. For growing children, Zars (1998) reported that commuting was an unhealthy situation because it limited physical activity on the bus as well as off.

Extracurricular Participation

Students who commuted long distances often declined involvement in extracurricular activities. After school practices and games put additional travel burdens on commuting students, who might not arrive home until 7:30 p.m. or later (Spence, 2000a). Jimmerson (2007) found that less than half of commuting students participated in after school activities with a negative correlation between the length of the rural bus commute and the number of participating students: the longer the road time, the less the participation. This lack of school involvement was a concern because students could

become alienated (O'Brien & Rollefson, 1995; Jimmerson, 2007) and no longer feel connected to the school. The disconnect, in turn, could affect academic achievement (O'Brien & Rollesfson, 1995). Even more difficult than being socially and academically disconnected with peers, was the disruption of home life.

Family Time

When the school day extended to ten or twelve hours (Spence, 2000a; Zars, 1998) because it included road time, it did not leave much opportunity for family time. Some parents had long drives to drop off and pick up their children from bus rendezvous points, which translated to more time on the road and family hardship (Zars, 1998). A study by Fox (1996) reported a noticeable drop of home routines and activities as school commutes extended in length and time. High school students who came home late in the evening sometimes found that the family had already eaten dinner, and they had to fend for themselves (Spence, 2000a). Other youngsters skipped morning breakfast, hoping to eat in the school cafeteria when they arrived on campus, while some students became nauseous from the bus ride and refused any food (Zars, 1998). Students did not share in family work time (Spence, 2000a) or recreation time (Howley, Howley, & Shamblen, 2001) and, thus, lacked the opportunity to bond with family members. Family time was further lost when the child came home to tackle academic tasks.

Homework and Academic Achievement

Students who commuted on buses often did not have the luxury of continuing their learning at home via homework. High school students avoided challenging classes, AP classes, or more advanced classes because of the amount of homework these courses required (Spence, 2000a). The students, who may have possessed the ability to engage in

more difficult curriculum, often declined because of the realities of limited home study time and the lack of motivation to engage in demanding work after a tiring bus ride (Spence, 2000a). Put simply, adolescent commuters were reluctant to put in the effort. (Fox, 1996).

In their classic research on the impact of commutes on academic achievement, Lu and Tweeten (1973) suggested that the cost of road time could be translated into fewer opportunities for study and reading for pleasure – both of which could enhance student success in school. They reasoned that the day had a fixed twenty-four hours and within that limited time, commuting competed with more profitable activities. Based upon the results of their study, Lu and Tweeten (1973) also proposed that students from grades four, eight, and eleven earned lower achievement scores the longer the youngsters rode the bus.

For students who spent more time riding the bus, the distribution [of their composite test scores] reverses: more students cluster below the mean. These results suggest that student achievement is negatively related to time spent riding a bus. Similar relationships exist in grades eight and eleven. (p. 45)

For many rural students who commuted, travel time seemed to be eroding the promise of better education opportunities at larger, better equipped schools.

Exploring commutes from a different point of view, Ramage and Howley (2005) interviewed the parents of children who rode the bus everyday to school. The researchers proposed that when school administrators looked at school busing, their focus was primarily on logistics and such practicalities as scheduling, routing, and capacity – but not on the possible effects of these rides on the students' academic performance or on the

disruption to family life. While researchers Lu and Tweeten (1973) observed that the bus ride was not conducive for working on academic tasks, Ramage and Howley (2005) uncovered additional problems when interviewed parents aired concerns about the loudness on the bus, unruliness, and conflicts between students. Students whose parents expected them to read during the ride might well not have done so.

Summary of Impacts of Bus Commuting

Commuting to school by bus in rural areas came at the price of lack of sleep, reduced involvement in extracurricular activities, limited time spent with family and on homework, and the reduced desire to enroll in challenging curriculum. All could impact academic success. Since long commutes by bus produced such serious consequences for children and their families, the current research seemed needed so that Ascension School, and others with commuting students could identify commuting students' needs and assist in interventions.

Lack of Research

The review of the literature has revealed the necessity for more research on bussing and its effects on school children. Zars (1998) noted that 60% of school children nationally, or twenty three million children, rode busses for twenty-one million miles each day. Rural children, with the longest rides, accounted for 75% of this number. In spite of the fact that so many youngsters commuted, Zars found few studies that examined how this practice impacted children, their families, and schools.

Three years later, Howley and Howley (2001) reported that although bussing had occurred for over half of a century, little was known about the experience from the perspective of those most involved: students and their families. Jimmerson (2007)

identified bussing and academic achievement, student dropout rates, and participation in school activities as areas in want of study (2007) while Spence (2000b) spoke of the need for more information concerning the well being of bussed children.

Howley, Howley, and Shamblen (2001) referred to the lack of research as the “nearly invisible issue of riding the school bus” (p. 10). Just a year prior, Howley and Smith (2000) studied how bus rides to school affected students’ academic performance, participation in extracurricular activities, and the social needs of students and their families. They saw benefits of such a study not solely for rural students but for urban and suburban riders as well.

Zars (1998) noted a possible central reason for the lack of information about school commuting proposing that researchers had shied away from bussing issues after the 1970’s to avoid the political conflicts surrounding desegregation and bussing. Although there has been much testimony from parents concerning the hardships of rural bussing (Spence, 2000a), information has been largely anecdotal (Spence, 2000b), “scarce and insubstantial” (Zars, 1998, abstract).

Researchers have given limited attention to adolescents who commuted to school by family car. Do these young travelers experience the same challenges as their bussing counterparts? Do they experience sleep deprivation, reluctance to take part in extracurricular activities, diminished opportunities for bonding with peers and the school itself, and worrisome eating habits – issues particularly relevant to growing teens? Adolescent development needs, as they related to commuting, are addressed in the next section.

Adolescent Development

The onset of puberty or adolescence brings about significant physical changes for middle school students, ages 11 to 14. Increases in body weight, muscle mass, bone growth, and fat are clearly evident. During these years of growth, children can gain fifty percent of adult body size (Susman & Rogol, 2004). Further bodily changes are spurred and regulated by hormone activity that also influences adolescent behaviors, emotions, and brain development (Susman & Rogol, 2004). The requisites for wellness during this time of maturation are adequate sleep, good nutrition, regular physical and social activity, and support for emotional and psychological health.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) conducted a survey in 2009 to compare six risky behaviors for grades 9 to 12, which may be relevant to behaviors found in the middle school years of six through eighth grades; data for grade eight was not available. Statistics were reported both nationally and by state. Among the issues studied were nutrition, physical activity, and emotional stability, each of which has a bearing on this study. The results of this survey are presented in the appropriate discussions that follow.

The mission of the CDC "...is to promote the health and well-being of children and adolescents to enable them to become healthy and productive adults" (CDC, 2009). Not only did this organization seek to increase knowledge about risky behaviors, but it also asserted that schools played a crucial role in providing interventions for these concerns. The "2009 National Youth Risk Behavior Survey," was distributed by the CDC to students in both private and public schools in every state.

Sleep

That adults required less sleep than growing children was a popular concept which led to the belief that the sleep needs of adolescents would be less demanding as they grew older (Carskadon, 1999). Recent studies indicated the contrary; adolescents needed more sleep than adults and just as much sleep as younger children (Banks, 2001; Dawson, 2005; Carskadon, 1999). Jensen (1998) discussed the importance of sleep to physical renewal. During sleep, the pituitary gland releases hormones to increase growth and repair body tissue. For a growing adolescent, nine and one quarter hours of sleep each night has been recommended (Carskadon, 1999; PBS Frontline, 2002).

Findings from a study on sleep behaviors of adolescents from three Midwest high schools by Noland, Price, Dake, and Telljohann (2009) indicated that 91.9% did not get adequate sleep on school nights, with inadequacy defined as fewer than nine hours. Other studies have shown that many students operated with seven and one half hours of sleep each night, creating a two hour deficit (Wolfson & Carskadon, 1998). Dawson (2005) reported that 25% of adolescents in his study slept less than 6.5 hours. Barriers that prevented adolescents from acquiring adequate sleep included challenging school assignments that increased the length of time spent on homework, heightened socialization with peers, family demands, playing on the computer (Fuligni & Hardway, 2006) and natural changes in the adolescent's body rhythm or circadian cycle (Carskadon, 1999).

The consequences of inadequate sleep reported were many. First, teens with insufficient sleep were moody, irritable, or less tolerant (Dahl, 1999). They engaged in more conflicts with adults (Dahl, 1999) and were prone to trouble controlling their

emotions (Wolfe, 2005). Second, the lack of sleep made it difficult to handle the demands of school (Wolfson & Carskadon, 1998). Dawson (2005) noted that tardiness and absenteeism increased while during class, sleep deprived students might not be alert; some students exhibit inappropriate behavior, while others struggled academically. Dahl (1999) also mentioned that when adolescents were sleep deprived they lacked motivation, exhibited difficulty in completing challenging, multi-stepped tasks, and had trouble working on assignments with low physical activity, such as, reading from a book. Students sometimes fell asleep during class.

Additionally, sleepy students often experienced lapses in memory or micro-sleeps (Dahl, 1999), and slower reaction times (Banks, 2001). Data collected from adolescents who participated in a study by Noland et al. (2009, p. 227) revealed 93.7% of the student participants were tired, 83.6% experienced trouble paying attention, 60.8% were earning lower grades, 59.0% were stressed, and 57.7% had trouble in peer relationships.

Finally, during sleep, the brain continued to rehearse lessons. A full night's rest improved a teen's ability to learn new skills (PBS Frontline, 2002). Thus, the opportunity to help the brain learn was limited by insufficient sleep.

In a study by Wolfson and Carskadon (1998), 40% of participating adolescents reported school night bedtimes after 11:00 p.m. An adolescent's lack of sleep could be exacerbated when the youngster commuted for long distances and did not reach home from school until late afternoon or early evening. If commuting teens were on the road as early as 5:00 a.m., they would not fulfill their sleep needs.

Nutrition

A balanced diet has been highly recommended to supply proper nutrition for growing teens; however, many young people do not have healthy eating habits. The U.S. Department of Agriculture Report Card on the Diet Quality of Children (1998) reported that 80% of adolescents, 11 to 18 years of age, had deficient diets. Failure to consume proper nutrients not only affected bodily needs, but also the needs of the brain.

Adolescents with deficient diets lacked the proteins, unsaturated fats, vegetables, complex carbohydrates, and sugars required in order for the brain to learn well (Jensen, 1998).

The CDC (2009) survey on nutrition indicated that 82.8% of the adolescents in Hawai'i consumed fruits and vegetables at least five times a day as compared to the national average of 77.7%. While this was a commendable dietary habit, milk consumption proved to be a concern as 92.8% of local young people drank fewer than the recommended three glasses of milk per day. This was higher than the national average of 85.5%.

Two studies, Project EAT by Neumark-Sztainer (2006) and the Growing Up Today Study (GUTS) by Gillman et al., (2000), were conducted to determine factors that would promote changes in how teens eat. Both studies found that family meals were a significant influence on teens eating well. Data from Project EAT provided evidence that family meals were a source of healthy types of foods and that adolescents eating family meals had fewer opportunities to consume soft drinks (Neumark-Sztainer, 2006). The GUTS study showed that family meals were less likely to contain ready-made foods such as frozen entrees, canned foods, or pre-made microwave meals (Gillman et al., 2000).

Studies have also discovered that growing children consumed more calcium, fruits, vegetables, and fiber as well as acquired vitamins such as C, E, B₆ and B₁₂, potassium, and magnesium when eating family meals (Gillman et al., 2000; Burgess-Champoux et al., 2009). Family meals made nutritious foods available and accessible; they provided the possibility of introducing new, healthy menu items (Patrick, & Nicklas, 2005; Wardle, Herrera, Cooke, & Gibson, 2003) and they allowed for adult modeling of healthy eating habits (Burgess-Champoux et al, 2009).

Family meals also furnished opportunities for critical talk: taking an interest in what children were doing, problem solving, and establishing a sense of belonging to a group. Communication among family members reinforced family identity, while meal time conversations became opportunities to monitor the behaviors and activities of children which could result in better school performance (Fiese, Foley, & Spagnola, 2006).

Research also has brought to light the barriers to the custom of adults and children eating together, despite the benefits of family meals. Families where two parents work have less time for food preparation (Cluskey, 2008) and children who were heavily involved in extracurricular activities create complex daily schedules that have not been conducive to enjoying family meals (Cluskey et al., 2008). Studies have not explored the impact of lengthy commutes on family meals and adolescent nutrition.

Siege-Riz , Popkin, and Carson (1998) noted the phenomenon of skipping breakfast as an increasing practice among adolescents. Suggested explanations for skipping breakfast in an older study by Cooksey and Ojeman (1963) included: adolescents who did not want to eat alone, lack of motivation to prepare a meal when

alone, and the unavailability of food items that encouraged breakfast consumption. For these reasons, Neumark-Sztainer (2006) suggested that parents need to be aware of the importance of family meals and to allot sufficient time for them.

Physical Activity

The need for physical activity has often been addressed by incorporating physical education classes into the daily school schedule and encouraging youth to participate in school sponsored sports and/or other active forms of extracurricular activities. Whether the adolescent participates in volleyball, paddling, dance, or martial arts, getting the body moving stimulates the brain. In a publication sponsored by the Department of Sport and Recreation of Western Australia (2008), which reviewed and summarized research in the area of physical activity and learning, the authors found "...a positive association between children's level of physical activity or sport and cognitive functioning or academic success" (p.1).

This finding was supported by Hillman, Castelli, and Buck (2005) who suggested that cognition is augmented with physical fitness. Chomitz et al. (2009) reported that students concentrate better when physically active, and that better concentration then contributes to school success.

To promote brain stimulation and general healthy physical growth, including muscular, skeletal, weight control, cardiovascular, and blood pressure maintenance, Strong et al. (2005) recommended sixty minutes of physical activity daily. Adding to that list of benefits, Jensen (1998) wrote: "Aerobic and other forms of 'toughing exercises' can have enduring mental benefits...by working out your body, you'll better prepare your brain to respond to challenges rapidly" (p.86).

Various studies in which physical education classes were increased in number or lengthened in time showed correlations to improved academic performance. In the Canadian Vanves and Blanshard projects, academic scores rose when physical education was increased to one third of the school day (Martens, 1982). Another Canadian study of “500 school children” (Hannaford, 1995) reported that students who participated in gym class for an additional hour daily performed better on exams than peers who did not exercise.

In 2001, Field, Diego, and Sanders (2001) proposed that their finding of a higher grade point average was possibly linked to increased amounts of exercise which prompted more neurotransmitter activity in the brain. Jensen (1998) discussed the involvement of some neurotransmitters with intrinsic motivation, attention, and memory – all of which are involved with learning.

In another study, the California Department of Education found a positive correlation between students’ physical fitness level and standardized math and reading tests for thousands of fifth, seventh, and ninth graders (Kristjansson, Sigfusdottir, Allegrante, & Helgason, 2009). A similar positive relationship between fitness and raw achievement scores in Math and English for the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) test were reported by Chomitz et al. (2009). Physical activity also increased students’ ability to concentrate (Chomitz et al., 2009) and overall school contentment was a side bonus of good health (Kristjansson et al., 2009).

While students who attend neighborhood schools can walk, bike, skateboard, or rollerblade to school, these opportunities for physical activity have not been available to students who commuted to school daily and sat in the car for a long period of time. An

alternative to exercising in school, or on the way to school, has been to join a sports team or club after school. Nationally, the CDC (2009) reported that 41.7% of all teens do not play on a sports team of any kind. No statistics are available to determine how much of the 41% of non-participating students nationally commute to school by bus, a practice that has often deterred students' participation in after school sports (Jimmerson, 2007).

Another CDC (2009) survey question asked if adolescents were active for at least an hour a day fewer than five days a week. Findings showed that in Hawai'i 65.6% were not active this frequently, while nationally the average is slightly lower with 63.0% not active this frequently. CDC statistics do not indicate whether students less active in Hawai'i were commuters by bus or by family car.

Social Needs

It is during the adolescent years that 11-13 year olds begin to place a high priority on peer acceptance. Friends become the social group of importance over family (National Middle School Association [NMSA], 1992). There have been several reasons reported to explain why strong peer relationships are cultivated by teens. Berndt (1982) highlighted four: "...the intimacy of the friends' conversations and their knowledge of each other; their responsiveness to each other's needs and desires; the degree of similarity or complementarity between friends; and the stability of friendships over time" (p. 1448). Adolescents interact with others of the same age group to obtain advice, to gain an audience for their concerns or problems, and to engage in mutually beneficial relationships. Adolescents are put at ease when they learned that they are not alone in their growing pains, bodily changes, or the challenges of making difficult decisions.

Through interaction with others, both adults and peers, the adolescent develops personal identity. According to Erikson's (1963) fifth level psychosocial theory of development, adolescents begin to discover who they are, re-evaluate their values, and question the authority of adults. It is during this time that adolescents develop a moral and ethical sense of conscience. There might be conflict between how they are perceived by others versus who they think they really are. These young people are searching for a way to "fit" in (Taubenheim, 1979, p. 518). Finding that special peer group that offers support for the adolescent as she struggles to address these issues becomes all important.

The interaction with both peers and adults provides the social context in which an awareness of self begins to take shape (Good & Adams, 2008). Adolescents, who have been socially supported in positive ways, form "ego virtues" (Erickson, 1968) that help to resolve conflicts in identity perceptions and led to overall well being (Good & Adams, 2008).

Adolescence also begins the transition from being a family member to being a part of society as a whole (Nurmi, 2004). As dependency on parents shifts to dependency on friends (Steinberg & Silverberg, 1986), young people become more social and spend a large part of their free time with peers (Medrich & Marzke, 1991). Socializing comes in three major forms: organized, informal, and digital.

Organized socialization.

One way for adolescents to gain entry into different positive social settings has been via extracurricular activities. Barnett (2005) compiled and synthesized current research on extracurricular activities. She reported that socialization through participation in formalized outside of school groups or in school sanctioned programs has

provided the opportunities for adolescents to engage in environments that promote positive development. Here students could discover their personal identities (Barnett, 2005) and be advised and guided in positive ways when interacting with coaches, mentors, and advisors (Eccles, Barber, Stone, & Hunt, 2003). Hollarah (n.d) learned through interviews that time management and net working could emerge from involvement in after school activities, while leadership, teamwork, perseverance, problem solving, and goal setting could be developed in the context of extracurricular activity participation (Barnett, 2005). Free time spent in a positive and productive manner has been shown to be supportive of academic success for some students and of reduced disciplinary problems for others (Rombokas, Heritage, & West, 1995). Productive free time has shown social advantages in areas like character building and the cultivation of lifelong social skills (Hollarah, n.d.).

The work of Brown and Benin (2007) also linked extracurricular activities to students' motivation to graduate. Students who participated in extracurricular activities opted to remain in school at almost twice the rate of students who were uninvolved in athletics (Davalos, Chavez, & Guardiola, 1999).

Besides sports, there have been a multitude of non-athletic groups that students opt to join: chess teams, math and speech teams, drama clubs, and music classes, to cite a few. The benefits of membership in an academic extracurricular activity included opportunities for social development and nurturing the desire to continue on to higher education (Rombokas, Heritage, & West, 1995; Eccles & Barber, 1999).

Medrich and Marzke (1991) reported that in the 1990 National Education Longitudinal Study sponsored by the U.S. Center for Education Statistics, 71% of

adolescent eighth graders were involved in an extracurricular activity throughout the school year. Whether it was sports, a club, a team, or special lessons, these organized activities were often viewed in a positive manner and encouraged by parents.

Extracurricular activities have also been viewed as a part of a child's education. Berliner and Biddle (1995) discussed the American vision of education as being broad. It extended beyond the basic three R's to include such areas as the arts, debate, music, and forensics. Schools offered many electives to provide students opportunities to explore, and the concept of a well-rounded student was promoted, particularly in middle school philosophy. Often children began to participate during elementary grades and continued until graduation.

As discussed earlier, previous research has reported that students who bussed to school often opted out of extracurricular activities, both athletic and non-athletic (Jimmerson, 2007), thereby missing the many advantages such participation has to offer. If students commuted by family car, it was important to know if they were making similar choices, or if they were experiencing a conflict between time demands on the road versus time demands in extracurricular activities. The current study looked at ways students developed coping strategies and ways support from educators and coaches, or parents, involved in the commute with their children, alleviate adolescent commuters' conflicts due to limited time constraints.

Informal socialization.

In the process of allowing teens to take care of more of their own affairs, parents and others offer adolescents greater independence from adults (Berndt, 1982). At the same time, peer socialization takes on a higher significance. According to the group

socialization theory, adolescent peer contacts exert lasting influences on these adolescents as future adults (Arnon, Shamai, & Ilatov, 2008).

Leisure time activities, “hanging out,” or dialoguing with friends were examples of informal socialization opportunities, and these free time occupations have engaged a good deal of the adolescents’ energies (Arnon et al., 2008). Though parents have seen it as a waste of valuable time, peer socialization has been an important avenue for teens to acquire several types of social benefits, including answers to questions about their physical changes and general emotional support (Berndt, 1982).

Networking to gain social capital has been also another possible motivator for teen socialization (Arnon et al., 2008). Here social capital is defined as the ability to garner resources and helpful information from interacting with others. Cote (2005) also suggested that it was important to be aware of the capital individuals brought to a relationship as well as what they took away. This he termed “identity capital” (p. 225). Such capital promotes the individual’s ability to utilize resources from different social scenarios and to facilitate making decisions to take action on one’s own.

In peer groups, teens have explored personal interests and adolescent culture (Arnon et al., 2008). They have received feed back as they have begun to establish their identities, strengthen identity capital, and gain acceptance. In addition adolescent socialization provided opportunities to develop social skills, learn how to problem solve, and explore social relationships. Medrich and Marzke (1991) suggested popular adolescent venues for socialization: boys tend to focus more on their interest in athletics; girls devote more time to talking or socializing.

Besides students being with one another during the school day, both boys and girls continue their conversations after they leave the school campus. In the age of technology, cell phones and computer use have facilitated adolescent socialization. Proficient navigation of these communication tools has demanded that adolescents develop a new kind of literacy – digital socializing.

Digital communication.

In 2006, a survey of 935 teens between the ages of 12-17 was conducted by phone for the Pew Internet and American Life Project by Lenhart, Madden, Macgill, and Smith (2007). The researchers discovered that 93% of the teens used Internet and 55% had created content or profiles on the popular networking sites of MySpace and Facebook (p. i). Because social networking had become a more attractive way to communicate, email had lost favor in an adolescent's eyes; only 14% used it on a regular basis (p. iv). On social network systems (SNS), teens have dialogued in a variety of ways: private messages, notes on bulletin boards, blogging or journaling, and they have responded to others contacting them, sent group messages, or chatted (p. 24).

In an earlier study sponsored by the Kaiser Family Foundation and conducted by Roberts, Foehr, and Rideout, (2005), 86% of teens accessed a computer from their own home and 74% were wired for Internet use (p. 1). The researchers also found that 31% of teens ages 8 to 18 had computers in their bedroom; 20% had Internet capabilities; 18% instant messaging access (p. 111). These findings were based on a survey of 2,023 children from third to twelfth grade. The participants were nationally representative across gender, socio-economic status, parent education, and ethnicity.

In addition to computers, Lenhart et al. (2007) discovered that adolescents in their sample population had ranked phones, both cell and land lines, as the most favored way to socialize. These findings were published in the Pew Internet & American Life Project (2007, p. 17). Since then, changes in technology have given cell phones the capability to access the Internet resulting in the growth of texting and twittering among adolescents. From my own informal observations and conversations with students as a teacher in a seventh grade classroom, I have observed that cell phone socialization promoted instant communication with the ease of portability and mobility. Some of my students have casually mentioned that they texted well over a hundred messages a day.

As newer technologies have emerged, adolescents have been among the first to adapt and embrace them (Roberts et al., 2005). Teens have also developed their own codes and shorthand to converse in the digital world. Knowing this new language, having access to technology, and being able to navigate through the virtual world demanded a new literacy, one that was constantly changing or emergent (Blummer, 2008; Bulfin & North, 2007). Young people who did not know the language and skills of social networking were often left out. Teens have reported they possess a sense of urgency to stay connected (Bradley, 2005).

Prolific conversation between peers, supported by the many venues and opportunities to communicate, was just one of the many attractions of computer and cell phone use. Another attraction has been the autonomy teens experienced when using these media. For many, socialization was not physically bounded by place, or “limited by physical characteristics such as good looks, race, or age; they did not need to be inhibited by the shyness or social awkwardness they felt in the face-to-face world”

(Bradly, 2005, p. 62). Digital communication has not been subject to adult interference, which has made this mode of socialization appealing to adolescents.

Roberts et al.,(2005) looked at parental monitoring of computer use. They found that only 28% of teens had rules on time spent on the computer, 32% were restricted on what they could do on the computer, and 30% of the parents were knowledgeable about the sites visited by their children (p. 17). Parent monitoring tended to decrease as adolescents grew older (Azzam, 2006; Roberts et al., 2005).

Computer and cell phone availability at more reasonable prices and the influx of new technology that allowed for a variety of digital social avenues have spurred the prominence of socialization in teen lives (Roberts et al., 2005). One hour a day of computer use was the average daily in 2004 (Roberts et al., 2005, p.135); when teens began to multi-task on several different digital media, the time increased. Adolescents also acknowledged that besides the risks of visiting safe sites and meeting new people, there was the factor of Internet addiction (Leino, 2006). Once engaged on-line, young people lost track of time. Medrich and Marzke (1991) have found that the finite nature of time did not make an impression on the young. Their sense of time differed from that of adults; therefore, adolescents were not worried about running out of it.

The percentage of Hawai'i 's young people who used computers for games and purposes other than schoolwork for three hours a day was 27.4%. Social networking could be included in this statistic. This average was higher than the national result of 24.9%, as reported by the Centers for Disease Control (2009).

Emotional and Psychological Development

In previous discussions, the literature highlighted the need to support adolescents as they grew physically and socially. In addition, brain development during this period of time affects young people's emotional and psychological states. The attraction to engage in risky activities, novelty, and thrill seeking behaviors has characterized adolescence. This is due to the slower development of the brain in the prefrontal cortex, or the center of control. The brain has been described as having two independently functioning networks. The first is the emotional side, fueled by hormonal changes that occur during puberty. The second is the more logical system which helps monitor actions. Monastersky (2007) explained that when an emotionally charged, risk taking situation presents itself, the regulatory network puts out a warning signal – except in the case of the adolescent whose logical side is not up to par with the emotional side. Restraint, or self-control do not kick in as quickly as it should and teens have often found themselves involved in an unsafe activity.

Caspi and Moffitt (1991) suggested that the hormonal changes that occurred during adolescent puberty can be stressful and demanded new coping strategies. Emotional stress can result when young people do not adjust well to bodily and cognitive changes, sometimes leading to teen depression. Furthermore, the amygdala, “known as the brain's fear center, increases in size in young adolescent boys” (Caskey & Ruben, 2007, p. 58). This part of the brain responds to threats, preparing the body for either “fight or flight.” It can come into play when the young man faces a teacher's reprimand, an unfriendly look from a fellow peer, an embarrassing situation, or even a classmate's

unsupportive comment (Jensen, 1998). The response can be a quick lashing back – physical or verbal – a defensive emotional outburst.

Lastly, Jackson (1997) found that about one in five adolescents experienced a mental disorder that can be diagnosed and possibly treated. Good mental health was imperative to succeeding in school; therefore, middle grades staff must be alert to adolescents who are in need of help (Jackson & Davis, 2000). Results from the CDC 2009 survey have shown that 30.6% of teens in Hawai‘i have experienced feeling sad or hopeless, almost every day for two or more weeks in a row. This was higher than the national average of 26.1%. The CDC also reported that locally, 18.9% of the surveyed students had seriously considered suicide, a figure greater than the national average of 13.8%.

Because of vulnerabilities like these, it seemed ironic that at the time when adolescents needed adult guidance the most, they instead sought autonomy. Yet gaining autonomy or independence has been a crucial step towards adulthood. McCormack (1997) defined autonomy as the time when “the child demonstrates a sense of healthful independence, self reliance, inner authority, and the capability of making appropriate decisions for herself” (p. 3). McCormack (1997) also explained that the foundations of identity formation that leads to autonomy is established in the earlier years when parents inculcated such elements as “personal security (trust), autonomy (self-reliance), initiative (self starter), and industry (follow through)” (p. 2). In many respects, the adults have provided adolescents the chance to exercise independence responsibly and to accept the natural consequences if they do not show responsibility.

Thus, many have found that adolescent students need to learn good decision making when it comes to risky or inappropriate behaviors, to evaluating academic options, or to working in collaborative groups to plan and complete projects. At the same time, adults on their part need to be vigilant, know their students well; provide guidance when the stresses of growing up became overwhelming, and put interventions in place. Adults in school (administrators, teachers, counselors, staff) and out (parents, coaches, trusted adults) must collaborate and work as a team to support adolescents as they journey through this difficult developmental period (McCormick, 1997).

Summary

Research studies have shown that the years of adolescence place many demands on a youngster. Physical growth spurts require nine and one quarter hours of sleep and a healthy diet, best supplied by family meals. Daily physical activity to develop and maintain body strength was also necessary to stimulate the learning mind, and such activity has often come in the form of after school extracurricular activities. The need to socialize with peers has appeared to take a priority and can be satisfied in both organized and informal social settings, including being on interactive Internet sites. Socialization opportunities promoted identity formation, as adolescents develop an awareness of who they are. In addition to many other challenges, research has shown that uneven brain development and hormonal changes put these young adults at risk emotionally and psychologically.

Adolescents who are forming their identities and experiencing rapid physical, social, and cognitive development, many argue, need support at school and at home. As discussed by parents of rural bus commuters, adequate sleep, nutrition, physical activity,

and socialization were concerns, and each competed with the others, vying for adolescents' limited time. Because a thirteen year old commuter does not view time as a limited quantity, she needs support to learn to prioritize conflicting demands and use time in a manner that not only adequately satisfies her social and emotional developmental needs but also accommodates her performance of academic responsibilities.

In an attempt to recognize and respond to the challenges of adolescent development like the ones previously described, and to support efforts from home, Ascension had re-organized from a junior high school or intermediate school to a middle school. Underpinned by the middle school concept, it was hoped that no adolescent would be lost and fall through the cracks of an on-campus bureaucratic machinery, that teachers would know their students well, and that children's academic as well as non-academic needs would be met.

Middle Schools

As early as the 1960 to 1970's, educators in the United States began to explore ways to better address the needs of young adolescents, ages 10 to 14, by initiating the middle school movement (NMSA, 1992). How could schools support learning and promote academic success during the turbulent time of puberty, when physical, social, emotional, and intellectual changes were all taking place?

In 1990, the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development (1990) noted that junior high schools and intermediate schools did not address the social, emotional, and physical challenges faced by their students. In the same publication, the Carnegie Council reported that the nation's eighth graders had fallen behind in math and science when their achievement scores were compared to youth of the same age and went on the

express concerned with the number of male dropouts, who were projected to earn \$260,000 less in their lifetime than high school graduates and who were likely to face double the unemployment rate. There were concerns regarding teenage pregnancy where 46% of the teens were projected to be on welfare within four years, many with problems of and alcohol and drug abuse which came at a cost to the United States of “more than \$136 billion in 1980 in reduced productivity, treatment, crime, and related costs” (p. 7). These “preventable problems” (p. 7) were provided in *Turning Points* (1990) – as evidence to support the need for adolescents to remain in a positive, nurturing school environment, beginning with the middle grades.

In 1969 the Council on the Emerging Adolescent Learner was formed; in 1974 the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) assigned a task force to explore the justification of middle schools, specifically designed to accommodate the needs of adolescents (Anfara, Mertens, & Caskey, 2007). Middle school teachers, administrators, counselors, and school staff would all have to be knowledgeable in the developmental needs of this particular age group. Proponents asserted that only when the school holistically responded to the growing adolescent could learning successfully occur.

Adolescence is inarguably a crucial period of development. Youngsters begin to gain independence, exercising their desire to make choices and decisions. It is a time when critical thinking and problem-solving skills develop, and self identities are explored. Advocates of middle school have argued that the nation can not afford to overlook these young people at this critical age before adulthood. Schools began to

struggle with change to meet adolescent needs, but there was no solid concept of what such a school should look like.

This prompted the National Middle School Association (NMSA) to publish its milestone booklet *This We Believe*. Initially copyrighted in 1982, it defined the middle school concept and how it could be translated into the everyday workings of the school day. In its 1992 version, NMSA addressed the “essential elements of a ‘true’ middle school” (p. 15) which included the commitment of educators to the special needs of this age group; curriculum and instructional approaches that were relevant to adolescent intellectual development; exploratory and advisory programs to guide these young people as they made personal decisions about who they were; and appropriate assessment. In addition, a middle school was expected to address school climate, safety, and health issues. Thus, middle school took into consideration the challenges of adolescence to underpin all its endeavors.

Another landmark document that supported school reform, *Turning Points: Preparing American Youth for the 21st Century* was published in 1990 by the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development. As the twenty-first century loomed on the horizon, the Carnegie Council recognized:

Many middle grade schools today fall far short of meeting the critical educational, health, and social needs of millions of young adolescents. Many youth now leave the middle grades unprepared for what lies ahead of them. A fundamental transformation of the education of young adolescents is urgently required. (p. 10)

The book presented eight principles with recommendations of how to implement them so as to create true middle schools. Two of these principles have a direct connection with the adolescent commuting issues previously discussed. The first one, “Young adults must be healthy in order to learn,” (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1990, p. 20) raised questions about adequate sleep, nutrition, and the need for social and physical activity. The second principle, “Responsibility for each middle grade student’s success should be shared by schools...” (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1990, p. 23) suggested that schools played a part in the safety and well being of the commuting students who might make up a sizable portion of enrollment and who were the focus of this study.

Ten years after the eight middle school principles were voiced, *Turning Points 2000: Educating Adolescents in the 21st Century* (Jackson & Davis, 2000) was published as a follow up study. The book continued to explore how middle level educators have tried to educate the whole adolescent child, that is, to respond to the developmental needs of this age group. The authors, Jackson and Davis, explained:

...it became clear to us that the progress made since the publication of the original *Turning Points* warranted examination and analysis. We believed that such an effort would produce a new understanding of what works and what doesn’t, an understanding based on actual experience, rather than on theory or anecdote.

(p. xiii)

The publication’s goal was to strengthen the educating of adolescents by sharing recent discoveries from research and practice. The book also emphasized that educating an adolescent required a team effort, not just among teachers but also partnerships

between the school, parents, and the community. An old Chinese proverb, “It takes a village to raise a child,” captured this sentiment of the middle school philosophy.

More recently, the National Middle School Association (2006) has created a website for continued support of middle schools. Posted on the website are the expectations for every adolescent of the 21st Century. This document outlined essential attributes that all young people should possess and listed the characteristics that marked the instruction, curriculum, organizational leadership, and culture of a middle school. It established standards for the preparation and training of middle level teachers as well published current research and successful classroom practices to support on-going professional development.

As early as 1990 the Carnegie Council had considered it imperative to stop losing the talent of the upcoming generations starting in the intermediate grades: “Middle grade schools – junior high, intermediate, and middle schools – are potentially society’s most powerful force to recapture millions of youth adrift, and help every young person thrive during early adolescence” (p. 8).

Their commitment to this age group, supported and promoted by NMSA, demanded knowledge of the physical and cognitive changes occurring within students, the development of appropriate curriculum and assessment, the use of engaging instructional strategies, the creation of a safe and positive learning environment, and the establishment of partnerships between teachers, parents, and the community.

Table 1 shows how these elements can be in place and utilized to benefit the students in a developmentally responsive middle school. Strahan, L’Esperance, and Van Hoose (2009, p. xiii) termed it “harmony.”

Table 1**The Harmony of Developmentally Responsive Schools**

Adolescent Growth	Developmental Needs	Responsive School
<i>Dynamic physical growth</i> (Anfara, Mertens & Caskey, 2007, p. xviii)	- sleep -proper nutrition -physical exercise	-campus food service -physical education program -health and wellness curriculum -adults model positive, healthy behaviors
<i>Brain Growth</i> (Susman & Rogol, 2004). -growth in some areas spurred by hormone activity	-proper nutrition -physical exercise	-campus food service -physical activity opportunity
-neural pruning (Caskey & Ruben, 2007, p. 56)	-exploratory opportunity -inquiry based	-electives curriculum
<i>Cognitive Growth</i> (Anfara, Mertens & Caskey, 2007, p. xix) -high order thinking emerging	-opportunity to direct and assess learning	-instructional activities integrated -core courses integrated -flexible scheduling -appropriate assessments
<i>Social Growth</i> (NMSA, 1992)	-peer acceptance -family influence -identity formation	-positive opportunities to socialize -parent communication -collaborative learning
<i>Moral/Ethical Growth</i> (Anfara, Mertens & Caskey, 2007, p. xix)	-positive role models -positive adult and peer relationships -guidelines for behavior and decision making	-positive adult relationships with teachers, counselors, and other adults on campus -advisory -high expectations for all
<i>Emotional Growth and Psychological Growth</i> -attraction to risky behavior (Caskey & Ruben 2007, p. 59)	-development of self regulation -adult guidance	-peer teamwork and leadership opportunities -advisors -safe environments -supervision before, during, and after school hours
-flight or fight (Caskey & Ruben 2007, p. 51)		-safe classroom environment that supports learning and risk taking

Table 1 lists several adolescent concerns which had also surfaced in the discussion of bus commuters. For example, under “dynamic physical growth” were the needs for adequate sleep, nutrition, and physical exercise — difficult to attain when riding the bus to school for lengthy periods. These same developmental requisites were also necessary to nurture brain growth and cognitive ability necessary to succeed in school and in life after graduation.

Bus commuters spoke of not having the opportunity to socialize with peers at school or participate in extracurricular activities. Yet, “social growth,” listed in Table 1, was an important consideration. In the process of interacting positively with peers and adults, adolescents are able to connect with their schools, and this in turn motivates them to stay in school until they graduate. When students commuted on the bus for long time periods and therefore lost opportunities to engage in social activities, they also lost the chance to explore and develop their own skills and talents.

In the areas of “moral, ethical, emotional, and psychological growth,” commuting can be problematic as well. If commuting teens do not have the opportunity to interact with peers and adults on a frequent and regular basis, they lose the opportunity for the nurturing they need to form healthy identities. As can be seen from Table 1, a responsive middle school, ideally, should extend the services necessary to support the healthy development and learning of students who commute to school by bus or in the family car.

If nationally junior high schools and intermediate schools were undergoing reform, the winds of change did not pass by the schools in Hawai‘i. Both private and public middle grade schools metamorphosed, including Ascension, to adopt the middle school model. The current study was designed in part to open a new avenue of

“responsiveness” to a particular group. If newly re-structured middle schools were created to address the needs of adolescents, responding to the specific challenges of commuting adolescents, particularly those who attended private schools, was clearly a part. Relevant to this study is the question: how do adolescent commuters deal with the challenges of commuting?

Coping

Several different lenses can be applied to identify and assess the ways in which commuting adolescents and their families coped with the lengthy daily commute to school. These lenses include culture, resiliency theory, and parent involvement and capital. Each will be discussed.

Culture

Anthropologists have long tried to define the concept of culture and have formulated many different definitions in an attempt to accurately present its features. Himes (1968, p. 74) outlined five characteristics that were involved in the construct of culture: it was socially created, socially shared, learned, gratifying, and integrated. Moore (1980) discussed Himes’ view by explaining that culture was produced by people’s interactions or through their social behaviors. Culture was not from DNA composition; it was not acquired biologically. When humans lived and associated with each other collectively, they did so in such a manner as to protect and help one another. These social responses became repeated and “regulated” (Moore, 1980, p. 3). This regulation resulted in the creation of a community that was mutually beneficial. In this way, the culture was socially created, shared, and recognizably distinct.

Culture is learned and “internalized” (Moore, 1980, p. 3) as people relate to each other in the community. Such interaction allows for the transference of culture from one generation to the next. The idea that culture was “gratifying” emerged from the idea that the individuals, who lived the culture, gained something: survival, safety, enjoyment, or satisfaction. Finally, the concept of culture as “integrated” referred to the view that cultural patterns worked in concert to satisfy social needs (Himes, 1968, p. 74).

Culture was often perceived as tradition or traditional. It might have started as a response (Linton, 1936) to something from which a learned behavior was generated, which in turn led to a patterned way of living. This concept of culture as a response suggests that culture may develop as coping strategy. However, responses have altered, as the patterned ways of living have evolved. In this way, culture is also dynamic and changing.

Myres (1927) has added this concept as well: “culture then, is what remains of men’s past, working on their present, to shape their future” (p. 16). From this perspective, culture reaches across time as a vigorous force. It was both adaptable and relevant in changing historical contexts. This suggested that culture was organic – not a fixed entity. Henze and Hauser (1999) have described this chameleon aspect of culture as “living” (p. 4).

More recently, the vision of culture has been expanded to acknowledge that culture exists in multiple layers. Individuals “within the same culture carry several layers of mental programming within themselves” (“Layers of Culture,” 2011, p. 3). These levels of culture include: “national, regional, gender, generation, social class, corporate” (“Layers of Culture,” 20211, pp. 3-4). The strata do not necessarily remain separate but

can interact and influence one another either positively or negatively. In addition, an individual may encounter a level of culture that differs from her own. This may occur in the school room and introduces the concept of culture in education.

Although anthropology has held a central and long standing interest in the study of culture in society, educators have come to realize that culture has played an enormous role in how students learn in the classroom. Teachers, in particular, learn to be sensitive to the different kinds of cultures present and integrate features of culture to the students' well being and academic advantage. Henze and Hauser (1999) pointed out two facets of culture that have been of greatest import to teachers: "cultural knowledge" and "culture as perception" (p. 6). Cultural knowledge refers to the educator's awareness of the details that allow an individual student to participate in her own culture and in the culture of others. These may be simple behaviors such as removing your slippers before entering the home, or celebrating Thanksgiving with a turkey dinner. "Culture as perception" refers to each individual's comprehension of things as influenced by the cultural filters we carry in our minds. "The way we perceive or interpret the culture of another person or group often tells us more about our own culture than about theirs" (p. 6). What is valued surfaces while observing the behaviors of others.

Henze and Hauser (1999) have also described "culture" as being "so all encompassing that we take it for granted" (p. 5). This may parallel a similar situation with the broad term socio-economic designator, "middle class," and suggests the possibility that "middle class" might actually be comprised of sub-groupings, one of which may be a sub-culture of the middle class in Hawai'i, the commuters, who opt to send their children to private schools.

The prospect of discovering that commuting families construct their own culture in response to the challenges of life on the road may not only add to our understanding of this segment of the school population but may also suggest cultural strengths or areas of need. These strengths and needs can then show ways the school and classroom teachers can become more responsive to middle school students who commute.

Resiliency Theory

A second lens for viewing the commuting experience is that of resiliency. A discussion of the identifying features of this concept follows.

Factors of resiliency.

Generally understood, resiliency means the ability to find something positive in negative circumstances or simply to be able to overcome an adverse situation. According to Bernard (1993, p. 44) resiliency is understood as “the ability to bounce back successfully despite exposure to severe risks.” It is a feat that is closely tied to the ability of the “self-righting nature” (Bernard, 1993, p. 44) of human beings, or in this study, the capacity to adapt. Resilient youngsters have four characteristics: “social competence, problem-solving skills, autonomy, and a sense of purpose and future” (Bernard, 1993, p. 44).

First these youngsters were socially capable and engaged in positive adult and peer relationships. They possessed communication skills and were caring, flexible, and appropriately responsive to others. Secondly, they exhibited problem-solving skills that demonstrated planning and resourcefulness. These skills allowed them to be pro-active in handling their own affairs. Thirdly, resilient children were independent and acted in ways that empowered them to rise above their adversity; there was a sense of efficacy

that helped them in onerous circumstances. As autonomous individuals, they also possessed a sense of identity and self-esteem. Lastly, these youngsters had a purpose, a sense of determination to reach a goal, and took steps forward with the hope of succeeding.

In the pilot study, using Bernard's (1993) classifications, similar resiliency traits among children appeared to be operating for commuting students who seemed to use planning, organization, and resourcefulness (resiliency factor number two) to complete academic responsibilities during the few precious hours at home after a long commute. Perhaps the commuting adolescent was motivated (resiliency factor number four) to creatively utilize school recesses or lunch hours; perhaps there were assignments that they could complete on the road while saving more complex work for home. Commuting students might demonstrate resilience by prioritizing time use both in and out of the car. In the current dissertation study, the researcher assesses if, how, and to what effect the four traits found in at risk resilient children emerged among commuting adolescents.

Researchers have found that children are not necessarily born resilient, but rather develop resiliency by exposure to nurturing or protective factors in their environment (Bernard, 1991). Findings from protective factor research have led to the concept that resilience could be viewed not just as an end product but also as an intervention to help all children cope with the stresses and strains of growing up. These protective factors include care and support from at least one adult or peer, high academic and social expectations, and a feeling of belonging (Bernard, 1991; Werner, 1987). If resiliency has emerged from the interaction between the individual and the environment, the focus of

plans to support students who struggle should be placed on enhancing environments as positive contexts.

Morrison and Allen (2007) expanded the concept of resiliency in their research of “protective possibilities” (p. 163) that was based on the idea that in routine daily affairs and every day environments, opportunities occurred that can nurture resilience (2007, p. 163). In their work, the researchers discussed specific strategies families, schools, or the community to use on a daily basis to promote resilience in children.

Relevance of the resiliency theory emerged with the concept that protective factors in the environment should be present for all children, not just those at high risk from dysfunctional families or negative peer influence, but perhaps also for those with added stressors in their lives, like commuting. The stress and challenges confronted daily by commuting adolescents, as discussed earlier, might need to be understood as detrimental circumstances that could compromise the welfare of this student population. To explore the commuting experience through the lens of the resiliency theory might reveal protective factors and/or protective possibilities at home and school that can help students and their families to cope with arduous challenges faced due to commuting road time.

Parent Involvement

Research has explored the importance of positive parent involvement for student success at school. Israel, Beaulieu, and Hartless (2001) have found that when “youths are provided with a nurturing environment and with guidance on behaviors that are deemed appropriate and inappropriate” (p. 8) results are both “powerful and positive” (p. 8) in a student’s academic performance.

In a meta-analysis of academic socialization, Hill and Tyson (2009), found that “academic socialization” (p. 758) seemed to have the strongest impact on students, particularly those in middle school, who did not want their parents to be at school or preferred that adults not take an active role in the completion of academic tasks at home. The researchers explained academic socialization should be understood as the way parents conveyed to their children the importance of education, set future goals for learning, and imparted methods to navigate through the education process. This approach has nourished academic values rather than simply strengthened content knowledge.

Grolnick and Slowiaczek (1994) suggested that there were multiple ways for parents to become involved in their child’s education. In particular, they discussed three arenas to do so. The first was *behavioral*, in which parents took action, such as communicating with teachers, attending school functions, or volunteering. This impressed upon the student that school was a place of importance. The second area was *personal*. This is where the parent communicates to the child that the adult is concerned about school and finds the school experience to be a positive one. In this way, the child’s attitude towards school is influenced. The third type was *cognitive-intellectual*. Here parents engaged in learning games or activities with their children, or were available as an audience for their children to practice new skills like memorizing their lines for a speech. According to Lareau (1987) this was historically a new role for parents.

The work of Rosen (1959) seemed especially to support the personal type of parent involvement proposed by Grolnick and Slowiaczek (1994). Rosen (1959) clustered three concepts: “achievement motivation, achievement values, and educational-occupational aspirations” to create the “achievement syndrome.” Marjoribanks (2005)

discussed how Rosen's theory focused on families who were achievement oriented and provided training for accomplishment, eventually weaning their children to become independently successful. Such children learned to be ambitious and performed to meet high standards especially in demanding situations. Valuing achievement became their motivation to continue to do well.

All parent involvement, whether home based or school based, intellectual, behavioral, or personal in approach, can be viewed as providing capital for students. The term "capital" came from the business or economic world and concerns assets, means, resources, or enabling wealth (Cote, 2005). Cultural capital referred to accumulated family resources including personal and ethnic values, attitudes, work habits, traits, disposition, prior knowledge, and a match between knowledge and school culture. A strong match between home values and school values has been found to increase academic success (Lee & Bowen, 2006).

Coleman (1987) discussed the socialization of children by families and schools – a process that, only when synchronized, promoted achievement. Schools provided *opportunities, demands, and rewards*, which parents complemented by instilling *attitudes, effort, and a conception of self* in their children (p. 35). However, the process begins with the socialization between parent and child. According to Coleman (1988) family social capital comes from the kinds of interactions and the strength of the relations between the adults and their children. Social capital is "productive, making possible the achievement of certain ends that in its absence would not be possible" (p. 98).

Israel et al. (2001, p. 58) have contended that another resource came from social capital, or the amassed assets gained from social interactions, like the networking

between parents and teachers, parents and the school, and parents and other parents. They found that “ties, formed by knowing the friends’ parents provide closure in local networks, which can reinforce community norms and practices that promote achievement.” (p. 58)

For example, often parents encouraged their children to have a well-rounded life by participating in extracurricular activities. This reflected middle class values that activated social capital. What additionally occurred in these extracurricular activities, in which the parents went out of their way to accommodate the needs of their children, was that the parents would often network. They met after school or on weekends at their children’s sports events, and they “talked.” They learned about what was going on at school, garnered ideas of how other parents handled assignments, and compared teachers and curriculum. Parents of older children passed down advice to parents whose children were coming up. The tips and information gathered were then utilized to facilitate their own child’s learning experiences.

The use of such opportunities demonstrated the further “activation” of capital. Thus, parents who took the time to know the parents of their child’s best friends were “more likely to have children who obtain a higher composite test score and higher grades and who stayed in school” (Israel et al, 2001, p. 58).

Social capital was also the asset that children gained when parents interacted and passed along information culled from social networks that supported their child’s learning. As pointed out by Lareau and Horvat (1999), it was not enough for parents to possess capital; they had to transfer it to their children. How much was transferred and how well depended upon parent skill and effort. In other words, parents “who have

social and cultural capital may choose to activate capital or not and they vary in the skill with which they activate it” (p. 38).

The primary vehicle for transferring capital has been identified as a strong family. Cairney (2000) explained that each family possessed a culture “in which participants (family members) construct particular ways of acting, believing and valuing through the interactions among family members” (p. 167). Thus family culture, in particular, parent behavior and conversation, establishes what young people come to believe and value about school. However, working parents, especially those who commuted, have limited time to spend with their children except en route and may not have the opportunity or energy to spend with their children while taking care of family and home demands. In addition parents, particularly of middle school aged children, may not feel that they are adequately skilled, guided, welcomed, or knowledgeable to support their child’s academics (Dauber & Epstein, 1989).

Finally, Bourdieu (1984, 1998) put forth the idea that when children received the social and cultural capital of their parents, the younger generation came to internalize these values. This in turn caused the children to eventually become like their parents; that is, they acquired the tastes and habits of the older generation’s social class, which includes educational pursuits. If parents modeled or instructed their children on how to take advantage of schooling, then youngsters would gain the social and cultural capital to better negotiate their way through the “system.” Marjoribanks (2005, p. 651) summed it up suggesting that when parents provided social and cultural capital, the two combined to form “educational capital” and this led to increases in learning and school success.

Summary of the Literature Review

Although nationally there has been an increase in commuting, the review of the literature has shown that not much research exists that has explored the impact of lengthy road times on adolescents, their families, home life, and success in school. Available studies on college commuters suggested that some schools take steps to address the needs of commuters to support the academic endeavors of older students. Investigations into rural school commutes via bussing have surfaced primarily anecdotal data with frequent mention of health and academic concerns. While there has been an abundance of digital conversation on the topic of school commutes using various Internet forums, there have been no formal, empirical studies of children who commute to school in the family car.

Of particular interest in this study are young adult commuters between the ages of 12-14 who experienced rapid physical growth and social-emotional development. For them, it is important to understand more about the ways commutes to school can adversely affect an adolescent's need for adequate sleep, nutrition, physical activity, and socialization – each necessary for healthy development and school success.

To better respond to developmental issues of this age group, middle schools emerged that were student centered and operated with the underlying philosophy that attending to the needs of the whole child supported learning. However these same schools may not accommodate student commuters in their population nor recognize this population as having special needs. Rather, responsibility has appeared to fall on the families of the adolescent commuters to shape their time both on and off the road to the best advantage.

The review of research has identified three theories, that might provide insight into how families have shaped the commuting experience for their children. The theories provide relevant lenses through which the phenomenon of commuting can be viewed and aid in the understanding of students' and families' experience of commuting and ways of coping.

Scholarship has shown that culture is a response that has led to a repeated pattern of behavior. If culture is conceptualized in this way, then it can be argued that commuters have developed a unique culture as they have adapted their life styles to accommodate the challenges posed by time consuming road trips to and from school.

The second lens that can be applied to commuting is that of resiliency theory which is both an end product and a process. Here commuting can be explored based on personal traits and the protective factors existent in the adolescent's environment that support the commuter in the face of adverse commuting conditions and promoted success for the child in school and outside of school.

Lastly, coping with commuting could be viewed through the lens of parent involvement. The researcher hoped to gain insight into the importance of capital and how the transfer of family capital (social, cultural, and educational) may assist commuting adolescents as they managed their lives both on and off the road.

The review of the literature has introduced key concepts connected to this study of commuting: adolescent development, middle school philosophy, culture, resiliency, and parent involvement. This study of students who commuted to school in the family car, as told by those who experienced this phenomenon, provides insight into their lives and adds to the general body of research. The next chapter recounts this study's

methodology, describing the qualitative study design involved in investigating the experience of ten commuting students and their parents.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

Howley and Howley (2001) have expressed their concern that little is known about rural bussing to school from the perspective of the participating students and their families. Much of what is currently understood of the bussing experience has come in the form of anecdotes (Spence, 2000b). Rarer still is research on students who commute to school by family cars. This latter phenomenon – commuting in family cars – was a common occurrence at Ascension School, a small parochial school that drew its enrollment from all areas of Oahu. The purpose of the current study was to examine how middle school adolescents and their families at Ascension School perceived the commuting experience and how the experience influenced their lives at school and home.

Educational Research

Defined by McMillan and Wergin (1994), educational research is “a systematic investigation, involving the collection of information (data), to solve an educational problem or contribute to our knowledge about an educational theory or practice” (p. 1). In this study, data were collected via interviews with students and parents, teachers’ observations of commuting students during the school day, and students’ digital blogs. The data from this study contribute to an understanding of the challenges faced by commuting students and describe in some depth how they and their families coped with the lengthy daily travel. Based on the findings, supportive interventions have been recommended that can be put in place both at school and at home. The study was qualitative in design and involved direct contact with the participants.

Qualitative Research Design

Because the purpose of this study was to examine the commuting phenomenon, it was non-experimental and ethnographic in orientation. According to Patton (2002), the basic question that underlies an ethnographic study is: “What is the culture of this group of people?” (p. 81).

The qualitative paradigm includes many different theoretical traditions. Patton (2002) has listed sixteen (p. 132-3), two of them particularly relevant to my study. The first, ethnography, comes from anthropological roots. These studies originally examined the culture of a group of people, often of non-western ethnicity, isolated or self-contained in small groups (tribes, remote villages for example), and illiterate. Anthropologists engaged in extensive field work, immersing themselves in the life style of those being studied.

Ethnography widens this anthropological concept to the modern day study of any group of people who interact for a lengthy period of time and eventually develop a “culture” with a shared intersubjectivity and the possibility of it “being passed on to new group members” (D’Andrade, 1992, p. 230). It could be the culture of the residents on a singular street, the people who regularly meet at the town tavern, or even... adolescents who share lengthy commuting experiences with their families as they travel to and from school. Granted, the individual students and their families do not interact socially on a regular basis, and they may not necessarily know each other over a long period of time, but what makes them a “group” is their common experience of commuting. Their individual experiences bear similarities that qualify as a “culture” and for this reason applied ethnography underpins my research.

The second qualitative tradition relevant to my study is that of constructivism which connects to the field of sociology. It refers to the concept that there are multiple realities because human beings have the ability to make meaning from what they experience and build reality based upon those meanings. Thomas and Thomas' (1928) theorem has captured this concept nicely: "What is defined or perceived by people as real is real in its consequences" (p. 572). When applied to my commuting study, I realize that each participant views the experience of commuting differently, which may stem from prior personal experiences, from what feels right or comfortable or manageable; or from the interactions of other involved family members. As the researcher it is not my place to judge which participant's reality is more accurate, true, or better than the rest. All must be respected. The search is for consensus (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 73) among those who live the experience of commuting.

As the researcher, I aimed to discover the lifestyle of commuting families and understand what defined their accommodations and experiences. Key data sources were interviews with students, parents, and teachers. Part of the research sought narratives from the participants (i.e. blogs) that provided insight into their commuting world.

Context of the Study: School Background

Ascension School is a small, Catholic, parochial school in urban Honolulu. The school educates students from grades Pre-K to twelve on two separate neighboring campuses. According to the school's most recent WASC self-study accreditation report (2007-2008), the population of its student body is as follows: 67.5% Asian, 17% multi-racial – including Native Hawaiian, 13% Caucasian, 2% Latino, .3% African American, and .2% Native American. A variety of ethnicities are represented in the school, as well

as different religious backgrounds and socio-economic groups. Some students live in households with single, working parents, while others come from double income households. Most of the students who attend the school are from middle class families, and financial aid is provided for approximately 22% of the student body (WASC self study, 2007-2008).

Ascension is a co-educational, college preparatory institution. The academic performance and ability of the students range from average to high, with nearly 100% of its 136 seniors continuing their education after graduation. At the conclusion of the 2006-2007 school year, 111 graduates had matriculated at four-year colleges and 24 entered two-year colleges. The average PSAT scores for juniors reached a high of 80 in critical reading, math, and writing, and a low of 51 for math, and 50 for critical reading and writing. Many high school students take AP classes. The majority of the students who graduate from Ascension High began their schooling at Ascension Grade School or Ascension Middle School.

Over the years, there has been discussion on ways to bridge the transition between the middle school and high school campuses. Efforts to ease freshmen into high school life have been explored for both continuing students and those newly admitted in freshman year. The current study directly explores ways to establishing a nurturing environment for young adolescent commuters at the middle school, to ease eighth grade students' cross-over and to assist students who are commuting for the first time in ninth grade.

To that end, this study focused on middle grades students and took into account their particular developmental needs and how they were addressed in a school that had

adopted the middle school philosophy (NMSA, 1992). In spring 1998, dialogue commenced with the faculty of grades 6-8 to explore the possibility of designing a middle school. Until then, sixth grade was considered part of the elementary division, while the seventh and eighth grades comprised the Junior High. Dr. Paul Deering, head of the Middle Level Masters of Education (MLMED) program at the University of Hawai'i , served as the school's consultant. All teachers in grades 6-8 were engaged in discussion and research during this process of reform, which was led by a faculty steering committee. Monthly meetings to report progress and to plan next steps were held regularly. The teachers examined such middle school issues as teaming, integration, adolescent development and needs, curriculum and instruction. The Administration supported faculty efforts by annually sending teachers, a few at a time, to the National Middle School Association (NMSA) conference. In addition teachers were given the opportunity to visit other local middle schools during the regular academic day. Teachers worked collaboratively using an inquiry-based approach (Deering, 2003a and b), shared hands-on research, and read relevant articles and corner stone philosophical publications such as *Turning Points 2000: Educating Adolescents in the 21st Century* (Jackson & Davis, 2000), *This We Believe* (NMSA, 1992), and *This We Believe: Developmentally Responsive Middle Level Schools* (NMSA, 1995). Faculty engaged in multiple conversations on how to create a child-centered learning environment and made changes in small steps. Ascension Intermediate became a Middle School by 2003.

Since that time, Ascension has not rested on its past endeavors. Informally, various aspects of the middle school program have been evaluated at faculty meetings, and as recently as the 2008-2009 school year, the faculty formally reviewed its progress

as a middle school. Through self exploration and self-evaluation, faculty teams examined current student needs: academic, social, emotional, physical, and developmental in conjunction with existing programs, then held a series of dialogues to make appropriate adjustments.

In addition, Ascension School has explored ways to align curriculum, assessment, and the needs of the whole child in order to better prepare students for success in the 21st Century. The faculty was asked to probe this question and possible outcomes, using Wagner (2008) co-director of the Change Leadership Group at the Harvard Graduate School of Education and author of *The Global Achievement Gap: Why Even Our Best Schools Don't Teach the New Survival Skills Our Children Need – and What We Can Do About It* (2008). In his book, which was mandatory summer reading for the entire faculty of Ascension School, Wagner writes about what he has learned from teachers and administrators in the field in education, often allowing their individual voices to be heard and generally promoting their ideas as food for thought.

Administrators at Ascension School urged all teachers to become familiar with the concept of 21st Century Skills, and how it impacted classroom teaching. Reading Wagner's text provided common ground for discussion at faculty meetings, a shared vision to guide the direction of the school's curriculum in the future, and established a goal for what students would attain once they graduated from the high school.

Wagner's key concepts were then integrated with the work of Ted Sizer (1992) whose ground breaking work, *Horace's School: Redesigning the American High School* (1992), led to the acceptance of Ascension High School as a member of the Coalition of Essential Schools. This transformation was completed by the year 1997.

Still a full-fledged member of the Coalition of Essential Schools, Ascension High continues to implement Sizer's philosophy of education.

In the middle grades, Wagner's work was synchronized with the principles that guide middle schools, as posted on the National Middle School website (2006). As an added caveat, teachers needed to prepare eighth graders to cross over to the high school by familiarizing them with the philosophy underpinning Sizer's work. Tables 2 and 3 draw comparisons between the core principles of works of Wagner, Sizer, and the NMSA. They are joined with another required reading for middle school teachers, *Turning Points 2000* by Jackson and Davis (2000), which was a follow up study of the best practices reflecting the middle school philosophy as implemented nationally. Recommendations emerged from the work of other researchers and educators in the field. The attributes listed on Tables 2 and 3 focus on educating adolescents in the 21st Century and highlight strong similarities among the four publications.

Table 2 notes relevant issues for middle school adolescents. In the affective arena, all the authors emphasized the importance of establishing solid relationships with students to promote academic success and development. Sources concur that teachers must know their students well and advocate on students' behalf. This was the primary goal when Ascension established advisories in both the high school and middle school curricula. Further, knowing commuting students well implies that teachers need to be aware of the challenges commuters face on a daily basis and to design interventions to address these challenges. Table 2 sources support the key concept that all students, no matter what their needs, have an equal opportunity to reach established learning goals.

Table 2

Changing Roles of Teachers: 21st Century Classroom Strategies

Wagner (2008)	Sizer (1992)	NMSA Website (2006)	Jackson and Davis (2000)
teacher as “facilitator” (p. 192)	teacher as coach (p. 208)	students are at the “center” of learning	“teacher facilitates students’ skills” (p. 81)
develop relationships with students (p. 238)	know students well (p.40)	“adult advocate” for every student	develop “close, supportive relationships” between students and educators (p. 123)
assess to measure “students’ growth” (p. 125)	set clear goals for all (43)	hold every student to “high expectations”	“ensure success for every student” (p. 25)

Table 2 also introduces the changing role of the teacher in the classroom. She was no longer the “giver” of information while the student docilely “received” it. This reflects the Ascension belief that teaching has changed from the dispensing of factual knowledge, often through lecture, to the producing of new knowledge. This new role has placed different expectations on how curriculum is taught and how students are expected to learn. These expectations are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Changing Expectations of Curriculum: 21st Century Classroom Strategies

Wagner (2008)	Sizer (1992)	NMSA Website (2006)	Jackson and Davis (2000)
curriculum of “discovery” (p. 184)	“busy work is not the same as being involved” (p. 87)	“curriculum is challenging and exploratory”	curriculum involves the “construction of knowledge” (p. 69)
“real” work (p. 189)	“constructive conversation,” “productive and resourceful thinking” (p. 89)	“significant and relevant questions” are posed	valued accomplishments that are meaningful beyond school (p. 70)
thinking critically (p. 190)	“learning to use one’s mind well” (p. 60)	thinking “rationally and critically”	using “higher order thinking” (p. 69)
participate instead of receive knowledge (p.190)	engage students (p. 85)	“engaged in active, purposeful learning”	“hook” students (p. 72)
learning and working collaboratively (p.25)	“learning is enhanced by collaborative effort” (p. 89)	developing “interpersonal and social skills”	providing collaborative opportunities (p. 84)
explore personal interests (p. 192)	“evolve one’s own view of a matter” (p. 73)	develop his or her strengths talents, or interests	include the “needs, interests, and concerns of students” (p. 64)

As indicated by Table 3, Ascension educators have learned that students must be able to use their minds well, think critically, and problem solve. Sources studied by Ascension educators emphasize the importance of providing instructional strategies and rigorous curriculum that support students’ brain development by challenging them to

exercise their growing cognitive abilities. Teachers learn to encourage collaborative work that responds to the eighth graders' desire for socialization – their need to talk purposefully and socially. By working cooperatively to learn, students gain social skills and create relationships. Relating to peers is part of what adolescents require to grow in positive ways; it is a classroom instructional strategy that invites animated participation. This segues into the second belief about learning found on Table 3: the student is an active, engaged, participant who must construct meaningful learning.

The idea that students must be involved during class time suggests the need for teaching strategies that facilitate learning for a commuter who is beset by tiredness or sleepiness – two symptoms of long distance traveling mentioned in the review of the literature on rural bus commutes. Teachers at Ascension have learned to make learning meaningful and authentic by personalizing teaching, or allowing all students to discover who they are and to develop their own interests. Personalizing education also encourages engagement.

Because Ascension Middle School educators studied and embraced Wagner, Sizer, and the middle school philosophy, its teachers viewed students holistically, and encouraged development of the whole child in order to assure the child's development into a successful adult of the 21st Century. With these underlying beliefs in place, Ascension School's commuting students could expect to be supported and thrive.

Selection of Study Participants

Ten commuting eighth grade students and their parents were screened by an initial survey and teacher recommendations and were purposefully chosen to participate in the study. Major criteria for selection specified that participants include students at

Ascension who made a forty-five minute commute in the family car with parents and siblings both to and from school. All participating students were selected on the willingness that they and their families demonstrated to provide rich data. The confidentiality of all participants was promised and maintained. Original names of the students, their families, faculty members, and the school do not appear in the final report; instead pseudonyms have been used. Consent and approval from the Committee on Human Studies (CHS), school administrators, and parents were obtained; participating students signed assent forms. The students were eighth graders in the private middle school, some of whom I had previously taught in my seventh grade core subject classes.

There were a number of reasons why eighth grade students were purposefully selected as participants in this study. At Ascension Middle School, one of the largest entrance years for enrollment has been sixth grade (37 entered in 2007-2008), and to a lesser degree, seventh grade (30 were admitted). By eighth grade, new students, who entered in sixth or seventh grade, had at least one full year to adjust to commuting. By eighth grade, the population was fairly stable, and few new students entered middle school at this level. There were also those who had been commuting since the elementary grades, some starting in Pre-Kindergarten. In order to draw on both novices and long timers, I purposefully selected eighth graders.

Eighth grade is also the time when adolescence takes hold. Physically the students mature and have growth spurts. Socializing increases and peer relationships gain importance. Extracurricular activities, especially sports, are popular and many students participate. The demands of adolescence become evident as young people begin

puberty just before their high school years. I purposefully studied eighth graders to learn more about how commuting fits in during this time of rapid developmental growth.

Finally, by the age of thirteen, most parents, teachers, and counselors tend to agree that the students should be old enough and independent enough to be academically responsible for themselves. On the verge of entering high school the following year, adolescents were expected to keep track of homework assignments, packing necessary books and supplies, planning and time management, and showing self-discipline to some degree. Adults see eighth graders as capable of functioning without homework monitoring and ready to develop independence and responsibility for learning, if they had not already done so in seventh grade. When long distance commuting reduced available time for accomplishing school tasks, it was important for students to use their time efficiently and responsibly. In this way parents could spend more of their time in commute preparations and attending to household and family needs.

To identify commuting students who qualified to participate in this research, a survey (See Appendix B) was sent home to parents and students at the end of the 2008-2009 school year. At that time, the students were concluding seventh grade. Because I had only taught half of the seventh grade class (approximately 56 students of 112), the surveys were distributed in the first round only to my 7-Silver Team (pseudonym) of students. I knew the students and parents well; we had developed rapport during the school year while I taught two core subjects (Language Arts and Religion). For some, I had even been their homeroom teacher, elective teacher, and/or speech team coach. Since the students were now moving to eighth grade, I would no longer be in a position of power, allowing the data collection to be a non-threatening experience.

When the surveys were returned, the responses were sorted to identify students who traveled to and from school for at least 40-45 minutes each day in the family car, the cut off for participating in the study. The qualifying families often drove to school from the same outlying districts, the most often mentioned being Mililani. Other areas were Ewa, Kapolei, Waimanalo, Kahaluu, and Kaneohe. Of the 56 students who took part in the initial survey, 25 or almost 45% were on the road for 30-35 minutes daily. Of these 25 commuting students, fifteen (60%) traveled the longer time of 40-45 minutes. However, several of those in the latter group did not qualify to participate in the study. Four students traveled by bus round trip to school, or rode the bus at least one way, most often the return trip home. Another young man mentioned car pooling with other families, and this disqualified him. There were some students who lived in two households, only one of which qualified for the approximately 40-45 minute commute time. One student who lived in Mililani moved closer to town, while another who did qualify at the end of seventh grade year, no longer qualified at the start of eighth grade because he started to take the bus home.

Originally I sought ten students and their families to take part in the study; this would represent approximately 10% of the entire seventh grade population. However, because there were not enough qualifying students from my 7-Silver Team of seventh graders, a second round of invitations was issued to students from the 7-Green Team (pseudonym), with a focus on students who lived in the areas listed above. Although I did not teach these students in core classes, I had coached some on the Speech Team, met them in Advisory, or had taught their siblings. Once again, a familiarity existed on which

I hoped to build a comfortable data collecting relationship, without distorting the information given.

Profiles of Participants

Six eighth grade girls and four eighth grade boys along with their parents took part in the study. The students were chosen by their answers to an initial survey distributed in class. Each participant responded that they commuted to school in the family car for a length of forty-five minutes or longer one way. All ten families were middle class, professional working parents, and homeowners. Commute times fluctuated slightly, depending on routes and departure times from home. Late departure times caused longer road time on occasion because of traffic build up during the morning rush hour. Similarly, the length of the drive home also varied, depending upon traffic patterns that either facilitated or hindered a quick ride home.

Only two students commuted for three years or less, beginning their commutes in middle school. Of the other eight participants, one had been on the road for at least six years, and the remaining seven had built up a record of nine years or more. Some of the long timers traveled to other schools prior to enrolling at Ascension; others attended the school from pre-kindergarten to eighth grade, before graduating on to high school.

Within the study, the most demanding trek, from Ewa, spanned 25-30 miles one way and clocked 75 minutes. Six others averaged 45-60 minutes for a 20-22 mile drive from Mililani. One student came to school from Waimanalo, with a 40-45 minute drive; however his mom did not provide an estimate on the distance traveled. The last two hailed from Kaneohe with a time of 45 minutes for a distance of 17 miles. It should be noted that Pam has been commuting to a town school for five years, but prior to that she

commuted to another school outside of town, bringing her total to 10 years on the road.

Table 4 summarizes these demographic findings. The occupation listed is for the driver who was interviewed, (m) for mother, (d) for dad. A secondary driver, usually the spouse, occasionally took a turn behind the wheel. All names are pseudonyms.

Table 4

Demographic Information on Participating Families

Student's Name (mom/dad)	Residence	Years On the Road	Approximate Minutes One way	Approximate Miles (Parent Estimate)	Occupation
1. Wendy (m)	Mililani	9	45	22-23	judicial clerk
2. Tom (m/d)	Mililani	10	60	22-23	pharmacist
3. Isaac (m/d)	Mililani	9	50	22-23	human resources/ Engineer
4. Remy (m)	Mililani	3	60	22-23	business owner
5. Kara (m)	Mililani	6	45	22-23	teacher
6. Tiffany (m)	Mililani	11	60	22-23	auditor
7. Yvette (m)	Kaneohe	10	45-50	17	teacher
8. Pam (m)	Kaneohe	10	45	17	librarian
9. Joe (m)	Waimanalo	10	40	--	nurse
10. Harry (d)	Ewa	2	75	25-30	electrician

Three of the families were of Japanese ancestry and the others carried a mix of ethnicities which included Japanese, Chinese, Filipino, Hawaiian, Guamanian, and others not identified. Except for one mother, the parents and students were long time residents

of Oahu, having grown up in the islands. In all households, except those of the three single parents, both parents worked. Although Harry's dad was an electrician, his mom was a professional nurse. Below, a brief profile of each participant is provided.

Wendy rode to school without siblings; her mother was the primary driver during the commute. She attended Ascension School from kindergarten to eighth grade. Wendy said her grades were "pretty good," earning "A's in a lot of my classes." She participated in soccer. Her mom described Wendy's performance as "awesome." Wendy's mom had attended private school outside of Hawai'i until she graduated from high school.

Tom rode to school with his older brother, who attended another private school in town. Tom's dad was the primary driver, although sometimes Tom's mom drove as well; she participated in the interviews. Tom had first enrolled in Ascension for pre-kindergarten and has continued until his eighth grade year. This gave him the distinction of being a "lifer" at the school. Tom said he averaged a B+ and "thinks" he got on honor roll. He was involved with baseball. Tom's mom, who saw signs of his success on his report card, was an alumnus of Ascension.

Isaac had no siblings, but he was the only student who commuted to school in the company of both parents. Isaac's dad was the primary driver; mom shared the back seat with her son. Isaac joined Ascension for his kindergarten year and has continued ever since. He earned "usually B's and above;" his mother said that he made high honors. Isaac was involved in volleyball, tennis, and violin.

Remy was a new comer to the school, enrolling in Ascension Middle School for sixth grade. She said she "worked hard to get three A's." Her mother confirmed that Remy made honor roll. Remy played soccer. Prior to Ascension, Remy was a student in

a neighborhood public school, not more than ten minutes away from home. On the commute, she was accompanied by her younger brother, who attended a different private school in town. Remy's mom, the primary driver, briefly attended a private school when she was younger.

Kara had attended other private schools during her kindergarten to sixth grade years. The schools were not in town. In seventh grade, Kara began school at Ascension along with her younger brother in the elementary division and an older brother at the high school. Kara earned B- or C's in some classes, high B's in others; her mom said her daughter gets "pretty decent grades." Kara's mom was a recently hired teacher of the school and an alumnus of Ascension. Kara attended piano lessons.

Tiffany was another "lifer" and had been at Ascension from pre-kindergarten to eighth grade. She was involved in volleyball. As a student, Tiffany described herself as "average," but went on to say "my dad said that if I don't get better than a C this year, then I am going to a public school, and I don't want to go [to a] public school." Tiffany's mom mentioned that her daughter has gotten B's and C's. Tiffany rode to school with her mother and older sister, a college student and a recent graduate of Ascension High School. Sometimes the older sister drove, picking Tiffany up after school then picking up their mom from work. Once her mom was in the car, she drove the girls on the commute home. Tiffany's mom was an alumnus of the school.

Yvette shared the commute with her high school brother and family dog. Yvette's grades fell in the A- to A range, dipping into an occasional B+; her mom mentioned that Yvette was doing "wonderful" at the school. Yvette's mom, a single parent, was the primary driver; however, grandpa lent a hand transporting his grandchildren on numerous

occasions. Yvette had attended Ascension since kindergarten; she was a member of a swim team, speech team, and kendo. Mom was also a teacher at Ascension School and commuted to a private school when she was young.

Pam had attended several schools prior to coming to Ascension. Some of these schools were located outside of town, but the most recent one was situated in town. Pam began Ascension in seventh grade and commuted in the morning with her dad. Pam considered herself an A-B student, but Pam's mom said that her daughter does "so-so" and could be doing better. After school involvement included participation on the speech team. On the drive home, Pam shared the car with her mom and an older sister, who attended a different private school located in town.

Joe had been in a town private school located since second grade, but he did not become a student of Ascension until middle school, in seventh grade. He mentioned that he "might make honor roll this year." His mother described her son's performance as "pretty good; he's doing all B's so far." He commuted to school with his mother, a single parent, who had attended a small private school when young. Joe was involved in both basketball and kempo.

Harry traveled the farthest distance of all the students in this study. He joined the Ascension student body in seventh grade; before that he attended a public school which was not more than ten minutes away from home. Harry described his academic performance as "B's and A's, and little bit of C's." Harry's dad echoed the same observations, saying that his son earns C's when "lax." Harry was a basketball player. Although initially Harry's mom took turns driving with his dad, by the second semester, Harry's dad was a single parent and shouldered the entire commute and child raising

responsibilities himself. Harry's mom had temporarily left the family to work on the mainland. Approximately every two to three months, she came home briefly to visit and drove her son to school. Harry's dad had commuted also and had graduated from a private school.

Consent

In order to carry out this research, I sought permission to conduct it. First, the Committee on Human Subjects at the University of Hawai'i reviewed the research proposal and granted approval. Second, Ascension School's Administration gave written permission to do the study on campus with students from the Ascension Middle School (Appendix C). I briefed the principal explaining how the study would take place, for what purpose, for what possible gains, and how the findings would be shared at the conclusion of the research. Copies of all consent forms and interview questions were provided and approved before use.

Third, parents signed consent forms (Appendix C) which permitted their child's participation as well as their own. I contacted most of the parents by phone and explained the study. Parents could ask questions during the conversation and understood they had the option of not participating. Other parents were approached in person on Parent Night in August 2009.

Once parents had given a verbal consent to participate, the formal written consent was sent home for them to sign. Accompanying the consent form was the list of interview questions that would be asked of their child. At that time, after reading in detail how the research would be conducted, parents could decline if they chose not to participate. If they agreed to be part of the study, they signed the consent form, returned

a copy to me, and kept a copy for their records. Parents were also told that during the interview, they had the option of not answering questions which they perceived as invasive or as inapplicable to their situation, or to withdraw completely from the research endeavor. It was made clear that at no time were they under any obligation to take part in the study nor would there be any penalty for refusing to do so.

Fourth, student assent was sought. Once the ten students were selected and their participation was approved by their parents, a meeting was held during the school day at which I explained the research project. All participating students were in attendance at this information session. The students learned that confidentiality would be enforced in that I would not report to their parents or teachers what was told to me in the interviews. I gave several examples, such as, if they came home late and did not finish their homework, or if they were not time managing well enough to allow for sufficient study time at home, I would not pass such information along to their parents and teachers. The students were invited to ask questions for further clarification and given the option to decline participation. They all signed two copies of the assent form (Appendix C), returned one copy to me and kept the other for themselves.

Lastly, five eighth grade teachers, in both core and non-core subject areas, as well as the two school counselors were invited to provide data for this study. I explained the study to both the teachers and counselors during the eighth grade level meeting in August 2009. Counselors and teachers who consented to participate signed consent forms (Appendix C), keeping one copy for themselves. The faculty members understood they were in no way obligated to participate in the research.

Data Collection

In this qualitative study, the principal source of data was interviews, with digital journaling (blogs), and teacher observations of commuting students serving as secondary sources. I kept a researcher's log to reflect on the process in which data were collected. All students, parents, teachers, counselors, administrators, and school names were changed to protect confidentiality and privacy.

Interviews

According to Patton (2002), the purpose of conducting an interview is to learn what the researcher "cannot directly observe" (p. 340) as well as to view happenings from a different perspective. Commuting in the family car is a private time for parents and children. So too is the home life of commuting students both before and after road time. Because direct observation of these very private family moments would be intrusive and would change family dynamics, interviewing was used to gather the stories of the participants. Weiss (1994) has said that the interview "gives access to the observations of others" (p. 1). Thus, I collected *their* observations instead. I *saw* through their eyes their home and car settings and vicariously experienced their lives through their own words.

The interviews provided data of the commuting experience as told by the participants themselves. Weiss (1994) has suggested that interviews are a way to understand how people live their daily lives as they cope with and confront every day challenges. I conducted the study to learn about social contexts from which commuters made decisions, ways values determined choices, and what prominent themes permeated the commuting experience. I also sought to gain insights into family relationships that supported or hindered commuting. It was a way to learn "about people's interior

experiences...what people perceived and how they interpreted their perceptions” (Weiss, 1994, p. 1). In other words, interviewing was a way of entering a person’s head so I could understand how she felt or thought about things. Findings from these shared narratives were collected to inform schools aiming to become more responsive to the needs of middle school commuters.

Finally stories or memories of road time in the family car, events that positively or negatively affect a commuter’s day, and factors that can influence behavior were retrieved through the interview, which “rescues events that would otherwise be lost” (Weiss, 1994, p. 2)

The primary purpose of this study was to explore the school commute from the perspective of those who were directly involved: the students and their parents.

Gathering their first hand narratives was invaluable; the challenge was how to accomplish it without “forcing” the stories or “leading” the participants’ responses. Charmaz (2006) explained that “Grounded theorists often begin their studies with certain guiding empirical interests to study” (p. 16). That is, they begin with “points of departure” (p.17) from observations, experiences, or impressions to “form interview questions.” I applied this approach to design data collection protocols; my “points of departure” had emerged from previous pilot studies, informal conversations with faculty and staff from other private schools, and from research based on information gleaned in my literature review. Of particular interest were the following issues: adolescent health (sleep, nutrition, and emotional/social concerns), participation in extracurricular activities, the completion of academic responsibilities, parent involvement, and school and teacher awareness of commuting students’ needs.

Questions designed to explore the car experience also surfaced from the initial pilot studies and these examined: the environment in the car during commutes, and the interactions between the parents and children during the confining ride.

Queries continued to evolve as the initial interviews were conducted. During this time, I asked questions about the data to learn what kinds of information were still needed; I was identifying the gaps. The additional questions were then pursued in the second round of follow up conversations. This entire process was to collect rich, detailed data. Charmaz (2006) says in this approach, “We do not force preconceived ideas and theories directly upon our data. Rather, we follow leads that we *define* in the data, or design another way of collecting data to pursue our initial interests” (p. 17).

Because the inquiry of this research was shaped by the information shared by the commuters themselves, this study was also akin to fourth generation evaluation, which is a “constructivist inquiry paradigm” (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 50) Fourth generation evaluation was the second research design that was applied to this study.

In the past, first generation researchers had planned studies from a perspective of measurement and testing to gain knowledge (p. 22). To this was later added the second generation evaluator’s role of description, or formative evaluation (p. 28). Later the third generation evaluator was expected to objectively judge, whether or not the evaluator was comfortable with this task (p. 30). More recently, researchers have focused their studies on the participants themselves; the issues and concerns of the stakeholders drive the investigation (p. 50). In this way the study was developed as a response to those most directly involved, the stakeholders. It was also a constructivist approach because reality was produced by the participant and researcher, and the findings were acknowledged as a

collaborative effort. This “fourth generation evaluation” (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 50) approach underpinned my efforts to unfold the participants’ narratives as the data were collected.

I interviewed each of the ten students individually; parents were not present. I interviewed each parent separately, without the presence of the child. The interviews took place twice during the school year. The student interviews occurred in the privacy of a conference room in the school office on the middle school campus. These sessions were conducted before school at 7:00-7:50 a.m. or after school from 3:00-4:00 p.m. Parent interviews were situated in an empty office or classroom at the high school campus. The appointments were scheduled to accommodate the working day of the adults.

Using an interview guide (Patton, 2002, p. 343) I asked prepared questions for the interview. The same basic queries were posed to of all student participants while another similar set was used with parents. During the interview time of about one hour, I presented the questions, but also had the freedom to explore responses with follow up questions. All interviews were taped, which allowed for systematic documentation of the narratives. The first interviews of parents and students occurred in October/November 2009, using the interview questions found in Appendix D.

A follow up second round interview was scheduled at the end of the first semester, in January/February 2010. This interview was used to explore themes that emerged from the first interview to ask for elaboration, clarification, and to open, on occasion, new lines of questioning (Appendix D). As part of the constructivist paradigm, I took part in the making of meaning along with my participants by the questions I

designed. I was the tool used by my volunteers to relay their views of life. Stufflebeam (2001) states: “Evaluator and stakeholders together identify the questions to be addressed” (p. 72). More specifically, the study used as its focus “the claims, concerns, and issues of stakeholders ...as organizational foci (the basis for determining what information is needed)” (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 50).

Another reason for the second round interview besides acquiring more data was to broaden the understanding of the commuting experience beyond a single period of time in the school year. What if the commuting experience and/or commuters’ perceptions of it were to change? Basing the findings on only one interview during one time period could have yielded a biased result. Interviewing at two different times of year reduced the likelihood of bias and strengthened the findings.

As the primary investigator, I conducted all interviews myself using a digital recorder. During the interviews, I jotted down some brief field notes and more at the conclusion of each interview. I typed these notes and kept them with the interview. The notes included observations about the participant, how the responses were made, non-verbal gestures or facial expressions, and some reflections on what was shared.

I copied all interview tapes for back up purposes and stored them in a secure location along with an original, untouched tape of raw data. I used a copy of each tape as the working file for analysis. I backed these up too as various stages of analysis were completed.

Blogs

For five consecutive days in November 2009, after the completion of the first round interviews, students wrote brief blog messages before school started, during mid-

morning recess, lunch recess, and after school. These on-the-spot check-ins provided spontaneous data about how commuting students coped throughout the school day. The blog check-ins were open-ended. The students related what they were doing, how they were feeling, if they ate, what they ate, how their day was going, or whatever else they wished to share at the time. Each student was recording a bit of their reality for that moment. The blogs were really “quickwrites” to borrow a phrase from Samaras and Freese (2006). As modeled in their text *Self-Study of Teaching Practices* (2006), these brief pieces were simply, unedited reflections, written on the spur of the moment. From the combination of the interviews and the student blogs, a fuller, richer picture of the commuting culture emerged. Blogging was also a means of triangulation with data from the interviews of students and parents.

The various messages were printed and kept as data for analysis. I monitored the site daily during the five days of blogging and responded to the messages written by the students. Students were encouraged to log onto the site at least four times a day (more if they wished), and provide brief glimpses of their daily routines both in and outside of school. They were asked what they were experiencing in their classes, what physical or health concerns they had, and how well they were able to fulfill academic tasks (Appendix F).

Technology had a place of high importance in the lives of adolescents. Not only are today’s teens spending considerable time on the computer, but they also are developing a savvy in using it to accomplish their various needs. In particular, youngsters from middle class homes have used the computer for networking with friends

and recreational purposes (Blummer, 2008), sorting out friendships and relationships, socializing (Bradley, 2005), and establishing personal profiles (Lenhart et al., 2007).

Before selecting blogging as the format to collect data, I researched several other social network forums. I spoke with a technology specialist at the university, who gave me a run down on the pros and cons of the various ways students could communicate with me. She mentioned that Twittering, although popular, was not highly secure because anyone could access the site and track a person's routine or daily whereabouts. This would be of major concern if my students, who were minors, used Twittering. Facebook, another popular venue, did not always have a positive reputation with adults, and it might have proven difficult to obtain parent consent to allow their adolescents on this site. Ning sites could not be accessed by phone, and the sites were not a venue for live updates. Blogging, it was concluded, would work the best if students logged on and wrote every day.

Online blogging has been defined as the voluntary sharing of personal information, which includes "personal thoughts, feelings, beliefs, activities" (Williams & Merten, 2008, p. 3). According to the PEW Internet and American Life Project (2007) researchers have found that 28% of teens who go online engage in blogging (p. 8) while 32% of teens who are on the internet daily maintain a blog site (p. 9). Adolescents utilized blogs to express the everyday occurrences in their lives while having control over how open or restricted their reading audience was (Subrahmarnyam & Greenfield, 2008). This documentation of their lives online had the advantage of accessibility of the various messages at any time from anywhere, and the online conversation could be printed and stored for future reading or examination (Williams & Merten, 2008).

Because of the engaging nature of online journaling, rather than pen and paper journaling, student participants of this study were asked to keep blogs to document their day both in and outside of school. The purpose of these digitally written documents was to provide information about what could not be directly observed by the researcher: what went on in the private settings of the car, home, and classroom. One of the advantages of communicating via a blog was that the site could be made private. A restricted, school sponsored moodle site was created for the purpose of collecting data from the ten study participants.

Before the blogging began, I brought students together in the school's computer lab and taught them how to log on and send messages. I had also given them instructions on netiquette (Appendix G) as far as appropriateness in their messages, and emphasized the need to disallow peers, outside of the study, to access the blog site. During the week prior to the official start of the blogging, I asked students to do a practice or "test" blog to be sure that they knew how to send their messages, and that I could successfully receive them.

Classroom computers, particularly in one eighth grade homeroom, were available to the students during the day; teachers were made aware that the students were blogging on moodle. To ascertain that the site remained restricted, students were not given the password. In this way, it could not be shared with peers. Parents would not have access to the site so that students could freely communicate using the blogs. The adults were made aware that blogging would be a part of the study before consent forms were signed. "Autonomy and independence" (Bradley, 2005, p. 62) from parents were reasons why

adolescents enjoyed using the internet; students appreciated that confidentiality would be maintained.

Teacher/Counselor Interviews

Another way of gathering data in qualitative studies is by observation. In this study, five teachers and two counselors were asked to give their perceptions of commuting students, in general, via interviews (Appendix D). That is, in their every day interaction with all eighth graders, did these teachers and counselors see behaviors that were linked to students who commute? For example, in the early morning hours, were students eating breakfast, and were these students commuters? Did any students have difficulty with completing homework and were these commuters who came home late and did not have time to finish assignments? Were students sleepy in class due to going to bed late and getting up early because of travel time? Were commuting students working during lunch recess to complete homework that was just assigned because they knew how to manage time?

The teachers who were invited to participate in the study had direct contact with commuting students almost daily. They taught core or non-core subjects, served as homeroom teachers, advisors, and sometimes met with these students for more than one content area each day. At least once a month, for September and October, the teachers and counselors received an e-mail asking for their written observations. Only one teacher responded to these inquiries in a brief, single email that simply acknowledged receipt of the inquiry and to say that there was no information to share. Because teachers did not seem inclined to respond by email, a formal set of questions was asked during face to face interviews. This formal set of questions (Appendix D) was directed to the teachers

and counselors once during the school year during November-December 2009, between the first and second round of student interviews.

Transcribing

Using a social science approach, this study attempted to present all that could be learned from participants in their particular situation. Weiss (1994) has termed this approach an “issue-focused analysis” (p. 153). In order to fully appreciate the experiences of commuting students and their families, the participants, provided thick description, that is, data detailed and rich. This abundance of data was examined, as the information was gathered. At the conclusion of the data collection, I amassed the stories from ten students and their parents which yielded a wealth of information through which much was learned.

As each interview was completed, the digital recording was transferred to my computer. Using the free software, *Express Scribe*, I downloaded the interview on my desk top and played each file. An essential feature of this software was the ability to mark the conversation with play back numbers. If I wanted to hear a section of the recording again, I could rewind or fast forward, finding the excerpt using the numbers that run continuously during the recording.

In tandem with *Express Scribe* and its tape recorder features, I purchased the *Dragon Naturally Speaking* transcription software. This software worked on voice recognition. I had several training sessions with the software to increase accuracy before transcribing the actual data. Essentially the transcribing process worked this way: I listened to a brief sentence or two of the recorded interview via a headset, then repeated what I heard into my microphone. Voice activated, the *Dragon* software automatically

typed what I had spoken into a Word document. In this way, I did not have to key board the transcriptions. Regularly during the transcribing sessions, I posted the play back number as a handy reference, so that I could re-locate any particular quote on the tape. While transcribing, I also had to verbally add punctuation (periods, commas, colons for example) realizing that as I did so, their placement would have an effect on the re-reading and meaning of the participant responses. As miscues appeared on the screen, I corrected them right away.

Once the transcriptions were completed, I listened to the interviews a second time. I edited for accuracy. I tried to catch errors due to:

- a. Not hearing of the participants' voices precisely, especially when the participants did not speak clearly or loudly.
- b. Trying to decipher what was said when outside noises interfered with the recording.
- c. Errors when repeating what I had heard from the tape. I may have spoken correctly, but the *Dragon* software mistyped what was said.
- d. Errors in homonyms, for example ("their" for "there"), although the software did have a sense of "usage" and for the most part put in the correct version of the word given the context of the sentence.
- e. As fully as possible, making sure that added punctuation marks captured not only what was said but how it was said, so that the participant's meaning was accurately portrayed.
- f. Making sure of accuracy in the insertion of pauses, laughter, hesitations, or moments of "thinking".

At the completion of this second time through the interviews, I inserted line numbers, which enabled me to locate quotes that I used in the analysis. The line numbers and the play back numbers kept the interview information organized and retrievable.

The edited version of the transcriptions was sent home to the participants for member checking (Appendix E). The parents, students, and teachers were asked to review the transcripts for correctness. They were invited to fix errors and make deletions or additions – none did. This strategy, also called “member validation,” (Cherry, 2000, p. 65) was an important step to invite participant voice, to ensure that the collected data were sound and to lend credibility to the study.

I then went through the interviews a third time to compile the responses. For example, all ten students’ answers to one particular question were assembled. In this way they could be reviewed as a group. This compilation included the playback numbers and line numbers, just in case I wanted to hear the original recordings again.

By now I had journeyed through all the data three times and was becoming acquainted with what the participants had shared. I was “immersing” (Hatch, 2002, p. 181) myself in the data, through “prolonged engagement” (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 237), and in doing so, I found places where I needed to ask for clarification or additional information. Rather than meet for a third interview, I sent my questions via e-mail and I received responses that way.

Data Analysis

Weiss (1994) has suggested that the process of analysis be done immediately following an interview by asking oneself “what am I seeing instances of, what I am learning about,” (p. 155). This was how the rudimentary study of the data began.

Preliminary analysis was initiated during the time that the interviews were being conducted. While listening to the participants, I was keenly attentive to what was being shared. As their responses were given, I picked up on ideas that may have needed more follow up during the second round interviews. I made note of them and referred to these notes when I constructed the second set of interview questions.

Further, I wrote about some of the information that was shared, reflecting, as “food for thought.” I was intrigued with the wording or phrasing that the participants used, especially if several adults and students used the same or similar vocabulary to describe the same phenomenon. I was forced to consider aspects about commuting that I had not thought about exploring. This initial analysis was a modified strategy suggested by Cherry (2000), in an analytic approach “the process of constant comparisons” (p. 62) because I was comparing what each participant said to previous responses to the same questions. Such comparisons fueled my next steps to gathering data as well as initiated first steps of analysis.

Calling upon the approach used by grounded theorists, Charmaz (2006) also speaks of using “comparative methods” (p. 54). This strategy of analysis, as explained by Charmaz includes not only looking for similarities, but also differences, when comparing data from interviews. The comparisons involved a “study of incidents” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 53) scenarios, anecdotes, and snippets of conversation “within the same interview and... statements and incidents in different interviews” (p. 54). A close reading of the interviews led me to see information in novel ways. I noticed and compared the particular language used by the participants, which Charmaz (2006) called *in vivo* (p. 55). The entire comparative procedure was “emergent,” (p. 59) and “open

ended,” (p. 178). It was “constructive” (p. 178) as well because what came to the foreground was determined by my own values and prior experiences.

Patton (2002) has suggested that data analysis be guided by the initial research questions posed before the study commences and the later insights that emerge during the collection of data. The process of analysis included scrutinizing the text for recurring words or themes. Called “content analysis” by Patton, (2002, p. 453) it was best applied to “interview transcripts, diaries, or other documents” (Patton, 2002, p. 453). The search for “patterns” (Patton, 2002, p. 235) was an attempt to make sense of large amounts of data that were seemingly casual and unrelated. For this study, it was a way of organizing the ideas that were flowing out of the data.

In combination with Patton’s approach, I also used “bracketing” (Hatch, 2002, p. 86-87) as a way of looking at something in the data and making it come to the foreground, but not necessarily interpreting. Bracketing was also useful to note and separate the researcher’s own values and experiences, first impressions, reactions, and reflections (Hatch, 2002, p. 86). As I re-read the compiled responses, I used a pen and bracketed key words, repeating phrases, or eye catching vocabulary in each response, then surveyed all the bracketed expressions in this one group of responses. I looked for repetitions and possible themes that were emerging, jotted initial thoughts, and noted them for further study.

From studying the concrete data, I began to see patterns of common concerns or topics of conversation. These were organized by “issues,” a technique suggested by Patton (2002, p. 439). In this study these might be adolescent needs, homework, parent involvement, for example. Each of these may be further subdivided. For example, in

keeping with the data, adolescent needs were sub-categorized into sleep, nutrition, physical activity, and socialization. The car ride was discussed by looking at activities that take place in the car, topics of conversation, and how the car was equipped for the long rides. Patton's strategy became the way that the overarching research questions for this study were broken down to into smaller inquiries. Thus, compilation of all the participant responses to the same sub-questions facilitated the finding of patterns which would eventually lead to a construct that would reasonably answer the research question.

Overall, it was an inductive process, in which specific evidence gave rise to understanding the bigger picture. Weiss (1994) termed this process "coding" (p. 154), in which the data provided by the participant is linked to the final overarching concepts in the final report. Charmaz (2006) described this phase of analysis by suggesting that the researcher "...begin focused coding to synthesize and explain larger segments of data....Focused coding requires decisions about which initial codes make the most analytic sense to categorize your data incisively and completely" (p. 57).

This echoes the constructivist paradigm and the collaborative production of knowledge: I review the hard data provided by the participants, but I "decide" how the data is "categorized." Crucial to this step is to ensure that the categories are accurate to the participants' stories. To do this, I was guided by the concepts of "fit" and "relevance" from grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006).

According to Charmaz (2006, p. 54) "fit" referred to how well the codes and categories aligned with the realities of the participants. "Relevance" was the interpretation of what was occurring. It was a gradual process of moving from the concrete (data) to understanding the significance of the data. Cresswell (2003) defined

grounded theory this way: “the researcher attempts to derive a general, abstract theory of a process, action, or interaction grounded in the views of participants in a study” (p. 4). Thus, I did not look for a particular pre-conceived truth, I allowed it to emerge so that it “fit” the realities of those telling the story.

Credibility

Under the umbrella of credibility, the researcher must provide evidence that what was done, how it was done, and why it was done were all sound. As the primary researcher, I chose different paths to establish credibility. Merriam (1998) and Patton (2002) both spoke of triangulation. Merriam defined triangulation as “using multiple investigators, multiple sources of data, or multiple methods to confirm the emerging findings” (p. 204). In this way, internal validity, could be substantiated. That is, by looking at the same concept from multiple perspectives, the researcher could determine if her findings aligned with reality. True to the constructivist paradigm, as I worked with the data, changes inevitably occurred. Triangulation helped to alert me to these variations in constructions while I was engaged in making meaning. Patton (2002) likens triangulation to an analysis by comparison. “Areas of convergence increase confidence in the findings. Areas of divergence opened windows to a better understanding of the multifaceted, complex nature of a phenomenon” (p. 558). In my own case, I used student interviews, parent interviews, student blogs, and teacher interviews to find those points of divergence and convergence.

Member checking was another way I instilled credibility as it gave participants the opportunity to provide feedback to the researcher: were the transcriptions and reporting reasonable (Merriam, 1998)? Guba and Lincoln (1989) have described member

checking as the most important step to establish credibility. Besides giving participants a chance to edit, it was also a way to test if the constructed meanings represented their realities. Member checking, according to Guba and Lincoln (1989), begins with a confirmation of the data. This to me was crucial because if the original data from my interviews were not correct, my later analysis could be totally wrong.

Lastly, I sought credibility in my methods by involving an outside peer to review my work. Merriam (1998) has called this “peer examination” (p. 204); Guba and Lincoln (1989, p. 237) and Carspecken (1996, p. 89) term it “peer debriefing.” I simply invited a colleague who was not involved in the study to review my writing. This peer also entered into conversation with me – posing questions that I had not thought of, or making inquiries about the direction of my work. Having a peer to “bounce” ideas on, and to provide feedback, was invaluable.

Limitations Related to Methods

Limitations of the study stemmed from the study’s sole focus on commuting of students in their own family cars at one school. Participants did not include commuting students who caught the bus to and from school or who car pooled with other families and peers. The dynamics of what occurred during these other types of commutes were not the same as what happened for a student who rode to school in his own family car. Other limitations emerged from the inability of the researcher to observe first-hand the families’ home life before and after the commutes, as well as during the car rides. Data from these unobservable periods were dependent upon varied formats of self-reporting by the participants (for example, interviews and blogs).

Most importantly, in this study, three components that must be considered in order to assess the strength of the study's findings have limitations which can affect the outcome. These limitations are the researcher, the methods of data collection, and the analysis of the data. Each will be discussed separately.

The Researcher's Positionality

As the researcher who designed the study, collected the data, and analyzed it, I was responsible for what was found; therefore, I acknowledge my own stance, values, preconceptions and past experiences with this topic, the school, and the participants. In other words, my positionality has a bearing on this study's findings and analysis.

Emic versus etic.

The challenge is to combine participation and observation so as to become capable of understanding the setting as an insider while describing it to and for outsiders. – Patton, 2002, p. 268

Because I did not participate in the commuting experience with my students and their families, I was resigned to the role of an etic or outside position. From this vantage point, I viewed the commuting participants through my own the lens as a middle school educator, who had taught at Ascension School for thirty years. I brought to the study some preconceptions. First were the values promoted by the middle school philosophy that called for adolescent developmental awareness and the need to address adolescent needs. Second, I spoke the language of a classroom teacher with academic expectations, and I saw my own school as part of the larger national education system with its own agenda. Third, I had taught eight of the ten students participating in the study during their seventh grade year, met their parents, and associated with them on a professional

level. It was not until the students became eighth graders that they became official participants of this study.

Reflexivity.

...to what extent the researcher's interests, positions, and assumptions influenced inquiry – Charmaz, 2006, p. 188

In an exercise of reflexivity, or self-reflection, I made an attempt to understand who I was so I could understand how my values and past experiences affected my research. I admit that the subject of this research emerged from both professional as well as personal sources. As a teacher, I encountered commuting seventh graders, some were seasoned while others were first timers who faced lengthy road times. I was curious. Did commutes make a difference in how students performed in school? If commuting was affecting students, especially new ones, should not the school put something in place to help them? This is where my middle school/teacher values started to emerge.

The second source for this study was my own commuting experiences, which averaged about thirty minutes of road time daily with my two children. I had never thought of myself as a commuter until one of the parents in the study brought it to my attention. Now that I was aware of my previous experience with commutes, I had to be careful not to color the realities of my participants with mine. Although I could empathize with parents, who were on the road, because we shared a common experience, I understood that I should not expect other parents to solve commuting problems, the way I did. I respected their strategies because these methods worked for *them* – whether or not they may have worked for me. I took the precaution not to enter into personal

conversation, give tips or suggestions, and most of all, act judgmental – which was a positionality issue that comes from who I am.

Power.

As a researcher conducting research in my own school and with my own students, there were several power positions that I held. Any exertion of power on my part, any position of dominance, negated the purpose of qualitative research: “to understand informants in their own terms to the extent that this is possible” (Gilgun, 2006, p. 440). The several roles that I came to peace with are presented in the following discussion.

I was a long time employee of Ascension School, with the advantage of seeing the evolution of student populations over the course of thirty years. When I first began teaching, it seemed that very few students commuted. At the time of this study, this was not the case where nearly half of the seventh grade class commuted thirty minutes or more by bus, family car, or car pool. My position was one of humility and appreciation that I had been given permission to conduct this study on my own campus. In doing so, I was careful to not jeopardize the school’s good reputation by divulging “insider’s knowledge” to participants or general readers of the study, that could be misinterpreted when used out of context.

My role as a former middle school teacher, (making the change to the high school campus just two years ago), was a bit trickier. There were pros and cons to this position. The pro was that I had experienced the change of our seventh and eighth grade from a junior high school to a middle school. This transformation strengthened my own knowledge, honing my sensitivity and sense of advocacy to the age group that I studied. However, working with my former seventh graders with the possibility of meeting them

again as tenth graders was a concern. To avoid being in a position of power, I conducted all interviews, blogs, and follow-up questions with students and their parents while the participants were in eighth grade and ninth grade so as to complete the study before I encountered the students again as sophomores. Thus, I tried to effectively remove myself from a position of power as the instructor and academic evaluator of the participants.

Further, out of respect for my colleagues, who were professional educators, I could not pass value judgments on their classroom practices, curriculum, or student relationships. Having known and worked with several of them for many years, I did not want to jeopardize professional collegiality or friendships.

Lastly, I understood that I was highly responsible for the data I collected. My records, transcripts, and notes were not carelessly “thrown on the table.” Everything was treated with respect; therefore, I took care to lock away private files of information. I did not casually discuss what I had learned with others in the faculty room. I knew that I was entrusted with snapshots of people’s lives. This alone put me in a position of power and assigned my participants to a station of vulnerability. Once the study concluded, all texts generated were destroyed, digital recordings erased. A summary of the findings was shared with the participants. It was their “truth” after all, and I acknowledged that ownership.

Methods of Data Collection

“Facts” and “values” are interdependent. “Facts” have no meaning except within some value framework; they are value laden. There can be no separate observational and valuational languages.

– Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 105

The second area of limitation came from the way data were gathered and examined. Because I chose not to immerse myself in the private lives of the participants both on and off the road, I elected to gather information via interviews and blogs with an occasional e-mail for clarification. This put an increased dependency on language to tell the story.

Language limitations.

I understood that I looked at my participants and what they had to say through a lens called “my values” and those values can seep in through language. Values were necessarily incorporated in the way I worded the interview questions, conversed with my participants, and in the choices of the words that recorded my findings. When I was thinking it through, it was in language, so even while conceptualizing the study’s design, purpose, or rationale, I had already made value choices. Being a word smith (an English teacher value), I was very conscious of nuances of meanings; so it was crucial that the truths related to me by my participants were set down using words that reflected their values, not mine. I often resorted to a thesaurus to find more closely the word that would most appropriately present the realities of the participants. Yet because I was the medium in making conscious word choices to tell their story faithfully, I was still enmeshed in the process of co-constructing reality.

Bishop (2005) discussed a conflicting look at language or discourse. On one side were the exact words of the participants, which were the most accurate. On the other side, was the language of the researcher who had “editorial control, and ownership by introducing research coding and analysis” (p. 126). To address this concern, as much as possible, I allowed the commuting story to be told in the words of the participants

themselves and faithfully set down evidence by using direct quotes from interview transcripts.

However, it must be remembered that the recording of the interviews, the clarity of the playbacks, the accuracy of the ensuing transcripts were all subject to error. To minimize mistakes in mishearing vocalization in digital tape recordings or mis-typing the transcripts, I reviewed each taped version twice before returning the transcripts to the participants who were asked to check them for anything amiss, and to make changes, additions, clarifications, or deletions.

Chase (2005) is a key narrative researcher who has helped me to understand my task of interpreting interview data. Instead of viewing my participant as simply a willing volunteer who answered questions, I had to shift my perspective to see this person as a narrator who used her own voice to tell me about her realities through story. The interviewee did not tell me what I want to know in (answering questions,) but shared with me what *she* wanted me to know about her life. It was my role to “invite” the stories (p. 661) and this “requires knowing what is ‘story worthy’ in the narrator’s social setting” (p. 661). This went back to something I had discussed earlier, that the questions I asked affected the construction of the participant’s realities.

Blogs and e-mail.

The blogs proved to be a secondary source of data. At times the typed messages were detailed and informative, and often very brief. The students were encouraged to blog four times a day to record a sense of their in school life as influenced by the commute and activities that went on at home.

On occasion, I e-mailed students and parents to clarify a response, to elaborate on their discussion, or to answer a question that was inadvertently missed during the interview. The e-mails were printed and collected in a binder for further review. Digital copies of the e-mails were filed in a separate folder on the computer, and were deleted once the study was complete. I used these e-mails to achieve more accuracy in understanding the participants' interviews.

Methods of Data Analysis

Clearly the issue of what reality is, is very much up for grabs...

– Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 93

In this phase of the study, I describe the credibility and rigor of the findings and conclusions that I drew. Under the canopy of credibility, the findings of this study were limited to the ten commuting families from one small, private school. It must be remembered that truth is relevant to the time, place, contextual situation, and individuals involved in constructing it. However, in the findings, rich, thick descriptions are provided “so that readers will be able to determine how closely their situations match the research situation, and hence, whether findings can be transferred” (Merriam, 1998, p. 211). From this perspective, other concerns of credibility are discussed below.

Credibility of “fit.”

Merriam (1998) discussed ethics during analysis of the data. This is a reminder that I was the filter of the data, and I had to be aware of my own biases while reading the stories of my participants. She has written “Deciding what is important – what should or should not be attended to when collecting and analyzing data – is almost always up to the investigator” (p. 216). My biases could not be “swept under the carpet” and forgotten.

On the contrary, the combination of my biases and the data from the participants created the construct of the commuting life style.

Once all ten responses were before me, I read them again for repeating words, phrases, or ideas that seemed to emerge from the voices of participants. These I gathered and furthered studied until a common theme emerged. Patton (2002, p. 559) has listed several different types of triangulation; two mentioned were relevant to this study. The first was “checking the consistency of what people say about the same thing over time” (p. 559). In this study, I could compare data from parents’ first and second round interviews to see if there were changes in attitudes towards parent commitment to commuting as the school year progressed, for example.

A second type of triangulation is “...comparing perspectives of people from different points of view, for example, in an evaluation, triangulating staff views, client views, funder views, and views expressed by people outside the program” (Patton, 2002, p. 559). In this study on commuting, using triangulation, I could verify emerging patterns because the themes were present in at least three sources: student interviews, parent interviews, and spontaneous blogs or teacher observations. For example, parents mentioned their concerns about adequate sleep. Students also mentioned the need for sleep and how they tried to use the commute itself to make up for the loss. Later, in blog entries, students mentioned being tired or sleepy during class. Thus, the lack of sleep was a valid concern for commuters as evidenced from different data sources or perspectives.

A third possible way to use triangulation was to compare how all ten parents or students responded to a particular interview question. When the responses of any particular query were compiled, they could be studied as a group. Was there a similarity

among the ten parents in how they responded? For example, how involved were the parents in their children's academic lives and what kinds of involvement did these parents pursue?

Besides verification using triangulation, I also considered my role in co-constructing the realities of the participants. There were many places where this collaborative effort took place. I had to be constantly aware of my own role in this joint effort and not dominate with my own values and judgments when I relayed the findings or drew conclusions. Discussion of this aspect of making meaning follows below.

The narrative tradition.

This qualitative study was an exploration of shared stories by the participants and ended in re-telling these accounts to a new audience. Riessman (2002) reminded me that, in this process, the stories alter. She described four stages of storytelling. First there was "attending" (p. 222). In this phase I listened to my participants as they told their stories during the interview. Already I noted certain phrases, or ideas that I wanted to pursue over others. When I asked for clarification or elaboration, I was influencing how the story would be told and already co-constructing the participant's reality. Riessman explained my actions this way: "By attending, I make certain phenomena meaningful... There is choice in what I notice, a selection from the totality of the unreflected on, the primary experience... I actively construct reality in new ways at this first level of representation, to myself, by thinking" (p. 222).

The next step was "transcribing" (p. 224). The way I opted to write down the words of my participants' was, once again, my choice, as I dictated using the *Dragon Naturally Speaking* software. Which pauses did I ignore? Did I note the laughter? How

could I capture hesitancy using text or punctuation? In making these choices, I was once again influencing the shape of the narrator's story. Riessman (2002) made me realize that I had to review those tapes again, checking the pauses, silences, laughter that I may have initially missed or misinterpreted. Even though I did the transcriptions verbatim, "There is no one, true representation of spoken language" (p. 225).

A third consideration was the step of "analyzing" (p. 226). Whereas the words belonged to the participant, the codes and themes were mine. This again constructed the reality and gives the stories meaning. "The challenge is to identify similarities across the moments into an aggregate, a summation" (p. 226). To double check that my codes and themes truly emerged from the responses of the participants, I re-read and re-viewed the actual transcriptions over again. As much as possible, I tried to let the actual words of the participants lead to the codes and themes rather than my personal value laden perceptions. Then I looked for a consensus.

The last level considered was "reading" (p. 227). The words I chose, the grammatical rules employed, the punctuation – all have a part in the reader's understanding of the study. Just as I brought my own values and prior knowledge to bear on the interviews when I first heard them, so too do readers bring their perspectives and experiences with them when they read my text. How will they come to understand the constructed reality?

Conclusion

In Chapter 3 I explained the study's design, introduced the participants, described how the data were collected, and the way it was analyzed. Most importantly, I set forth the limitations of this study by examining the many areas in which error could occur, or

how positionality and language could affect the findings. It is my hope that this candid discussion will serve as a backdrop to the findings presented in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

This study explored commuting to school in the family car. The purpose was to better understand the experience and influence of commuting on students and their families. Student and parent perceptions of what occurred and how it influenced schooling were shared in the voices of the participants themselves. These findings were based on data gathered from one hour initial interviews of each student and parent participant, and follow up interviews of each student and parent participant. Once the two interviews were completed, an occasional e-mail to either the parent or student to request clarification or additional information was sometimes used. These e-mails were sent with the prior permission of the participants that communication might continue as needed. Secondary data sources were teacher interviews, conducted once for an hour and student blogs which were collected for five consecutive school days. In reporting the findings, all names were changed to maintain confidentiality. The researcher used brackets ([]) to delineate follow-up questions asked during the interview conversation to gain further information or to add information to clarify what the participant shared.

In this chapter, the relating of the findings begins with the parent conversations on their decision to commute. Two prevalent reasons emerged: home ownership and private school enrollment. Parents also gave their reasons why bussing their children to school was not preferred over driving to school in the family car. This initial discussion will serve as a backdrop for the rest of the chapter, in which the research questions will be addressed: how parents and students perceived the commuting experience; the way

commuting families adapted; the influence of commuting on home life; and how commuting affected school life from the viewpoints of students, parents, teachers, and the school itself.

Why Parents Opted to Commute

This section provides a discussion of why parents opted to commute. It focuses primarily on three topics: bussing, home ownership, and education. Although they were not directly linked to one of the original research questions, these themes began to surface during the first interviews, and parents and students were asked to elaborate on them during the follow up interviews. The responses provided by the participants created a lens through which the commuting experience, as told by adults and students could later be viewed.

Bussing

Despite the lengthy drive to school, all ten families opted to commute in the family car rather than have their children bus to school. Neither public bus transportation nor making arrangements with a private bus company were seen as a viable way for their adolescents to be conveyed to and from school. Concerns that influenced some parents' decision not to bus their child included scheduling and safety.

First, several parents mentioned that the inflexible regular bus schedules did not fit with the many after school activities in which their adolescent children were involved. Students often practiced off campus or had athletic meets at different sites; this was prohibitive to catching a bus from a specified bus pick up point at a designated hour. Tiffany's mom said: "with the conflicting schedules and times, she [Tiffany] certainly would not be able to catch the bus home because she has activities."

Tiffany's mom also brought up another consideration:

If they [her daughters] caught the regular city bus, they probably have to get up earlier to make sure they got on the bus... I am sure it is an express bus, but they have to just get up earlier.

This earlier wake-up call meant less sleep for her girls, which may make it even more difficult to get them out of bed. From another parent's perspective, Harry's dad added the complexity of driving his son to the bus stop to make the boarding time. He says, "You either have to drop him off at Kapolei at 6:30 [a.m.] or Waipahu at 6:30 [a.m.]. So I cannot make that time, dropping him off at that time."

Secondly, bussing to school entailed safety risks. These risks included not only the concern that their child had to catch the bus, unsupervised, in the very early morning hours or later in the evening after sports practices had concluded, but also the risk of exposure to possible violent activities, as Isaac's dad reported:

I used to ride as a security when I was working at another high school, to watch, to observe, because they were having problems with the kids being hijacked on the bus. Before it used to be at the bus stop, but now it is actually occurring on the bus too.

The strongest argument for driving to school, however, emerged indirectly in the course of the interviews. It was connected to nine parents who worked in town and would have to drive in daily. The remaining parent, Harry's dad, worked a job that changed sites on an irregular basis and this allowed him more flexibility to drop off and pick up his son. Although they were all aware of bussing as an option, it seemed that parents did not want to add this cost to their households, since they were going in the

same general direction as the school anyway. As a result, parents did not look into the possibility of bussing. Only one mother, Joe's mom, did inquire about cost and quoted \$250.00 one way and \$330.00 round trip for the year.

In the review of the literature, transporting their children to school by family car did not seem viable for families of rural commuters whose children were bused lengthy distances as a consequence of school consolidation. However, given the choice, were the parents in this study willing to drive to a city school if they did not work in town? All ten responded in the affirmative. Given the option, these parents chose to commute by family car. What would motivate the parents of this study to embrace the commuting life style even if they did not have to? The findings surfaced two factors that underpinned the decision to commute: home ownership and school preference.

Home Ownership

I think home ownership is probably the biggest factor because it determines whether you have to commute or not.”

– Tiffany's mom

An iconic symbol of status, economic success, and the attainment of the American Dream, home ownership was a force to be reckoned with. The parents in this study all mentioned that they were not ready to give up their current homes to avoid commuting. Even as Joe's mom spoke of the cost of commuting in time loss, she acknowledged that home ownership was keeping her from moving closer to town.

If I knew it was going to be so hard to take away so much time, so much valuable time, that I could be doing other things than driving, yeah. I mean you don't think, you know, an hour and a half is nothing, but some days it is almost two

hours getting here, and going home. And so two hours times five hours is ten hours, which is a whole day of me doing stuff, which means my Saturdays and Sundays are shot because I have to do stuff for the whole day, you know? And some things if I didn't complete, I have to do it the next day again. By that time I just want to rest....

[What's keeping you out there is home ownership?]

Yeah, basically.

During the interviews, parents spoke of affordability as a factor in home acquisition. As Isaac's parents matter-of-factly said: "Well that's, that's where we could afford to buy."

In doing so, they, and the other participants of this study fell in line with the national trend of home ownership discussed in the review of the literature: that the further home buyers were willing to drive, the feasibility of acquiring a home increased (Howlette & Overberg, 2004). The parents in this study demonstrated pride in being home owners; "it was one of our priorities," affirmed Remy's mom. She and her husband were willing to live further from the city in order to achieve this goal. But underlying the price tag was also an assumption that the *quality* of the home purchased was also an important consideration. These middle class families were able to get the most "bang for their buck" by choosing to reside further from the city, and they were not willing to "trade down" to own a home in town which cost more but provided fewer amenities. Kara's mom said:

The only way we could probably move into town is if we bought a smaller home. And I don't know if our family is willing to give that up yet. Like I said we enjoy

our home ... it is not anything huge and fancy, but each child has their own room....we are very comfortable....So that is all that the kids have known... We have never really talked about it, I mean if we had to move for financial reasons that is different. But if we just moved out of... I don't know if they will want to.... just to be in town.

In addition, parents said that living outside of town was desirable over the congestion of Honolulu life. They described their neighborhoods as wholesome for raising a family and believed they lived in a healthier environment. It was "cooler" and "not as congested," said Wendy's mom; "quiet...our neighbors are good," Tom's mom expressed; "Honolulu... more noise, more traffic throughout the day, and no night time stars," mentioned Tiffany's mom, and as Harry's father shared, his son had neighborhood kids to play with on the street, which was how he had grown up.

The students had a different point of view. Kara was the only student who solidly wanted to move closer to town because she "hates sitting in traffic" and because being out of town was "inconvenient living...so far from everything." Joe, Tom, and Tiffany wavered on the see-saw. For them a move into town was not a simple, cut and dry decision. Joe wished to move because of the desirability of living in town since "everything is closer, like malls, restaurants, school," but the family could not take the house, built by his grandfather, with them, so he would not move. For Joe, it was "a matter of pride."

Tom and Tiffany brought up the concern of not being able to associate with the friends they've made in their neighborhood or on a district sports team. Tom, for example said he "would like to live in town, closer drives and closer to [school] friends,

but in Mililani, he played baseball. Tiffany would find it hard to move “because a lot of my friends live where I live” even though “in town it's easier and better.” The reluctance to leave established peer relationships close to home was one of the primary reasons why Yvette and Remy also decidedly responded that they would not consider moving. Both girls were involved with athletic teams closer to home; Remy was in soccer while Yvette swam for Kaneohe. These four students, Tom, Tiffany, Yvette and Remy revealed how peer socialization trumped the long daily drives to school. As discussed in the literature review, friends take on greater importance during adolescence (Arnon, Shamai, & Ilatov, 2008).

The remaining students: Wendy, Pam, Harry, and Isaac simply liked where they lived and did not want to move. They were accustomed to the commute and were willing to make sacrifices. "We are very content with living in peaceful Mililani," explained Wendy, who understood that “waking early” was “necessary if I wanted to live in a beautiful town.” Over all, the majority of the students did not wish to re-locate, but unlike their parents, home ownership was not their primary motive for remaining outside the city. Since the families elected not to move to town, an alternative to avoiding the long commutes would be the choice of school. This option is the focus of the next discussion.

Education

Well I think the commuting thing, was just a byproduct of the private school decision because there really is... I mean the choices are really in town, as far as private schools, or the better ones.

– Isaac’s mom

When parents were asked what led to the decision to commute, their responses all related to school choice for their children. Of the ten parent participants, eight had attended private school themselves for some portion of their own education, three were actually alumni of Ascension School. These discoveries emerged during the interviews. However, their past history with private school education was not the sole factor that influenced their decision to send their children to private school.

The parents had engaged in causal inquiries about the schools in their local communities and formed opinions based on what they found. Isaac's parents, for example, walked by the neighborhood school and looked in the classroom windows to learn what was being taught; they also observed the children in their neighborhood. Here's what they had to say:

And so, we took him...at [school name deleted]... outside, you can see what type of work they do, because you could be reading all the things in the classrooms, that's on the walls or by the windows...public schools they put it by the windows....

Well actually we had decided prior to pre-school, that he was probably going to private school, which is why we sent him to preschool. Because I think just interacting with...you know we were lucky, we had kids who are older in the neighborhood so we could see how they were progressing as far as school went. You know, make a more informed decision as to whether we thought there was any learning going on, or enough learning I guess.

Remy's mom shared her observations about the school within minutes from where her family resided. It would have been convenient for her daughter to walk to school, but opted not to send her middle schooler there.

You know, our elementary school was really good, nice neighborhood, but now since you're going to the middle school, everybody has to go to the middle school. I mean, just even when I go walking just ...some of the kids there, I mean...is naughty.... I don't want to judge them.... but I mean I see it. ...So if my kids went to the middle school I mean it's only like an eight minute walk from our house I don't even have to drive them...it's just down the street kind of thing. So I just didn't want them to go.... from what I seen when I passed by when I used to go walking with my dog, when I seen those kids don't show any respect, I didn't want my kids to go through that. I mean, I don't know if they might get bullied, because of what I've seen, I didn't want to experience that ... I thought a lot of the stuff was not right so that's why I didn't want to go there.

Harry's dad voiced his worry about not only what might happen in his local school, but also the possible trouble his son might get into after school when no adults would be around to supervise.

I knew that peer pressure, but plus the main concern was the area that we live in. With all the so-so gangs in the neighborhood and this group of people fighting [that group of] people, the military, and you know... I just didn't want to hear it from his friends who went to the public school, knowing that there's fights every day....I want you to go to school to learn, not to end up in fights or picking up a gang, because I had no way of picking him up there... I don't want him between

two o'clock when they finish school and now [4:00 p.m.], saying, what [did] you do? Or at somebody's house acting...Doing something that wasn't supposed to be done.

Other ways that parents looked into private schools was via on-line research, and talking to colleagues or relatives who sent their children to various private schools. Strong academics and a positive learning environment emerged as the two most mentioned reasons why the adults were willing to tackle the long commute to a private school located in the city. In the area of academics, Harry's dad said, "teachers are...going to push you to learn;" Wendy's mom added that the education is "a little more advanced." Tom's mother liked that her son "would be prepared to go on to college."

According to Yvette's mom, a positive learning environment was a place where she felt "they [her children] were safe;" while Tom's mom spoke of "caring teachers... with the feeling of family;" and Kara's mom noted the "amount of attention that they [students] get, the quality of the education that they have." In the end, these parents came to the same conclusion as Isaac's parents: "We decided that the school was more important than the length of the commute."

The discussion above calls to mind the study of Bayer (2009) that in Hawai'i , there is a strong pro private school bias in the islands, though Bayer herself contests or opposes this bias. During the interviews with the parents in this current study, several parents did compare private school education with public school education. Although there was sometimes an apologetic tone or diplomacy in the wording of their

conversations, the parents clearly indicated their preference for private institutions.

Kara's mom stated, "I always believed in private schools."

Having discovered the motivations for driving long distance to a private school, the findings that describe the commuting experience itself will be reported.

Parent and Student Perceptions About the Commuting Experience

The first research question explored what commuting to school in the family car was like for eighth grade students and their families. The findings revealed a clear difference in mindset between the adults and their adolescent children. The parents' perspective of commuting might be described as a kind of "road stoicism." The word "stoicism" comes from the word "stoical" and refers to the concept of possessing the ability to "bear difficulties or discomfort without complaining" (Ehrlich, Flexner, Carruth, & Hawkins, 1980, p. 903-4). Because the parents had deliberately chosen the commuting life or "road" life, as a means of reaching goals that would benefit their children, namely a comfortable home and a private school education, they had willingly accepted the difficulties that accompanied this decision. Tom's mother said: "I mean, I guess it's our choice of school, our choice of where we live, so..." Her open ended sentence suggested that along with that choice came the responsibility and commitment of making the commuting experience a successful one, that is, doable, manageable, and with the least cost to their growing children and themselves.

Kara's mom put it this way:

When you have to do it, you just do it. Yeah, it is the mind set. Whether I had two hours sleep or eight hours sleep, you know, you gotta do it. There is no other way to do it [Laugh].

Her stoic attitude underscored how important it was to possess an unwavering mentality, to stand by the decision whether or not conditions were optimal. She displayed a hardened determination to follow through, yet maintained a sense of humor. Kara's mother continued: "It has to be worth it. I mean you know if you're doing this, I'm hoping that a person is doing this for good reason."

Through further conversation, parents revealed what that "good reason" was. A commitment of this magnitude, over the long haul of at least six years (from middle school to high school graduation), required a resolve grounded in the educational values of the parents. Each adult had a story to tell about their own education which revealed why schooling has been such a high priority for their child – no matter the cost. A brief glimpse into their past follows.

Joe's mom said:

Anyway, so his [her father's] big thing was education. That's the only way you can get out of this rat hole. Educate, educate, educate. We were very poor. We had no food, but I did go to all private schools.

As an at-risk daughter of an alcoholic mother, Joe's mom attended a small parochial elementary school and attributed the structured instructional environment imposed by nuns as the factor that brought order into her life.

Wendy's mom said:

I tried a community college but I didn't... and I had one more year left, and then I came here. I felt so bad after that... so Wendy is at a higher bracket than I was in school. [Laugh]... because I wanted her to do more than what I had... I wanted her to have more than what I had."

In her childhood days, Wendy's mom remembered attending a Catholic School in Guam and how she wanted her own daughter to grow up in a Catholic environment. She also mentioned that her mother's child rearing practice of doing homework first before going out or watching television was something she has carried over with her own daughter.

Tom's mom said:

When I graduated from high school, my father made us all work at the local cannery. He told us if we don't go to college, this is the type of job you're going to have. So I said, okay I'm going to college. [Laugh] Because I realized that I could do more than you know, put lids in a machine, and it was tiring, and it was loud, and it was dirty, and it was long hours, and it was not what I wanted to do.

Tom's mom also spoke of her own parents, who were highly involved in the academic life of their children. She reminisced:

They were always around for us for homework, for extra help, because my father was always there to help me with math. We would stay up really late, to help me understand with math, and my mom was always there for helping when we were trying to get scholarship money, and she was the one at the library looking up what we could do, what we could find. So they were very supportive of trying to get us to go to school.

Harry's dad said:

It's the job I have now...Because I work in construction so I have plenty knee problems, back problems and I don't want to put him in [a] way where, you know, you gonna make good money but then yet you gonna always have pain, and for

the rest of your life you're gonna hurt. That's how my dad was. So now I... he sees it [what] my dad goes through, and it's going to be the same with me. So I just tell them, yeah you gonna make good money, but yet you gotta do better for yourself.

Harry's father also recounted how education was emphasized in his home, when he was a youngster, via the "old school way." He described this method in the following quote. Notice that he felt that he continued what his parents did for him, without employing physical methods to make his point.

Yeah, they [his parents] pretty much did the same thing I am doing but more in a stricter way. Yeah, [chuckle] you know old school, they would whack you when you bring home an F.

Kara's mom said:

Oh... from his [husband's] parents... His parents ... They stressed.... they still do that to this day. They were talkers about how education is important, you have to do well in school, you know, that kind of thing... You know ...they say that to my own kids....not to lecture but... dinner time... it just comes up [chuckle].

As a side note, Kara's dad was a product of public school and "he would have rather have had a private education for his kids."

From her own side of the family, Kara's mom talked of wanting to give her daughter a religious education as she had had when she was going to school. She wanted to raise her children Catholic and as long as she and husband could financially afford it, they would enroll their kids in a private school.

Pam's mom said:

He [Pam's dad] knew he couldn't go to college unless he got some kind of free college or whatever because they couldn't afford it. So he did. He got an appointment to Coast Guard Academy. So that was just kind of... a lot of it was just within him. He saw what needed to be done and he did it. And the other brother went to college through BYU. But he converted to being a Mormon from being a Catholic...

[So actually Pam has, from several generations, the idea of education being important?]

Yeah.

[And you do what you have to do to get??]

Yes.

More revelations arose as Pam's mom continued the story, focusing not so much on the accomplishments of Pam's dad, but on Pam's grandfather who had also gone back to school for a college degree later in life. He was not able to attain his diploma while his five children were still young, but he did make it a point to return to school and graduate. She said, "He just valued it." Pam's mom mentioned that this value of higher education was passed on to Pam's dad, who is now a successful businessman and married to a librarian. Both parents continue to highlight a good education for their daughters, one of whom was participant commuter in this study.

Tiffany's mom said:

I think, my parents probably always assumed that we would go to college. It was just... it was just something that they assumed...

I think the idea was that if you went to college you could get a better job.

She recounted how her parents attended a local public school and did not get beyond their high school diploma, yet she and her three siblings were sent to a private school. She said:

I'm not sure, I never asked them [why parents sent children to a private school].

But we all went to private school. So when I had my kids, it was not really a question as to whether they should go to public school.

Yvette's mom said:

And he [her father] talks about...applying to Iolani [a private school in Honolulu] and getting in but not be able to afford to go. And that was his dream.... you're talking about a young, maybe 15 or 14-year-old kid, that wants to do this. You know, whose parents are not pushing him, to get into this school. It's something he did on his own. He saved enough money to take the entrance exam but still was not able to go.... and you know he got in. My grandmother was heartbroken because she knew this was what he wanted, and they couldn't afford it.... Well he went to the Air Force to get through....He took that route; that was the only route he saw, so that's what he did. And so he tells.... he talks to Andrew [grandson and Yvette's older brother] about these things and so that is what Andrew sees. You take whatever route you can, to get where you need to go. And there is not just one road.

After completing his college degree, Yvette's grandfather became a successful engineer. Yvette's mom related that even during his career, he continued to take classes because learning did not end.

Remy's mom said:

But everybody wants their kid to be better, you know, to learn from our mistakes. So I try to teach Remy my mistakes, you know what my mistakes were so that I can better her. So I'm trying to push them. That's why she's going to a private school.

In addition Remy's mom shared that she was second generation Filipino, and her father's efforts in America made an impression on her.

My father [who] was an immigrant from the Philippines said he wanted to make sure that he took care of us, you know our... my mom and the three kids. With whatever he can support us with, he would. So he gave us all whatever he could. So we would have a good job, and then, so hopefully, we pass on to our kids and everything.

Isaac's mom said:

I think [from] my parents because when I was growing up... both of my parents were college graduates. So they had always stressed it, that education was very important. And I think from the time we were young, we already knew that we would be going to college after high school. There wasn't really a question of what are you going to do after high school, like there were for a lot of my classmates back then. We knew that we were going to go to college...all my

siblings and I, knew that was the most important thing, and that you had to do well in school.

The ten vignettes attempted to capture the strength behind parents' conviction in this study to send their children to a private school. Their values, formed by their own parents, were what propelled this generation of adults to willingly accept the arduous task of driving the long distance. The parents in the study set the tone and modeled for their children how to face the daily grind of being on the road. If mom and dad could tolerate it because they believed it was the right thing to do, then the expectation was that the children would also.

In contrast, the children seemed to approach the daily drive with an adolescent temperament of "acquiescence." Here "acquiescence" may be understood as "to accept as an arrangement" (Ehrlich et al., 1980, p. 9). Commuting to school was a parental "arrangement" in which the students had limited say. As adolescents, they were still under the authority of their parents. The eighth graders did not have the means to buy their own homes, independently pay rent, or even make financial contributions to the mortgages paid by their parents. In this sense, the youngsters simply had to accept where their parents chose for the family to live.

Nor did the adolescents have a great deal to say about their education. Parents in the study allowed their children a limited choice -- which private school they would like to attend -- but not input on whether they could select a private school in town or a public neighborhood school just down the block from where they lived. These children visited various private school open houses and the final decision rested with the student feeling comfortable in the school environment and financial feasibility. Generally the "choice of

school” was usually given to students who were older, entering upper elementary or middle school grades, for example, as was the case for Joe.

I [mom] asked him, which one he wanted want to go to. He can go to [school A], you're not going to [School B] or [School C]. [School A], [School D], or Ascension. Which one do you want? And he started thinking, thinking, thinking... But honestly, the adult has all the decision making...but I had to ask him because I didn't want him to be unhappy. Yeah? And he was okay with it.

Other students began their private school education when they were four or five years old, reducing even further the possibility of the child’s input in school choice.

Pam’s mother relayed this: “I guess from preschool time we started them [daughters] off there, and stayed in the private school line.” Thus for the students in the study, commuting began as an “arrangement,” as a consequence of having to live as a dependent of their parents and therefore to abide by their parent’s direction. Any further discussion of how parents and their children perceived the commuting experience can be viewed within the backdrop of these two overarching themes: parental road stoicism and adolescent acquiescence. The themes will be threaded throughout the discussions as parents and students spoke of their on the road experiences.

Commuting Described by Participants

When the participants were asked to encapsulate the entire commuting experience in a single word, they gave the responses listed on Table 5.

Reviewing the information from Table 5, only four parents saw the commute in a similar way as their child: Wendy’s “busy” schedule was “over-whelming” for her mother; Kara’s term of “crazy” was akin to her mother’s word “hectic;” both Tiffany and

her mother spoke of the experience as “tiring” or “exhausting;” and Remy’s “stressful” commutes linked with her mother’s choice of “chaotic.” Because there seemed to be only four parent-child matches, this suggested that parents and their children did not necessarily experience commuting the same way.

Table 5

Single Word Descriptors of Commuting Experience

Student	Descriptive Word	Parent	Descriptive Name
1. Joe	patience	Joe’s Mom	spazzing
2. Wendy	busy	Wendy’s Mom	over-whelming
3. Tom	tiring	Tom’s Mom	elevator
4. Harry	exciting	Harry’s Dad	frustrating
5. Kara	crazy	Kara’s Mom	hectic
6. Pam	divergent	Pam’s Mom	routine
7. Tiffany	tiring	Tiffany’s Mom	exhausting
8. Yvette	complicated	Yvette’s Mom	bonding
9. Remy	stressful	Remy’s Mom	chaotic
10. Isaac	exciting	Isaac’s Dad	time consuming

On the students’ side, six reported descriptive words that suggested the commute was busy and complex. These students commented on the many “activities” and “schedules” to keep track of (Wendy); that they “had so much things to do” and “how it changed so quickly” (Harry). Although the excitement and busy life was welcomed by some students, others found the experience “tiring,” as reported by Kara.

Because from the morning.... from the time I wake up I'm really tired already because I probably slept late from the other night, and I have to worry about my homework during the day, how much homework I have. And then my mom will usually make me pack up after school to go to the store or something before my brother's game, and then... I don't know... it's busy because I just don't know what we're going to do next.

Yvette's word "complicated" was followed by this snap shot description of her experience.

Because like me and my brother do a lot of stuff. So my parents have to go all over the place, and sometimes we don't know who's going to pick us up.... as long as they are there, we go in their car. Because sometimes like, when we have like other stuff that's not normal... we have to make all these changes, and then everybody has [to]... somehow make it work. Like my grandpa... has to go pick up my brother and my mom has to take me wherever it is... And then we meet up again... and it's like really.... yeah.

When these students spoke of their "busy," "exciting," "complicated" lives, it revealed that they saw their commuting lifestyle as a "full plate" which came from an extended school day as a consequence of living outside of town. The students woke up earlier, arrived at school for an entire day of learning, engaged in after school activities (whether it was a team or sport, or simply actively accompanying their parent on errands), arrived home later in the evening, then tackled homework before climbing into bed to face more of the same the next day. While some of the students elected their descriptive word to focus on the non-stop aspect of their lives, others preferred to report

this hustle and bustle by its effect: that it was “tiring,” “stressful” or that one needed “patience” to sit in the car.

However, if given the choice to change to a school closer to home, eight students said they preferred to stay at Ascension, citing the fact that they had friends at the school and because they liked the school. Wendy explained her decision to remain at Ascension this way:

I have not considered changing schools...I like going to a private school because it seems safer and better to me. I think Ascension is an excellent school and I have great friends here. I think I will stay here until my senior year. Even though I wouldn't have to wake up as early, I like having an education here.

A fellow student, Harry, emphatically responded in his e-mail: “NO I do not want to change schools because I like my friends here at Ascension and I'm already used to commuting.”

The importance of maintaining peer relationships is a priority for adolescents, as discussed in the review of the literature. During the adolescent years 11-13 year olds place a high priority on peer acceptance. Friends become the social group of preference over family (NMSA, 1992). The students in this study had formed bonds both in school and in their neighborhoods or community sports teams. To move closer to town would incur a loss of friends in their neighborhoods; to leave Ascension and enroll in a community school would result in breaking relations with current classmates. The students in this study wished to maintain their network of friends across the island. Because of this adolescent reasoning, they were able to “acquiesce” or agree to continue the commute.

From a contrasting point of view, when parents were asked to ensnare the commuting experience in a single word or short phrase, they tended to provide descriptors that expressed the tension or strain they felt from the experience, with the exception of Yvette's mother who mentioned "bonding" and Tom's mother who saw the commute as an "elevator" landing at both "good and bad."

Parent responses affirmed that the commute was stressful particularly for the morning drive because there were inflexible deadlines that had to be met. The start of school at 7:50 a.m. and punching the clock to begin the work day were imposed deadlines. Penalties could be incurred if these times were not met. With deadlines in place, there was an added pressure for the driver. To make the situation more onerous, the road itself, presented its own stressful challenges: driving conditions that were not predictable or alterable. For example, Joe's mom wondered at poor drivers, who got a license "in a Cracker Jack Box [chuckle, sigh];" Wendy's mom brought up "if there's accidents and you have to wait so long;" and Tom's mom mentioned "if there's really bad traffic." Other problems voiced were: "We have to figure out if there's a shortcut [if there was bad traffic] or make a spontaneous decision of "who we gotta drop off first" (Remy's mom); Isaac's dad mentioned times when the "whole H-1 shuts down;" and from Harry's dad, "rain."

How did parents, driving under such conditions, manage to remain in control of the car and themselves? It went back to the choice they made to embark on a commuting life and the development of road stoicism, which mentally armed them to face whatever challenges the road had to present. The parents recognized that the road conditions were beyond the driver's sway and they shared their versions of how they were able to "bear

with difficulties or discomfort without complaining” (Ehrlich et al., 1980, pp. 903-4) while behind the wheel: “Go with the flow” (Wendy’s mom); "just ride it out... bear with it" (Tom’s mom); "just gotta be done and I'm the only one who gotta do it" (Harry’s dad); “I have very little control...I don’t let that get to me” (Yvette’s mom); "nothing you can do" (Remy’s mom).

Joe’s mom provided a unique example of how she set her mind to the task of driving:

So while I'm driving, I have to calm myself down, you know I’d say prayers, the “Serenity Prayer” is one that comes always to my mind. You know, really. “God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, and change the things I can. And have the wisdom to know the difference...” have these people get out of my way before I kill them, so dot, dot, dot, dot.... [Laugh] you know what it is, I repeat, after repeat, and I finally calm down.

From Harry’s dad similar sentiments were expressed this way:

Immune to it already... no sense getting upset about it because I have to stay in the thing anyway. I can't change that. It's something that I physically... I can't go out and change. So I gotta deal with it. Yeah, I can't change the traffic. I just gotta learn to deal with it, or else, it just gets frustrating.

Unlike Credo (2005) in the literature review, none of the parents in this study mentioned the hazard of exposure to breathing pollution caused by inhaling car exhaust fumes, a risk that increased in slow moving traffic over extended periods of time. Instead, at the point when the family was in the car, the adult’s full attention was riveted on other cars, the road conditions, spontaneous decision making, and the weather.

Despite being challenged mentally and physically, the adults demonstrated a stoic mindset that allowed them to face the many possible difficulties of driving.

While the parents were behind the wheel, the student passengers mentioned reading, occasionally completing homework, cat napping, and sometimes engaging in conversations with family members during the ride to town. Isaac's parents noted that their son "just tunes out the commute. I mean, he just always brings something to do that's going to entertain himself."

Similarly, Pam describes what the commute is like on the way to school:

You don't really notice where you are going sometimes... because like throughout all the years you look at the scenery, you don't pay attention to the actual direction, or where you are going. I mean you know you're going to school obviously, but like sometimes like you just don't realize you're on a street that you know, or you're on like a major highway or something because they will all look the same to you. It would just be like thinking... it will just pass by in front of your eyes. And before you know it, you are at school.

As young adolescents, the students in this study did not have the ability to drive; therefore, they were dependent upon their parents to transport them to school in a safe and timely manner. Having no road responsibilities whatsoever (they were not even navigators) and none of the stresses of their driving parents, the students, like Pam, demonstrated acquiescence.

For seven students (Table 4) who had been on the road since pre-kindergarten or kindergarten, spending a sizable portion of their day in the car was normal – they did not know any other life style. This emerged in the conversation with Tom's mom:

[So they've grown up commuting since pre-K?]

Yes.

[Neither son has ever known what it's like not to commute?]

No. From pre-K they've been...

Yvette's mother echoed this sentiment: "This is all my kids have known. Because from the time they started preschool, they came out... they commuted. So this...It's all they really knew."

In not having any other life style to compare with commuting, the long time commuters simply seemed to accept the lengthy drives to school with a mentality of: "This is the way things are." Tiffany's mother captures this point below:

I think over time, it just becomes an automatic thing...because they don't know any other.... they don't know what it is to drive for five minutes and get to school versus an hour.

During the interviews, both students and parents spoke of what they saw in themselves and each other as they faced the daily grind of a commuting life style. Two traits were mentioned: patience and flexibility. These qualities may be seen as manifestations of stoicism and acquiescence – they were qualities that allowed both the adults and adolescents to carry on every day.

According to Tiffany's mom, patience was important "for dealing with the crazy drivers, dealing with the traffic, and just dealing with the stress and all the time involved. ...If you can't, then it could drive you nuts." She mentioned this with a laugh which seemed to underscore her point.

Harry's dad designated patience as being important because if he is patient, "it's [the commute] more relaxed. I mean I get frustrated sometimes, because I've had a bad day or what, but ... you just learn to live with that." Harry's dad suggested that patience made for a tranquil ride and as a parent, he could not take things out on his son while on the way home. Patience was, perhaps, a manifestation of stoicism or the acceptance of things the way they were.

The second trait that commuters mentioned was flexibility or the ability to adapt and accept changes. Despite the best laid plans, or the most rehearsed routines, the road presented its own agenda. Pam's mom, for example spoke of last minute adjustments, and how her flexibility helped her through the rough spots.

That I am flexible. You know, my husband can't pick up one daughter, and I have to stay in town, then I can find other things to do. You know, because our schedule is never the same every week, it's kind of... what days can you pick up? And I have to do whatever.

Or Isaac explained how he learned to take things as they came, even though they might bring disappointments.

It's easier for me to adjust to different things. Like, how my car broke down, it was easy for me to accept that I couldn'tthat I probably wasn't going to go to school that day. And I am used to different changes easier.

Very closely related to the concept of flexibility, was the concept of "letting things go," which was mentioned by Pam's mom, Kara's mom, and Tom's's mom. Yvette's mom described it this way: "... I know that when you put one more thing in, something gives. That is the reality of it, you know?" For these parents, flexibility was

the maintenance of a balanced perspective. It helped them to keep an even keel when something unexpected cropped up. It was also a stoic realization that they could not do everything; they had to prioritize and be satisfied with their choices.

In the previous discussion, the adolescent participants demonstrated “acquiescence” while their parents exhibited the mental toughness or stoicism. In both cases, the presence of these two traits graced the participants with endurance which carried over to other aspects of the commute: what occurred before and after the drive itself, and their relationships with non-commuters. Each will be examined separately.

Expanding the Commute Concept

A good snapshot of the day before the car left the garage and after the family returned at the end of the day was provided by Remy's mom:

Because everything is so fast paced in the morning. You know everything is fast-paced, “Okay, get everything ready, grab your books, let's go.”... “Eat your breakfast”...and when we get home it's like, “Okay, let's go home, we got to go home.”...“Make sure you have everything.”...“Get home, take your books out, study, gotta do homework”... Everything is so fast paced. We only have so much time, especially when there's traffic.

When in conversation with the participants, it soon became apparent that the "commute" experience was not exclusively the time spent on the road, but encompassed the period of preparation before the commute, as well as the aftermath of the ride home. There was always awareness that lengthy travel time impacted home life. In addition, the homeward bound commute had its own special characteristics, blending the commute home with tangent excursions. The discussion of various commute time periods follow.

Morning rush.

First there was the span before the family climbed into the car and drove off in the morning. All the household activities were framed with the concern of "running late" (Remy's mom) or the urgent need "to leave at a certain time" (Kara's mom). It was during this hour of preparation that an orchestrating parent assumed her role to make sure the family was up and dressed, the car was packed with the day's essentials, the house secured, pets cared for, and breakfast of some kind had been provided. Yvette's mom shared that "Once we get in the car, that's the relief."

Tiffany's mom remarked, "Because we have to make sure we pack everything, we have to make sure [to] get out by a certain time, and there might be traffic going home so then it messes up the rest of your night."

Kara's mom put it this way:

Seriously, because what I tell people is from the moment I wake up, I don't breathe till I go to bed [Laugh]. You know what I mean? It's like just go, go, go, go because everything is on a schedule...My life right now is a schedule, around a strict schedule. And like I said, five minutes makes a big difference. So there's not much...not a lot of leeway.

While Kara's mom used the term "schedule" to describe her day, several other parents mentioned the word "routine" instead; one that was customized to fit individual family needs. "Routine," phrased Pam's mom, "it's just a routine. It's just part of our daily life. So we don't think about it. It is like breathing. You get up, you do it, and go back."

Wendy's mom unfolded her morning like clockwork:

Well I always set my clock for like 5:00 a.m. So...bathroom, change, get ready. Kitchen, get dressed, back to the bedroom, get dressed, kitchen, get all the lunches ready. Then breakfast. Then wake my daughter up like 5:30. And then we leave in fifteen, twenty minutes.

Tiffany's mom laughed as she recounted how she began the day:

So from the time I get up, we have to take care of the dog, clean the kennel, give him his water and his snack. Then I'll take a shower and wake up one of my daughters, wake up the older daughter, and then I'll get myself ready. Then I'll wake up the younger daughter. Then I have to pack the lunches, make them something to eat, and then get everybody in the car. So that's the normal routine.

The definition of the word "routine" is "a standard course of procedure, a series of acts performed regularly in the same way" (Ehrlich et al., 1980, p. 791). A routine is an intimate habit; it requires minimal thinking about what needs to be done because repetition promoted familiarity. These parents related their day in short, quick phrases, an instinctive litany that did not require much deliberation, and possibly reflected the way the actual events unfolded: precise and time-saving. The creation of a standard procedure allowed for easier acceptance of what could have been a stressful life; difficult situations and the way to handle them become the norm if they were procedural. Joe's mom said that having a routine, seemed to smooth out the rough spots of the commute experience.

I don't know if there's a difference between good and bad. I don't think there's a good day of commuting [Laugh]. I don't think of a bad day; it's just routine.

Harry's dad also noted that there were fewer arguments; everything and everyone simply fell into step. This was why he had established routines for his son and himself:

I think we just got a routine going on already. We have a good routine...okay you prep all this the night before, the next morning we just go. It's the same thing. Just don't break the routine... we're not at each other's throats as much... it's hard to explain.... it's like now we are in a certain routine.

[How long did it take to get the routine?]

A couple of months.

From these examples, it was possible to view routine making as a life style adaptation that would help each family reach the goal of leaving the house on time, during the morning hour crunch. As for the students, they too spoke of their morning routines, which primarily consisted of getting themselves dressed, packed, and into the car on time. There was however, a difference. The students knew they had to get out of bed, groom, take care of breakfast needs, and be in the car by a set time – but for some, the manner in which they executed the routine was not always a smooth endeavor. Pam recalled the hectic morning environment at home:

My mom would have gotten mad at me because I didn't move fast enough this morning.... For the whole time and I'll feel like.... I would just be sitting there [in the car] thinking "God!" Fuming at her in my head. And she's thinking like "Gosh"....I am thinking like... "She's so annoying" and I'll be thinking that and she's probably thinking that too.

Once in the car, Pam resorted to a strategy to reduce the stress and make for a more pleasant ride: “I’ll just, I’ll just stay quiet. Because if I open my mouth, I might say something bad or whatever. Or maybe just try to sleep or something.”

Pam did not seem to object to commuting and protest by dragging her feet or being as disagreeable as possible, but rather, Pam simply behaved as a sleepy adolescent, who moved slower in the morning. As a developing child, she simply did not bear the sole responsibility or urgency of getting herself ready for the day, as an adult would prepare herself for work. Pam was dependent on her mother to push, prod, cajole, coax – do whatever it took to get her daughter to meet the morning deadlines. In the course of their conversations, Pam, like Tiffany, Yvette, Kara, and Harry all revealed adolescent acquiescence: agreeable but...adolescent in the manner of response. On the other hand, Isaac, Joe, Tom, Remy, and Wendy all spoke of executing their routines in a smoother fashion. Isaac said: “I wake up, use the bathroom, then I brush my teeth. Then I put on my contacts, then I change my clothes. And then I help to pack the car.” This illustrated that not all adolescents responded to parentally established routines in the same way, nor will they necessarily respond the same way every day.

The afternoon road.

The second phase of the commute experience was the afternoon commute, which was not the same as that of the morning. Although it was important to come home as soon as possible to prepare dinner and allow sufficient time for the adolescent child to tackle homework, the sense of urgency was not as glaring. The end of the day road trip was dependent upon whether or not the student had afterschool extracurricular activities. There were different scenarios. For example some students had extracurricular activities

for only part of the week or were engaged in pre-season training. They would come home late, often at seven o'clock in the evening or after on those particular days. For the remainder of the week, when there were no activities, the students might reach home as early as 4:30 or as late as 6:00. During the school year when the sports season was in full swing, students arrived home late every night, at 7:00, even as late at 9:00. It should be noted that all ten students were involved in some kind of extra-curricular activity for a portion, if not all school year.

Another scenario was one in which students left campus right after school, dropped off at home to unload, changed their clothes, then headed out to an extracurricular activity in the neighboring community. At its conclusion, the student experienced a second home coming, later in the evening, usually six o'clock or after.

Occasionally the commute home was extended because families did errands along the route. Such tasks included grocery shopping, picking up needed school supplies, or stopping off to buy dinner – usually take-out meals of some sort. Sometimes students who had very late extracurricular activities would eat dinner in town either before or after their activity. At other times they just ate at the nearby mall before going home.

Students who had siblings often waited for their sister or brother to finish an extracurricular activity. Although some students in this study were not involved in a club or sport year around, and could technically reach home early, they accompanied their involved sibling to practice, thus coming home late with the rest of the family.

Every day was different, depending upon the needs of both student and parent. Afternoons required more coordination to meet the fluctuating schedule, so that one parent took care of one child while the second parent attended to the sibling. Or the

adults alternated staying late while the other one went home early to start dinner.

Overall, it was an arrangement of joint effort. Kara's mom provided a typical example of what could take place in the after school commute:

The things I do after school? ...My husband and I play tag team, can't do it without him because on days when I have to go to an appointment, he'll get the kids. Like yesterday, I left right at three, he got the kids. Some days... he'll [husband] pick them up early and take the younger two home, and I wait for Kyle [oldest son]. I would go to doctor's appointments, we sometimes get snacks, we sometimes go to the market... Sometimes... we [mom and daughter] go straight to piano practice, but that's about it before we actually get home. And then, usually though, we go home first if the kids have like, soccer or something, we go [to soccer] after we come home.

While the morning commute tended to be fairly stable as far as consistently having the same driver, a direct route, and a strict time table, the afternoon commute was more complex. What was noteworthy about the afternoon commute was the way the parents accepted, willingly, their roles as chauffeur to their child and “gopher,” to run needed errands or attend to personal and family matters. Logistical planning and coordination relieved the tension and frustration of trying to accomplish all the running around – now there was an equal partner shouldering the commute responsibility. There was mutual support that strengthened the parents’ ability to make commuting a successful daily event, as was clearly evident in the excerpt from Kara’s mom. In the case of the three single parents, however, Yvette’s mom relied upon grandpa to take on the

partnering role, but for Harry's dad and Joe's mom, they were on their own, creatively squeezing in the family needs as they could. Harry's dad related:

If he [Harry] needs anything I will go get it for him. But yeah I do fit it in ...plenty of my shopping and all of that between his practices just to make life easier for me too, yeah. Grocery or I go, yeah pick up his supplies, whatever he needs.

The students said that their part of the "arrangement" was to let their parents know what they required; in return, the parents accommodated their requests. Unless the students accompanied their parents on these afterschool forays, the adolescents were engaged in extracurricular activities. Even though they knew that such involvement meant a delayed homecoming – made even later because of the long commute, limited time for homework, or even less sleep, the students accepted these conditions in exchange for the opportunity to play sports and socialize with friends. Therefore, they acquiesced because they gained adolescent benefits and because their school needs were taken care of by their parents. As Yvette's mom shared:

And whatever they need, I will make the time to get what they need. So even if it's for projects, getting supplies or... But they have to communicate to me, and give me enough time to do that. And they know that it will get done, they will have it. So I think they are confident in that, and they know that if they tell me... it will get done.

Evenings at home.

The third extension of the commuting day was the time period after the family reached home. The chores for the parent not only included dinner preparation and clean

up but also providing for the next day's commute. Joe's mom will "see what I am going to defrost for the next day... so when I come home and I can slap it together," "we have to think about what we're going to have for breakfast (Tom's mom); "You know having as many things prepared the night before (Pam's mom); because, as Harry's dad said, the next day, "it's easy, just grab and go."

Harry's dad also mentioned that although he tried to get his son into bed early, he himself stayed up to finish household chores.

[And do you go to bed early?]

No not really... I'm like still putting away and.... so sometimes 9:30, ten.

Students brought their evening to an end after homework was completed and they had packed for the next morning's commute – thereby executing their final routine of the day. For their parents, the work continued until bedtime and determined the official closure of the adult commuter's day. Parents described putting considerable energy and time into making the commute experience a successful and positive one, and this explains their use of the word "sacrifice." Four parents specifically mentioned this word. For example, Isaac's mom stated that if education has priority "then you need to make the sacrifice, as far as the commute," while Tom's mom believed that the results were well worth the demands of the commute, "I mean there's a lot of sacrifices, but we see how the kids are and where they are going, where they have been ... We sacrifice for the kids...and that's okay."

Harry's dad recognized that the sacrifices of the present will affect his son's future:

I take on hardship just to make his life better....I'll just make the sacrifices for my son now, because it's only, I don't know, four years and a quarter left. Hopefully. Then he's finished; then he's out of the house in college.

Finally Remy's mom mentioned that sacrifice was a required, but manageable feat: "Yeah I mean, we handled it. I mean, we just....we sacrificed, what we gotta...you know....what we gotta do."

As for the other parents who did not specifically mention the word "sacrifice" this idea was present not only by what they shared in their interviews, but in the interviews with their children. The adolescents' awareness of their parents' efforts in this entire endeavor did not go unnoticed or unappreciated. For example, Joe related "that my mom really likes to really support me a lot... And that she worked a lot," while Harry spoke about how his parents had to wake up early to drive him to school. Remy added that her parents "take a part of their day, early in the morning... before they go to work, just to drop us off... that they care about me." Wendy realized that "That like my parents do a lot of stuff for me. And I'm pretty lucky to go to...this school even if it's all the way in town." Kara observed the toll the commute took on her parents by saying:

Like, maybe they wouldn't fight but they probably feel really tired, and they just want to take a break and rest.

[You can see the commute wearing people down?]

Yeah...They just do it because... they do it for us.

These testimonials were the ways the students saw their parents "going the extra mile," making the needed sacrifices so that the commute was feasible. In addition Yvette and Isaac perceived the stoicism of their parents this way:

She (mom) can handle stress really well. Because like she has to do a lot of stuff, like even with my grandpa's help, she still has to deal with ...driving me everywhere, and then when I complain... she doesn't lose it.

Isaac mentioned, "If something goes wrong, they are very calm, and it's easier for them."

Yvette's comment highlighted the numerous demands placed upon her single mother, who accepted them without lashing out at her adolescent daughter. While Isaac realized that the serenity of his parents helped them to cope with the unexpected. It was this kind of accepting attitude that allowed the parents of this study to gallantly endure – an important ability not only when dealing with various aspects of the commute but also when relating to town folk who did not.

Commuters versus Non-Commuters

I mean granted they [her children] get up early, but I think everybody has to get up early for school anyway. I mean we ...our basic hard part is the drive and the traffic...because every family has the same issues of getting the kids ready whether it's the drive or not. So I think, you know, we all stress in the morning, getting the kids ready. [Laugh] – Tom's mom

Although Tom's mom expressed the idea that each family had its own challenges to get their children up for school each morning, she acknowledged that there was a difference in the fact that she must drive. This factor alone, however, was what accounted for the other participants' sense that there was a distinct difference between their life style and that of non-commuters.

According to Tiffany's mom, unless you have actually experienced the long drives, you will not be able to understand it.

Because you know, when people talk about traffic, let's say somebody that lived in town, to them, traffic might be having to spend an extra or ten [to] five minutes for just going an extra mile. To a commuter, traffic means spending maybe an hour or two in your car versus that extra five or ten minutes. It means hundreds of cars versus just a handful of cars...It's relative to where your point of reference is....I used to live may be ten minutes away...My parents lived up St. Louis Heights. I had no idea when I moved out that way [outside of town] what traffic was. Because to me anything more than a ten minute drive, was traffic, anything past Moanalua Gardens was far. [Laugh] But you know, you just have no idea until you have experienced it. And it actually took me many years to get used to that commute.

Yvette's mom summarized the difference she sensed between commuters and non-commuters this way:

I think it's the planning.... I don't think they [non-commuters] have a clue about how much there is in the planning, and you know.... because if you don't commute, and you're always on a whim going here, going there, or you know....and taking the kids here or there....no I don't think they have a clue.

[Laugh] I think the mindset is different.

[So you think there's really a difference between commuters and non-commuters?]

There's a difference. There is a difference....And I think it makes a difference in the kids. You know, and how much they prepare...I think that non-commuters are more lax. [Laugh] You know, whereas I can't be... in planning.

Isaac's Mom brought up another distinction between commuting families and those who live in town:

Well I don't think they realize you have to factor in the extra time. You know if you have a commute, then.... I mean like we automatically know that you must be ready to leave an hour [before] if you want to be there. But you know people could be calling you, if they don't have the commute, and think you're still at home a half an hour before, right? and need something.

I think we're just used to it. I mean.... Well I think they don't realize that they can't call me fifteen minutes before and say it's cancelled because I'm already practically there, right...So, you know, I think that's the only thing, is if you cancel something, and you're calling me fifteen minutes before, it's like you don't really need to bother because I'll be there.

What was noteworthy was Isaac's parent's attitude toward non-commuters who asked for supplies as an afterthought or canceled an event at the last minute. Such incidents could lead to some disappointing and frustrating situations for commuting families. The fact that Isaac's mom mentioned these scenarios suggested that her family had encountered them on more than one occasion. It might make for prickly inter-people relationships. However, Isaac's mom, seemed accustomed to these occurrences, speaking of them matter-of-factly during the interview. They serve as an example of how differently commuters and non-commuters understand time; they also suggest that the

commuters must bear the burden of those misunderstandings, especially when they are “caught short” or inconvenienced. It is perhaps another demonstration of “road stoicism.”

When commuting parents spoke of their experiences to co-workers, friends, or family, the reactions received from non-commuters also underscored a discrepancy in life style. Wendy's mom recalled what happened when she conversed with her peers at work: "I talk to my co-workers on that, and they... sometimes they [say] 'Wow'..... then they feel fortunate that, 'Oh, we don't have to travel so far like, like you folks' ”

Remy's mom seemed to meet neither understanding nor empathy from co-workers or family for the life style she chose. She shared:

I mean, they think it is our choice. It is our choice. But they are like, if that's what you want [to] do, send your kids to private school, then that's your own..... your fault, you know I mean? I mean that's what they're....that's what they're thinking. I mean, “Don't complain to me you gotta wake up 5:15, but that's your choice to have your kids go to private school.”

Remy's mom continued by giving this example of her daughter's soccer coach.

Remy's soccer coach is good because.... their kids go to private school too. So they know the same thing about driving early. But their daughter just started last year. And I think now because he's going through it, it is easier for him to understand why.... Remy sometimes gets to practice late. Because before, it was no excuse. You know it's like, "Why aren't you here at five o'clock?" There is no excuse. Because they didn't understand the commute. But because now the daughter goes to private school, he understands that it's the commute and if there

is traffic, there's traffic. So it's different when they don't have...they don't have any commuting issues.

Even Harry's dad mentioned a lack of comprehension by others when he said:

I don't think they understand. I mean, they ask... “Why do...?” “Why would you...?” I mean you hear this a lot... “Why would you do that? Why would you sit in an hour and a half traffic to come?”

In the end, it all came back to choice. The parents chose the location of their homes and of the school for their children. Now the adults were committed to following through. Pam’s mom wrote in an e-mail:

I don’t feel judged by non-commuters. I never really thought about what they thought – it doesn’t affect me... We are content with our decision to commute – if we weren’t we would change the situation. It’s a free country to make those choices.

With the same stoicism that armed them to meet difficult road challenges and the non-stop demands before and after the drives, these parents were able to uphold their decisions to friends, family members, and co-workers. As Wendy’s mom said: “I know it is a must. If I was to do it over again, I wouldn’t.”

Did the adolescent commuters also sense a difference between themselves and their non-commuting peers? Tiffany pointed out several ways that her life style was unlike that of her friends in her comments:

They say... “I'm tired, I didn't get a lot of sleep,” but then actually I think ...that we get less every day, not just that one day. They probably spend time, more time

with like their friends and family. And like sometimes they grumble that... "Oh I need to spend more time with my friends."

[And what are you thinking?]

Oh...you spend a lot of time. They grumble about stuff that like a lot of us that live on the other side don't because we are used to it...Like sometimes they would grumble... "Oh, I got home so late"...and like they would probably get home like earlier than us normally.

Remy had this to add:

They don't know how long it takes for some people to get to school when it may only take them a couple of minutes. They don't know how stressful it is everyday to get home late, to do your homework, and go to bed late. How long it takes to do things, like the time difference.

What supported these commuting adolescents were their friends on campus. As mentioned previously, of the 56 students who took part in the initial survey, 25 or almost 45% were on the road for 30-35 minutes daily. Of these 25 commuting students, fifteen (60%) traveled the longer time of 40-45 minutes. This suggested that commuters were not an anomaly at the school. For example, when Wendy was asked if many of her school friends commuted, she replied, "Yeah. Probably most of them."

Commuters who had friends, who were also on the road for various lengths of time, were empathetic to the trials of the long drives, as Yvette explained:

By the time I get to school, I usually like vent to my friends. Yeah. I complain [Laugh] about like "Oh my gosh my mom is like getting on my nerves," because like I forgot something or something like that.

[Do your friends commute?]

Most of them do. They just listen and then after a while...they know...I'll just stop and I will feel better.

Classmates were also forgiving and flexible when the best laid plans went awry because of road conditions. Remy told this story of how she had planned an early morning birthday celebration for a friend and fellow commuter, but was not able to accomplish it as envisioned.

I remember on Sally's birthday there was a really, really, really long line of traffic so I got to school really late, and I didn't really have time to socialize with Sally. So by the time I got to give her, her present, [it was] at recess. And by getting to school late, really threw everything off. Because I... already sort of planned out things we were going to do as soon as I get to school. Like we were actually going to go to the snack bar and get breakfast, and then like talk to each other, and then like I would give her, her present...But ...it just got moved ...back to lunch recess.

From the excerpts provided by the students in the study, it could be seen that while the adolescents felt some of their peers did not understand the difficulties of traveling long distances to school, friends, who were commuters themselves, informally mustered together to relieve stress and contribute to the acceptance of their commuting life style. These students had created a casual support group – something their parents did not seem to have with other commuting adults. Remy was reminded of this in the advice she received from her cousin, who also commuted: “Think positive. And think about what I'll do when I get to school. And think of all the friends who'll be waiting for

me as soon as I get to school.” Perhaps it was those comforting thoughts that made the commute a doable feat every day.

Summary

This section provided some insight into how parents and adolescents viewed commuting. Parents made the conscious decision not to bus their children to school and chose to commute in the family car in order to own their homes and provide a private school education for their children. Because of these resolutions, motivated by personal education experiences, parents had willingly and stoically accepted the fast paced commuting life which included creating family daily routines so as to successfully cope with stress both in and out of the car. The students, on their part, demonstrated “acquiescence” to commuting; an agreement made possible by some adolescent traits which characterized this age group. In addition parents and students perceived a distinct difference between themselves and non-commuters; a difference that could not be adequately explained, but must be experienced. The next section explores these differences and how commuting families shaped their lives to accommodate the arduous demands of lengthy road travel.

Commuting: An Adaptive Lifestyle

Exploring how students and their families adapted to the daily commutes of forty-five minutes or longer was the focus of the second research question of this study. As families responded to interview questions, it became apparent that both adults and adolescents engaged in behaviors or devised strategies to successfully deal with the demands of the long drives and to manage their lives outside of actual road time. These

strategies may be viewed within the overarching theme of adapting to endure, a synonym for “survive.” (Morehead, 1985, p. 557).

Although the term “survival” means “to continue to exist,” (Ehrlich et al., 1980), and appears unrelated to commuting to school, the word has other definitions that are applicable to commuting families. From several internet dictionary sources, the word could mean: “to continue to function or prosper despite” (*Merriam-Webster*, 2011); “to cope with” (*The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, 2000), “keep body and soul together” (*Collins Thesaurus of the English Language*, 2002); “to get along or remain healthy, happy, and unaffected in spite of some occurrence” (*Random House Dictionary*, 2011). In fact the origin of the word “survive” comes from “super” meaning “over and beyond” + vivere meaning “to live” (*Online Etymology Dictionary*, 2010.). Therefore the word “survive” really means more than simply “to exist.”

These denotations suggested that families who “survived” the adverse conditions of commuting did more than merely continue to “live;” they coped, functioned, and prospered. In the following discussion, commuters spoke of how they survived in the context of commuting to school by creating a supportive environment for themselves while off and on the road.

Domicile on Wheels

Human beings need a positive environment to survive. Besides providing shelter, a place to call home should also be safe and nurturing. Because of the demands placed upon commuting families, there was very little time spent at their place of residence. The participants in this study adapted to this challenge by taking their homes on the road with them.

Wendy's mom related: "I feel it's [car] our second home because we are out on the road for a long...like.... two hours commuting," while Isaac's mom put it this way:

Well we have had the same car from before like, I think from before Isaac was born... So he just grew up, living.... and well then, he's always had the commute, so it's like you know half the life was spent in the car, and the other half at home.

Several considerations besides the amount of time spent in the vehicle made the family car a second home to both students and parents alike. First many interviewees commented that the car was kept clean and tidy. Trash was regularly removed, so it was a comfortable environment (Pam). Secondly, like a home, the roomy car interiors were allotted into definite living spaces by some of the students. For example, Kara's mom described her daughter's way of utilizing her area in the car: "Kara keeps ... in her side of the car, she keeps her brush, she keeps her little container of hair stuff, things like that."

Kara, added to her mother's description by saying that she, like several other student commuters in this study, had her own school supplies and a mini-closet within easy reach:

I have a pencil case, in my [seat] pocket, and it has like scissors, it has a pencil and some coloring pencils. This is in the car. In my...in the pouch of the car seat. *I ...*have a notebook in there...If I'm like really hot, I probably like change because I have extra clothes in the car.

Kara's last sentence was especially telling because she was able to adapt to weather conditions by altering the clothes that she wore, rather than suffer in the heat in inappropriate garb. This was an example of a basic coping tactic: dress appropriately to

match your environment. It also parallels the common behavior of changing one's clothes at home to unwind and be comfortable. Having a pseudo closet in the car allowed for this.

In another family, Tom's mom told how her sons' division of the back seat was almost akin to furnishing their own rooms:

...you know each person has their designated spot. Jacob, no matter, they always sit the same spot, even if they have to crawl over each other. You know I am like, "It's okay, you can sit on the other side," but you know, they have their own comfortable thing. Tom has whatever snacks he wants in his side of the car, and Jacob has his stuff, and they know where their music thing is...

From the previous excerpt, the two brothers demonstrated not only establishing a "room of their own" but the fact that they respected each other's living space. There might not be physical walls to separate each boy's domain, but it was clear that even in the car, the boys eked out a sense of ownership. It almost called to mind the concept of "territorial rights" which allowed for acknowledged cohabitation – also a survival technique among living creatures. In addition, Kara, Tom, and his brother promoted a sense of their own identities by personalizing their places in the car which was in keeping with Taubenheim's (1979, p. 518)) use of the term "fit." In this case, Tom and Kara, students in this study, secured their place in the family unit and at the same time maintained their individualities.

A third reason why the car became an extension of the home became evident in the way students and parents referred to various sections of the car in "house" terms.

Yvette's mom mentioned, "an extension may be of our home, kind of like a living room."

Pam, a student, provided a detailed comparison between the car and her house: comfortable, familiar....let's seeyou could say that design is similar...because you know how you have a lot of chairs on the dining room table, it's like... you... okay so like all the chairs in the car are your dining room table's but your table is your lap. And then like... but you can all see each other and twist around like from the driver's seat [to] see back there and talk to people face-to-face....like talking to them kind of reminds you of the dining room so that makes it like home...or like you know, you wash your hands after dinner or before dinner, my mom always makes me use those hand wipes, which kind of reminds you of dinnertime in the kitchen, you know because the sink is there and you wash your hands.

Oh and the refridge....you know how in your refridge you keep your ketchup and your mayonnaise and you stock the fresh stuff? In my mom's car she has those little packets of ketchup, you know...you put it onto a burger if you wanted to ...she keeps it in this little compartment she has where she has also napkins, and she has some straws.

Pam was not the only one to mention the "refridge" concept. Other parents spoke of hauling a cooler that was stocked for the day, such as Harry's dad: "Well, it [car] always has a cooler inside. It has pretty much anything you need. Waters for him, it always has water for him, soda, juice or anything ready to go, because we are always on the road."

A fourth way that the car emerged as "home" was noted in the types of activities that occurred during the ride. For example personal grooming evolved the car into a bedroom. Kara's mom described how her family finished dressing in the car before disembarking for school.

They kind of get dressed in the car in the mornings. I mean they are dressed but like Kara will brush her hair in the car in the morning. Ethan actually puts on his socks and shoes in the car in the morning. So they finished getting dressed in the morning.

Pam's mom also wondered how her daughter completed getting ready for school while being driven to Ascension by her husband. She expressed what she was "curious to see...is.... when does she [Pam] get her shoes on in the car ride, you know, how close to school is it and how and she'll even brush her hair in the car."

From another participant, sharing a moment to read seemed to be a family activity made possible while riding in the car for Isaac's family. Isaac, a voracious reader, kept books in the car, like maintaining a home library: "Nice to have a pile of books in the back," said Isaac's dad. "Like sometimes he will have three books in the car because he knows that he's going to finish one before..." added Isaac's mom. In a later interview, Isaac himself admitted to his reading habit during the long drives and said that he adapted to the lack of light in the early morning or late evening this way: "If it's dark then I use a book light. It's the kind you can clip on to the book. I have to bring it [light] with me ... My mom sometimes reads too." It should be noted here that Isaac was the only student in the study who commuted with both parents present in the car. His father assumed the driver's role, while his mom shared the back seat with Isaac. When Isaac mentioned that

he and his mom read together, this suggested that the car provided an opportunity of a kind of quiet togetherness, as in a home, where family members were engaged in their own activities, but adults and children were together.

Finally and most importantly, the car felt like home. The participants shared that the car was "cozy," (Kara's mom), and a place you could "relax ...which I do at home; it's just normal" (Wendy). Isaac added, "because my parents are there too, I can ask them for help or I can just ask them anything like at home." Joe contributed that the car was "comfortable...you can kind of camp in there...the only thing that is like separating it [from home] is the bathroom," while his mother said the car was equipped with everything you need except for the kitchen sink." Joe's mom further noted that "You know it's the way we want it, yeah? And I guess it's kind of like Joe's room, because we sit down and talk story. It is like an enclosed room, yeah? Like a small room, yeah."

Data pointed to the participants in this study adapting their cars into a pleasant environment that provided for their needs while on the road. This home on wheels was a good example of how commuters did more than "survive" the long haul; they were also able to "keep body and soul together" and demonstrated "Home is where the heart is."

Nurturing surroundings was just one aspect of how the ten families adapted. Survival was also supported by the use of tools, that is, technology. The following section looks at how commuting families used some of the most popular devices of the twenty-first century to promote a successful on the road experience.

Technology

The presence of technology during the commute provided welcomed alleviation to the wearisome ride, prevented conflicts among siblings, and furnished stress relief.

Tom described the road time as “boring” because “there’s nothing to do, really,” thus various types of tools were used by the participants to spell the tediousness of sitting for long periods. Students and parents mentioned: Portable Play Station (Kara’s mom) and Nintendo DS hand held games (Remy’s mom). According to Isaac’s mom, her son creatively tried to play games using his school graphing calculator: “He has a calculator in his bag. At one point, he was trying to use it to play games, and I put a stop that, because it burns your battery out, right?”

In two families, there were multiple dvd players set up so that each child had the luxury of selecting their own movie to watch. At other times, all the kids clustered around one dvd player and enjoyed the movie together, just the way a family gathered around a television at home; a spontaneous family moment had been fashioned by this arrangement. Kara’s mom described the family dynamics in the excerpt below:

Oh if it is a good movie, all three of them watched together. Ethan, [the youngest] chooses the movies. But then if it's a good one [movie], like we just bought “Transformers”...all of them were watching. And if it's good, Kyle [eldest] will hop in the back because he usually sits in the front with me. He'll hop in the back and watch with them. And all glue to Ethan's [dvd].

Pam’s mom spoke of using technology for both education and entertainment:

Books on tape. When they were younger that was very, very useful because when they were both listening to a story, there's no fighting...So...now that they've gotten older, they have lost interest in that.

[What kind of books?]

All of the Newberry books, you know? They'd have....you know, like now like maybe *Lightning Thief*, and *Hunger Games*, all of the popular books are on books on tape...When we bought a new car... I had to ask them to put in the cassette player... for that purpose because they were all CD's [players]. Now the books on tape are on CDs. And so, it's easy.

What was noteworthy about the excerpt from Pam's mom was how she used technology to keep the peace in the car. As the driver, she could not allow herself to be distracted from watching the road while trying to break up a disagreement between her daughters. This was an important safety issue, which might explain the presence of electronic games and dvd players in cars for other families in the study who transported more than one sibling.

The other interesting tidbit gathered from Pam's mom was how she specifically requested the car be altered so that she could continue to play the books on tape, since the stories had not yet come out in dvd format. This was similar to the purchase of one, if not two dvd players for installation on the back of the seats so non-driving family members could watch a movie. These extra features in the car suggested a survival strategy and demonstrated the need for adaption in order to reduce possible volatile scenarios and ensure a calm ride home.

As an example of another adaption of a commuting vehicle, Isaac's mom relayed how they decided to acquire wireless access for lap top use and how it has been employed during the drive.

Dad: But they [Isaac's friends] usually call him at this hour, I've noticed on the way home. We haven't even made it home, and his friends are calling him about the homework.

Mom: Because we have wireless Internet, so he can do it anywhere.

[You arranged for wireless?]

Mom: He likes it now because we didn't really get it for him to be doing his homework in the car, right? But he found out that, sometimes you can do your homework in the car now, right? Because you can connect to the Internet even if you're just driving.

Dad: Especially when your friends call you and ask you the question and you haven't even been home, or [he] hasn't even looked at the problem.

By providing for a wireless internet connection in the car, the work office and school classroom became mobile: the family continued to work on a lap top while on route, if they chose to, without sitting and wasting time. Isaac's parents had also revealed how their son networked with peers via his cell phone during the car ride. This practical use was one of several ways that commuting families employed cell phones, making this piece of technology one of the two most utilized modern devices by the participants of this study.

For example, if a parent wished a child to access the internet, another way to accomplish this was via the student's cell phone. The ability to log onto the internet gave students research capabilities and a direct link to their on-line text books or other learning tools to facilitate homework on the road. Joe's mom reported that her son used his iphone for two reasons: entertainment and school work.

Well he has an iPhone so he can do a whole lot of stuff on that because it has websites and internet [access], and everything else so, it entertains him that way.

There's games on his thing also.

[Why did you give him internet?]

Well because sometimes he couldn't find a definition of the word or because Ascension now has science and math [textbooks] on-line. So he goes straight onto it, because... my gosh, [if] he forgets this, we gotta get that... so the iPhone does a lot of things actually.

If Joe should forget his textbook in school, it was not a walk across the street to the campus to retrieve it. With his cell phone, Joe could still do his homework with the on-line version of his text. This meant he could do his homework from anywhere and at any time. In this way, adapting the phone to a level of greater capability ensured his “survival” in school because he could fulfill his academic responsibilities – he had no excuse for incomplete work.

The impetus to acquire technology so that students could use every available moment to get a head start on homework might seem to be in conflict with parents providing technology for entertainment. Remy's mom and Remy herself bring to light these opposing views. First, Remy's mom explained why she acquired internet capabilities for her daughter's cell phone:

...and the dictionary, they just do it on their phone. Because everything is on the Internet so they just do all of that through their phone. My daughter just got hers [connection] this year.

[Why did you get Internet?]

For my daughter she's usually out, you know like when she is waiting for the bus [the school transports students to practice sites after school]... she can use....do something versus just wait there without nothing. So she can usually look up her words or do something like that. And just to keep in touch with us, she can check her e-mail and everything on her own.

In the excerpt above, Remy's mom signed on for internet access via her phone carrier to enable her daughter to strategically use her spare minutes for academic work. In this way, less time was needed for homework in the evening after arriving home, and this facilitated earlier bedtimes.

Interestingly, Remy mentioned that their family car also had an entertainment center for the children's use while on the way home.

Well my dad has DVD players that help to relieve stress. If I have a lot of homework, it like takes my mind off things. Like if I'm really stressed out, it will change my mind on the topic, and then later on I can go back to it, and I don't need to worry about it so much.

In the previous excerpt, Remy expressed the need to remain mentally and emotionally healthy while facing the demands of school, homework, and a hectic commuting life.

While parents encouraged their children to use spare time to get ahead in their work, they also felt it was important to give their adolescents a "mental break."

Watching a dvd on the ride home provided just that sort of opportunity. Initially the two scenarios seemed to be contradictory, but upon closer look, perhaps not. Instead the student was given the choice of how to utilize spare time; Remy chose on some days, to

take a break. In this way she could return to her academic responsibilities a bit fresher. On other days, or in other free moments, she could choose to do a little homework. Either way, there was a sound reason for her choice: mental down time or surging forward to finish her work. The main point was that parents *provided* for either choice – and allowed the student to adapt appropriately as needed.

Also from Remy’s mom, another purpose for giving her daughter a cell phone was reported: the phone kept the student accessible to the parent and allowed for coordination of pick up times, particularly at the conclusion of after school activities. Isaac's parents provided more detail on this point:

Dad: Yeah but you don't know when they're coming back [from off-campus practice]. That's why we got him a phone.

Mom: To either ... go to the site where they're at, right? Or you sit at [the school] for an hour, right? [Laugh] Or you give the kid a phone and you say, “When you are leaving the site, call me,” then I'll leave the office. Which is what I finally did, right? Because I can't be sitting at [the school] for an hour and the bus doesn't come, right?

As discussed previously, the afternoon commute was often complex and at times unpredictable. The use of the cell phone enabled the parents to overcome the difficulty of staging events so that at the end of the day, all family members were accounted for and on their way home.

Interestingly, the adults had their own unique uses for cell phones. For example, despite the hectic schedule, Kara's mom carved out a few precious minutes to relax and socialize with her friend while her children slept as she drove to school.

For me, I know this is kind of bad but a lot of times I talk on my cell phone to a friend who is commuting also. It's our only time to catch up. It's kind of...our... [social time?]

Yeah. That's basically it.... I hardly see her, she has a family too, she is a teacher; I used to work with her. We were always close when [we] worked together. She commutes to [her school]. It's our only time to connect.

Harry's dad enjoyed camaraderie and a little bit of sport as he and a friend experimented with different routes home to see who could arrive at their destination first. Using Nextel, not quite a cell phone but more similar to a walkie-talkie, this form of technology became a way to relay a play by play account of road conditions, route choices, and creative maneuvering.

Yeah. [chuckle] like me and my co-workers who live on our side, we try to... not race home...but we kinda... they have their own shortcuts, what they take, and I take my own shortcuts, then we try to compare.

[Are you on the phone?]

Yeah

Sometimes we say, "Okay, see how you go, because I have Harry, I can jump in the car pool lane," he can't, but he takes Moanalua, he jumps in the right lane, he cuts back although in the front.... and then, "Okay where are you at now?"

...Not talking on the phone, but we used the Nextel, so five minutes later...

"Okay, where you stay?..."

"Where are you staying now?"

I pass him...I mean other people have their own shortcuts, and we say....

"Your shortcuts don't work, we tried already. No work"... It's just funny.

[Did you find a good route?]

Oh yeah, we found out. So we know exactly where to go, when to cut over from...[chuckle]

On a more serious note, parents also networked about bad traffic conditions, warning their friends about closed freeways, or routes that were either promising or to be avoided at all cost. If no networking with friends was possible, parents turned to the car radio for traffic updates – crucial especially for the morning drive when time was an issue and in the afternoon when unexpected freeway delays occurred. The following excerpts showed how one parent used the radio while the other one relied on collaborating with another parent. First, Wendy's mom talked of how she used the radio to stay awake and keep abreast of road conditions:

But I have to listen to the radio, just listen to the radio, turn the air con up so I won't [fall asleep]...you know, stay up, stay up.

I am always worried about traffic, if there's accidents or anything like that...So when I get to the airport, just driving along listening to music and then whenever the traffic comes up, I listen for that too.

Second, Isaac's dad spoke of a parent with whom he exchanged information. This second family lived in the same outlying area as Isaac's, and the two drivers called each other with road updates.

Dad: Usually like with the Townsends, because when they were playing volleyball [after school extracurricular activity], we kind of know what the traffic...we kind of let them know they have to go to Mililani, but...see we have

more leeway than them, because we can take Kam Highway... They gotta go down Mauka side, so, they have to take the freeway.

[Traffic networking?)]

Mom: Well we try to check, yeah, make sure we know what the traffic really is before we leave.

Dad: Because I know that Mr. Townsend... called me once about some situation, but we hadn't even left town...one time we were at home, the second time he called us, you know.

Road updates helped the drivers plan alternative, time saving routes home or to town. The importance of knowing multiple roads, like Harry's dad, and being able to spontaneously change from the original "flight plan" demonstrated an adaptive strategy.

Besides the cell phone, the second piece of technology most used during the commute was the ipod, which was programmed with the adolescent's favorite tunes to relax or sleep with. A quarrel between siblings came to a quick end if one child plugged into her ipod and effectually shut out her opponent's contentious comments and complaints. Kara explained:

Oh we have two [DVD players] like because we have the type that goes on the seat, where your head goes. So he [younger brother] has one and I have one. So I will be watching a movie, and he will be watching a movie. Well, I don't like using earphones.... And he doesn't like using earphones too, so there's like two movies going on at the same time. Well like if his is too loud, I will try to like lower the volume, but he will get mad at me because he will say, "Oh no, it is too quiet." ... then like, I would just listen to my iPod and shut off my DVD player.

As Kara demonstrated, the ipod was a means of keeping the peace during the drive. When family members argued in the car, there was no place to escape and cool off. Siblings and parents were forced to stay within the vicinity; thus having a means of mental escape, though not physical, was an important adaptive technique.

Also on the ipod were games that could be played to pass the time. Yvette's mom explained the versatility of the ipod: "But now the games are on their iPod, but it's mainly for the music... and I know Yvette can... she can get e-mail, if she gets a connection ... on the iPod."

Yvette herself reported that she

...can do almost anything in the car. Like... most of the time at home, if I have free time, I watch TV. But in the car, like I have my iPod, which is portable, and you can like download episodes from your TV show or like movies onto your iPod and I can just watch it from my iPod.

As the previous discussion conveyed, commuters used technology for a variety of reasons. Entertainment was provided via ipods, cell phones, dvd players, and various hand held gadgets; technology tools also helped to maintain tranquility in the car and reduced stress. Radios, Nextel, and cell phones appeared essential to establish desirable driving conditions, facilitate the completion of homework by linking to internet websites, invite academic networking with classmates, promote socialization opportunities for adults and adolescents, and connect the family to better coordinate the complex commute schedules. Overall, the tools of the twenty first century permitted each family a way to exceed basic survival and truly exhibit their abilities to cope, function, and prosper. Technology allowed for both efficiency and pleasure while on the road.

Although technology offered several important ways to support commuting families, the real factor that underpinned the successful operation of the day's commute was an adult who assumed leadership for the entire endeavor. The odds of survival for a social unit, even as small as a family, increased under knowledgeable, caring, responsible leadership. Findings suggested that for the commuting families of this study, the adult leader was usually Mom.

Designated Organizer

Despite the differences among family procedures, the entire process hinged on a single adult family member to orchestrate the whole experience. With the exception of Harry's dad, a single parent, it was the mothers who got the ball rolling in the morning. They were the first ones up and out of bed; they were the ones to wake their children, or jump started the family into action. Mothers shouldered many extra responsibilities such as packing school lunches, preparing breakfast, or taking care of pets in order to keep everything moving efficiently. Because Harry's dad did these things too, it seemed to indicate that one adult must assume the leadership of this crucial morning hour because of the stress of leaving home on time.

With the exception of Harry's dad and Yvette's and Joe's mothers, who were all single parents, the remaining seven students were from households where two parents were available. It was interesting to note that although the father may be around, he did not seem to play a primary role in organizing the commute. To be fair, however, Remy's father and Kara's father left for work much earlier, but this still left four other mothers who seemed to do the primary commute work. There was only one couple that may have

been the exception, Isaac's parents, because mother and father seemed to share equal responsibilities. Here's what Pam's mom divulged about the mornings in her household.

I am usually busy. Everyone else isn't usually very busy. [chuckle] They kind of do the minimum and I am kind of doing a little extra, to help them... get out the door on time. If something needs to be done, I'll end up doing it. If ...my other daughter's computer needs to get packed, I pack it up, maybe or.... I'll feed the dog. I get the newspaper. I cleaned up the kitchen after breakfast so...and then I am hurrying them along. Like, "Are you on track?" You know, "Get out of the shower." Or, that kind of thing.

The adolescent children did not seem to be as rushed as the adults. Kara told of her mornings this way:

And you'd be seeing like, she [mom] would be like calling us downstairs to ...get up and hurry up because we are going to be late.... And well I get up slowly, so I'm just like taking my time. I go to the bathroom to like to fix my hair and stuff and I brush my teeth. And later, I would just like.... after that I would get dressed.

Similarly, Pam also talked about moving at an unhurried pace after being awakened by her mother:

And I sit there for a couple of minutes. And then mom called me about two times and finally I get up and go eat breakfast, then I go back upstairs, change into my uniform, brush my teeth, wash my face, in a much slower manner though, [than] I am saying, because it's morning.

Another student spoke about getting up only to fall asleep and having to be roused a second time. Multiple wake-up calls were part of the morning scenario for both boys and girls in the study; it fell under the lead parent's responsibility to rouse the children.

Yvette recounted:

So then my mom tells me to get up, so I get up. I go upstairs, I go in the bathroom, and then I fall asleep again in the bathroom. So she [mom] has to wake me up again.

In addition to being the driving force behind the commuting family, the task of maintaining the daily calendar fell to the organizing parent. Moms often carried a calendar or planner with them for on the spot updating. It was also not unusual for the managing parent to creatively devise ways to keep abreast of daily and future events.

Tom's mom good naturedly disclosed her system:

A lot of post-its... right on the door before I leave so I don't forget. And then I always have a... log that I write down every day.... what I need to do....something tomorrow might be due, or if I have to call for their haircut appointment for later on...

[Do the boys check it too?]

No, no, no that's just my notes. They see the post-its and they laugh. [Laugh]

To update the calendar, the parent was dependent on receiving the information from the school via letters or handouts that came home, e-mails, or directly from the adolescent herself. The eighth grader told her mom about a particular date, and it was written on the calendar. In fact, many families relied on several calendars: a stationary one, often posted in the kitchen; the other was a mobile calendar that traveled with the

adult. Harry's dad recounted how he started the calendar after his wife left the family to work in another state:

He [son] knows his schedule what he has because I mark it all on the door. The door that he puts...I mark all his notes...like from Monday, I put his whole schedule down. You have speech, you have math, you have....so get ready. So look at the next morning's list, what you have, and be prepared.

[You change the list?]

Probably every week, I have. If he has something then I'll change it.... it's ...just on a piece of scratch paper [chuckle] and I tape it to the door. 'Cause I need...I gotta remind myself too, with notes, you know.... dentist, and all, otherwise I forget.

[When mom left, how did you start your system?]

I just started it myself. I saw it on a show. I forget what [tv] show it was. I think it was "John and Kate Plus 8" thetuplet... 'cause she [Kate] had everything marked out. I figure do it that way 'cause it's easier.

Interestingly, while the parents were aware of the day's schedule, their adolescents might not have been. The students often reported that they themselves did not know what was going on and depended upon their parents to get them to the right destination at the right time.

I'd say the number one thing that helps me manage is my mom.... Because, I am always with her, so she knows what is going on, and like her schedule, more than I do, and so she knows like where we need to go, and like how much time we need to spend in there, yeah. (Kara)

Once the student gave information to the parent, and it was noted on the calendar, the student seemed to release it from memory, freeing up storage space for other matters that needed to be remembered. The technique of “memory sharing” or storing memories with other people (Gladwell, 2002, p. 189) in this case the family leader, was a strategy that helped maintain an orderly life with minimum effort. Wendy narrated her method of updating the calendar:

It is in my mom's planner. She tells me what's going on for the week and stuff...Because she writes it all down. As we go along, she just takes it everywhere and plans appointments.

[Does she get information from you?]

Oh yeah, she gets it from me...Or there's usually a paper to bring home, so then I show it to her and then she writes it down.

[So you tell her, she jotted down, and then she reminds you?]

Yeah.

Calendars allowed parents to know what events were poised in the near and far future; however, merely “knowing” did not necessarily translate into the adolescent automatically preparing for them. For example, most parents in the study spoke of how they expected their child to be prepared for the next day. This was easier said than accomplished. The findings showed that it was the designated organizer who frequently possessed information that a student needed to do the task – information that went beyond a date, time, or place. Joe confessed that his Mom reminded him

...of things, every day. Don't forget practice clothes. Don't forget your bag. Did you brush your teeth? Without her I would probably... like forget my practice clothes and then I would have to run like 100 laps, yeah.

Similarly, Remy claimed that her mother helped to “manage all my time.

Because she reminds me what I'll have to do, and what I didn't complete.”

It fell to the directing parents to follow up, to catch the “dropped ball” and do what the child had either forgotten to do or did not have time to do. So whereas the child might have packed his school bag, parents took care of the sports bag, as in the case of Joe and his mom: “Oh no his school [bag] he does his own. After school activities is what I take care of.” Using parents as “safety nets” might be one of several adaptive survival strategies which the adolescents had acquired, without consciously realizing it.

In an effort to reduce the frequency of reminders, delegate responsibility, and foster independence, the lead parent tried to transfer to her children the skills and habits to manage their own affairs. By middle school, adolescents were weaned from having their parents do things for them. In this way, the students developed their own routines, essential to successful acceptance of the commuting life style, which had been discussed earlier in this chapter. This transfer of responsibility came at different ages. For example, Wendy learned to be independent in fifth grade:

Pre-K, oh gosh...first grade...no she wasn't packing, I think she just started when she was maybe, fifth grade? I think? Yeah, fifth grade. Before that, I guess I was doing it. I was doing it myself...

Tom's mom detailed the way she used to do everything for her sons until she felt they were old enough to manage their own things

Oh yeah... Well when they were little I had to do everything, right? I have to get the backpack ready, put that in the car for them, get them in the car, make sure, you know, they had their shoes, that everything was ready. But now they're bigger, so you know, so they just get their stuff, then they go...I guess it just came with age...we just said, "Okay it's time that you do it." And their bags got really heavy. [Laugh]...And now they have a lot to carry, with practice, right? And that way they know they have everything, that they know they brought it into the car, their practice clothes, their school bag, baseball, everything... they know that they have it.

Pam's mom described the transfer process as her child's change in perspective: from being taken care of to handling her own affairs. Pam's mom also remarked that the process was a gradual one.

Yeah but they start learning it so early. If you are at three and a half, and you're going to school, you're commuting. At the beginning you just get up and go, right? From her [Pam's] perspective it's everyone's pretty much taking... everything is taken care of for you. Yeah I am sure...along the way, have to progressively learn to pack her own bag, and make sure everything is done, and ready the night before and.... She has to learn how long it takes her to get things done in the morning.

Yvette's mom said her daughter began to do things for herself by "second grade," but until then, she spoke of setting up an evening routine, which might have evolved into an independent habit.

I made sure that they had everything packed the night before. So that when they got to the car, they took everything to the car. Before we pretty much had a night time routine, checking... “Okay do you have your books? Do you have...” you know. “Is the backpack packed?” And then knowing what you want for lunch... Joe was one of the last ones to make the transition of taking care of himself. Joe’s mom narrated:

[So he's basically responsible for loading the car?]

Yeah. As of this year [Laugh].

[What happened before?]

I was doing it for him. So I said, “Welcome to the big league.” He's now 14, in eighth grade, “You're on your own.”

Now that the students were in eighth grade, parents, such as Isaac’s mom said that “it has gotten easier... so I think, now that he's older, it's easier because he gets... his own stuff together, right?” Eventually the other parents in this study, like Isaac’s mom, were free from the actual work of packing for their children and helping them dress in the morning; however, the adults were not free from reminding, urging, and hurrying their adolescents to move faster or in more efficient ways.

Lead parents also modeled behaviors that promoted success in commuting and encouraged their child to learn from the adults’ examples. Joe’s mom quipped:

I guess... they do what you do, they don’t do what you say. That has always been the golden rule. I try to see that all my stuff is there, and grab my stuff out the door, or I’ll put things there so I know... So he tries to do that.

Wendy's mom mentioned several preparatory behaviors that her daughter followed. For example, mom packed for the next day, so did her daughter. Mom prepared her clothes; Wendy did the same. Both kept their work areas clean. In a essence, "She follows me in organization," said Wendy's mom.

Harry's dad also tried to show his son how organized he was, by preparing several days prior. At one point, father and son had this conversation about planning ahead:

Even with work, like I need to be prepared. I need to write my material [s] for that day. So he asks me, "What are you doing? It's pau [finished] work already. Why don't you do it, during work?"

"I don't have time during work. So I write this down, so in the morning ...I have what I need...so I can complete my job. 'Cause if I don't, if I don't complete my job, I get scolding by the boss for not finishing your job."

"Oh yeah" – [Harry's response to dad.]

"Then I cannot pay for your tuition."

"Oh, okay." [Harry's response]

[A little chuckle from dad.]

Although parents tried to demonstrate behaviors that facilitated commuting, there might have been preparations that the adolescents did not see because they were either doing their homework or already in bed. However, whenever possible, parents capitalized on teachable moments like the ones previously discussed. This was one way that adolescents developed into seasoned commuters, but not the only way. Honing problem solving skills to address the challenges posed by the long drives also emerged from the data. This capability is discussed in the next section.

Nurturing Cognitive Capability in Commuting Adolescents

The findings from the data highlighted some notable ways that adolescents in this study surmounted the hurdles of commuting by developing creative solutions for even the most ordinary, everyday situations. These were opportunities for adolescents to analyze, come up with solutions, and make decisions to their advantage. Sometimes parents were also involved in the process as some of the examples showed, beginning with Yvette's story.

Yvette's mom described her daughter's morning behavior using the term "survival skills." Her daughter had developed tactics that compensated for getting up late in the morning and not having enough time to get ready for the day.

It's critical that we leave before 6:30. 6:30; it's like our deadline. And you know we stand there knowing she's gonna barely make it. She has to get her things in the car, or we're not going to make it. So we've been doing it for her.

[mom and brother?]

Yes. He volunteers and I think he does so because he doesn't like to hear me yelling so much [Laugh]

[He takes the initiative?)]

Right, but there's times when I tell him, you know, he shouldn't be doing this. Because otherwise she's going to feel that everything is going to be done for her. Because ...it takes her so long to wake up, and then to get ready...I think she knows that... she's learned that we'll do it. We'll get her things in the car. But she does know we will not pack up for her because we don't know what she needs.

Yvette's mom expressed that her daughter "knows" that if she slept later and ran out of time, her Mom or brother would pack the car for her. She had compromised, in her own mind, that her contribution to packing the car was to prepare for her own needs, gathering everything into a backpack, or bag the night before. However, that was where "her responsibility" ended. Yvette knew she should put her own supplies in the car, but as a growing teen in need of more sleep, she opted for the sleep, assured that her bags would be taken care of by a reliable older brother.

In addition to waking up on time and packing the car, one of the rules of this household was to take care of your own lunch. If Yvette could not even get up early enough to pack the car, she certainly would not have time to put a lunch together for herself. This was the way she solved it:

Now Andrew packs his own lunch. So she [Yvette] buys...see the agreement at the house is if they buy school lunch, it comes...from their allowance because there's always food at home. That... because I know they don't really like the school lunch. And I know if they get lazy, and just buy the school lunch, it's not going to get eaten. It's kind of a waste of money. So there's always food at home and they always... every week when I go grocery shopping, they write what they need for lunch, you know. Snacks, whatever. They write it on the list and I... it's no questions asked. I buy what they want.... Pretty much....So, she is into the CPK frozen flatbread things because then she doesn't have to make anything.

[She has to microwave it in class?]

Right. So she's taken care of that, that way. Andrew makes his sandwich. So I guess survival skills?

Yvette had figured out that bringing lunch from home did not necessarily mean that she must assemble it, as her brother did. She ordered microwavable meals on her mom's shopping list, which she would simply pull from the freezer as she left the house. The meal could be warmed up in her classroom, and she did not have to spend her own allowance to buy a school lunch that she really did not want to eat. So from this brief scenario, Yvette had a problem solved to her advantage: extra sleep, home lunch without work, while saving both time and money. It was a good example of how the adolescents took advantage of something or someone in order to accomplish what they must.

Another example came from three of the boys in the study, who developed a similar but efficient way to deal with the nightly task of packing their bags. Joe described his strategy, in this way:

Let's say like if I was doing homework, I would... as soon as I am done with that, put it right into my bag. It has formed a habit. I just take out what I need, yeah. I think it makes things simpler because like... if you take out everything and something falls that you need for the next day, and you forget about it, you know.... it just makes things easier.

Harry shared this same strategy, which "just came to him." He packed this way so he did not "have to keep re-doing everything." He did not want to do it in any other way because to "take everything out, do my work, and then put everything back in, that makes more work for me."

As for Tom, he resorted to the same technique, which he devised after he forgot his math book one day and did not have it in class. Following that one incident, he only

takes out what he needs and re-packs immediately before removing something else from his bag.

Three different reasons led to this efficient packing method, but the strategies all demonstrated ingenuity on the adolescents' part to streamline a simple task. By doing so, they reduced the risk of leaving something at home and discovered a frugality of motion which was time saving. The real motivation for their actions, however, was the fear of overlooking something essential for school the next day – which every commuter had fallen prey to at some point.

Forgetting.

Without exception, each family had a story to tell about the dreaded time a child left something at home. This was the universal cardinal sin that any family member could commit. More often than not, it was the shoes, because students did not fully dress before they climbed into the car, or because shoes were left in one car and not transferred to the other. As the adults shared their stories, they disclosed different parenting values and student problem solving skills that resulted in distinctively contrasting results.

The first way of responding to an adolescent who “forgets” was to have the child face the natural consequences of his omission. In this case the student learned to be better prepared the next time around; it was a lesson in accepting your mistakes and learning from them. Harry's experience was an example of this:

Yes. I just have to get over it, and just sleep it off. I just think about it and just say, “Oh well, that was my mistake and I should have been more responsible.”

Then I just play basketball and get my mind off of it.

In the second scenario, the child had forgotten something and the parent refused to go back home to retrieve it. Instead, an alternative was found to replace the item, often from a most unusual source. Pam's mother remembered the time when Pam left her shoes at home.

I think one time she had to wear someone's from my husband's office shoes to school.... he [husband] had to go and get someone's shoes... some small woman at his office. And she [Pam] wore those. I think she'd have to wear like his [dad's] socks before, you know because she didn't have socks.

On another occasion, Pam did not have a uniform shirt and had to borrow one from the school nurse, who kept clean, extra uniforms in case of emergencies. Other ways to retrieve a forgotten item: parents made a stop at K-Mart, fortunately opened twenty-four hours daily, to buy socks, shoes, or other supplies. Some parents recalled borrowing shoes from grandma or a cousin. The following was an anecdote from Tiffany, who resorted to technology to untangle her predicament:

If I forgot something, or if I'm going to be late, I would call my friends and tell them.

[What do you mean if you forgot something?]

Like if they didn't leave their house yet, because they lived closer, I would call them and ask them to bring it for me. Like my uniform, if I have the wrong uniform.

[You leave the uniform at your friend's house?]

Oh no, I just use theirs. And like for volleyball, like the practice shirt or something.

[And they will bring it to school for you?]

Yeah.

Tiffany learned to do some quick thinking to resolve her plight and discovered that networking with peers via the phone was one way to deal with forgetfulness, so she would not have to face irate coaches or teachers. Both parents and students, in the previous examples, demonstrated the value of creative persistence in finding solutions, exhausting all possible avenues.

A third way parents responded was to have the child explore all conceivable alternatives before making a decision. An example of this is provided below:

Yvette ...forgot her shoes. That was, I think she was probably in fifth or sixth grade... And I told her, I said, "Well you have.... what are your options?"

And she said, "Well, I'm gonna call poppa [grandpa], call him and see if he is still home, and see if he can bring my shoes."

"Well, you call. And I said, "What if he already left for work? And he doesn't come in this way?" And I said, "You understand you're asking him to come out of.... to go out of his way to come here to drop your shoes off."

And then she thought about it and then she said, "Well what else can I do?"

And I said, "Well, you tell me."

And she says, "Can you stop at Wal-Mart?"

And I said, "I am not buying you a pair of shoes."

And she said, "Well I'll pay for it."

So I said, "Well, okay that's an option." And then she remembered that Mrs. Ritman [teacher at the school] always has extra shoes in her car. And so she

called, and she [Mrs. Ritman] did have a pair of John's [her son's] shoes, and she said she might be able to fit it. So we came to school, she tried it on. She said it was a little small, but she said it would do. She didn't have socks. She just used the shoes.

In this example Yvette had to critically think through the possible solutions, make a choice, and accept the consequences of that choice. Here, Yvette chose to wear someone else's shoes for the day, which were too small, and without socks. She understood that this was her decision, in lieu of calling her grandfather to come out of his way to bring her shoes from home, and without spending her allowance to buy shoes from the store.

The act of forgetting something impacted a commuting child greatly. As both parents and students related, they cannot go home and get what they forgot, like students who lived in town. The actual act of "leaving something at home" often caused tension between family members and when parents scolded the adolescent – it made for a very unpleasant and even longer ride to school. This too was something to be avoided at all cost. Overall, the experience of commuting forced families to plan better, think creatively, make difficult decisions, and live with them.

In a "back door" way, the challenges of commuting might have also reinforced adolescent cognitive development. As the review of the literature revealed, the students in this study were at the age where brain development – particularly that of critical thinking was beginning to occur (Anfara, Mertens, & Caskey, 2007). Opportunities to problem solve were exhibited when Yvette figured out ways to solve lunch preparations without additional cost of time or money to herself; it occurred when Tiffany called

ahead so that her peer could bring her the necessary clothes for school or practice; and it surfaced when the three boys figured out the most efficient way to pack their backpacks with the least amount of wasted motion. Strengthening the skills of problem solving was just one way the commute might have had an unexpected positive effect on adolescent growth – from the challenges, emerged self learning and adaptations for survival.

The previous discussion explored how commuting adults and adolescents adapted to lengthy commutes to school. Because so much time was spent on the road, the car became a second home to these families; it served as a place of belonging. The interior spaces of the vehicle were customized for the personal comfort of each family member and, like any home, needed supplies were just a finger-tip away. To ensure that the commuting experience ran smoothly, one adult, usually Mom, was designated the as the leader. It was usually her skills of organization and calendar maintenance, which kept everyone else on task, on time, and headed to the right destinations. She also served as the adolescent’s memory bank and modeled behaviors that made for a smoother commute.

A number of technology tools supported her efforts. Technology provided a means of socialization and networking with others while maintaining the necessary lines of communication with family. In addition the commute experience both on and off the road required creative problem solving in order to successfully meet the ordinary demands of the day and built capacity in families to adapt or endure. That students and their parents did more than simply exist has been supported by the findings; the families “survived,” in a positive sense of the word. The considerations that students felt connected to their families, and that adults and adolescents alike were able to exert

decision making and had a sense of efficacy over their own affairs, indicated the presence of resilience. The findings from the data supported the presence of resilience and the part it has played in these families' lives as they coped with commuting.

Resiliency: A Family Perspective of Commuting

The term "resilient" was specifically mentioned by three of the ten participating parents when asked what they had learned about themselves or their families from the commuting experience. Their references prompted the researcher to use the lens of "resiliency," as introduced in professional literature reported in the literature review, to data collected throughout the study. Yvette's mom spoke of resilience when she responded to the question of what strengths she had discovered about her family from being on the road. She marveled at how well her children have managed the commute and all it entailed, even when she started them at a very young age:

...how resilient they are. You know I thought, there was a time, when I thought, "Oh my gosh having them commute at such a young age was probably going to be too stressful and..." but they have handled it, and I think they have handled it well. Where it is not a negative effect on their sch....., on their learning, on anything.

Tom's mom saw resilience, strengthening them as a family by bringing out their best qualities:

I guess resilience. You know, you can bounce back, although sometimes we fight and we argue about.... because we're all tired.... you know it always comes back to the family and being able to help each other out.

Lastly, Kara's mom said that resilience and the ability to persevere one day at a time could actually lead to a contented life.

You know I guess I've never really asked them, "Are you content?" But I think overall, they are happy with where we are and... because there are other things to factor in besides that lack of time, yeah? You know there are other things I think come into play. But, oh you just have to be patient, I guess, you know, you just have to be resilient and keep going.

Unfolding the concept.

Were students in this study able to take the potentially difficult situation of commuting, and surmount it? Initial forays in the data indicated this was possible. Evidence is provided in Table 6. Generally understood, resiliency means to be able to overcome an adverse situation.

Brackets ({}) were used in the Table 6 quotations to focus on something of interest in the data. Hatch (2002, p. 86)) used the term "bracketing" as a way of making something come to the foreground. This was useful to note first impressions, reactions, and reflections.

The five students listed in Table 6 showed how they took a negative aspect of commuting and saw an equally positive advantage arising from it. Wendy did not enjoy waking up so early in the morning, but she discovered the benefit of added socialization or homework time once she arrived on campus; Joe simply put the time on the road to a productive use to endure the lengthy car ride.

Table 6**Evidence of Resiliency Emerging from Data**

Student's Name	Challenge	Adapting
1. Wendy	“that I have to {get up early}, because I usually sleep late, and then {I don't really get that much sleep”}	“Well, I come to school earlier...I have {time to hang out} with friends... and that's positive. Like if I didn't {finish a homework assignment the night before, then I have time to do it.”}
2. Joe	“the only thing {negative} about it is {it's kind of a long ride”}	“...but it also brings out its positive things too, when {there is a long ride.} You know like {sleeping} and {doing homework} and sometimes {eating...when you don't have time to eat at home.”}
3. Harry	{“To get up early”}	“I don't know, my body is just {used to it already} from getting up early, so {I'm just like ready for the day”}
4. Tom	{“I couldn't get out of bed}, I was { too tired”}	“Overtime, { I just started to get used to it.”}
5. Pam	“I had to { wake up earlier, kind of annoying.} ... Well it was {a negative because I wasn't used to it...”}	“Now it's a {routine} every day to get ready and jump in the car and drive to school. It's like {second nature.} It's like you know, you just automatically do it, {you don't realize what you're doing sometimes}

The remaining three students, Harry, Tom, and Pam shared how their bodies simply became accustomed to the early wake up call, and eventually they physically adapted.

Mentally, the students also adjusted well because it became “second nature” as it did for

Pam, and they could be “ready for the day,” as Harry phrased it. These examples began to point to the possibility that the students were able to bounce back after being stretched by the new challenges of a demanding morning routine. There was a positive tone that seemed to override the fact that they spoke of “negative” aspects to the commute.

Another example of emerging evidence came through examples like the ones listed in Table 7.

Table 7

Emerging Resiliency: A Sense Self Regulation

Student’s Name	Quote
1. Tom	{“I started thinking, of... what if I start}....what if I did that... like {if I decided to do} a little every night, then I can space out my work, evenly.”
2. Pam	{“I managed the whole situation by}...like being prepared the night before so that I am not that late in the morning and I am not late to school. {I learned this by} experiences like forgetting your shoes in the morning and then you have to go and buy new shoes before school, or leaving your backpack at home, or forgetting to do your homework, you know, that sort of thing.”
3. Remy	“The fact that {I have the responsibility to do my own things now,} that the commute started. Like waking up on my own, and if I get up earlier, I have time to do things rather than getting up late and I have to rush.”
5. Isaac	“{the commute} it has helped me to organize my time and use it wisely. Because {now I can plan it} out so I’ll have enough time to do my homework and my extracurricular activities and still get to bed early enough so I can wake up early.”

Table 7 shows how the students discovered small ways to order their own lives. In the face of commuting, they appeared “irrepressible” (Morehead, 1985, p. 474). Once again, brackets ({}) were used in the Table 7 quotes to bring into focus something of interest in the data.

These snippets evidenced that resiliency was present in the lives of the students in this study, in keeping with the concept of resiliency as presented in the literature review in Chapter 2. The expression was broadly used to portray seriously challenged, at-risk youngsters who were able to successfully overcome difficult circumstances in their lives. Findings from this study strongly indicated that resiliency, as applied to commuting families, aided the researcher's understanding of how the adults and students coped with the difficulty of lengthy road times to and from school.

In this study, data from parent and student interviews suggested that long distance commuting produced difficult situations for adolescent commuters and their families. The ten student participants in the study voiced the stress of having limited time, living a hectic, fast paced, and complex life style, and adhering to strict routines and schedules. Academic demands and extracurricular involvement vied for the limited time available. Students in the study juggled to meet expectations in each arena. In spite of these challenging conditions, the commuting eighth graders functioned and achieved academically. They were resilient and displayed the following four resilient factors.

First, all the students in the study engaged in positive relationships with adults and peers (Bernard, 1991). In reference to adult relationships, the parents noted family moments both on and off the road. The eighth graders also got along well with their teachers, who reported no conflicts in class, or avoidance to interact with the adults during the school day. Additionally the students interacted with their peers amicably whether on and off campus through participation in extracurricular activities, academic networking, or just casual socializing during free moments. Teachers reported that the students in the study were not loners in school.

Secondly the students used the strategy of problem solving (Bernard, 1991) to deal with commuting dilemmas. Some creatively networked with peers who lived closer to school to obtain items left at home. Others devised time saving ways to pack their bags, met the challenge of preparing their own lunches, and learned to make do with the resources available to them. They also developed an acquiescence of mind to accept what they could not change. If traffic was bad, it was bad: so they capitalized on the extended drive to get more sleep.

Thirdly, within the home and at school, participating students were proactive and managed their affairs (Bernard, 1991). For example, students informed parents of events coming up so they were put on the calendar, knowing that their parents would remind them of these important dates later. In the car, they maintained their own “spaces” stocking their personal areas with personal items such as snacks, music choices, books, or toiletries. Even when students encountered problems, sometimes as a consequence of their own unpreparedness, they still had to problem solve, and live with the solutions.

Fourthly, the students had goals for both the near and far future (Bernard, 1991). Within the school year, they strived to make honor roll, earned good grades, and completed their work. Looking ahead, they had aspirations to graduate and attend college. For the most part, students spoke of academic goals rather than personal ones, which might indicate where the priorities lay. Commuting to a private school was a means of achieving these goals.

The previous discussion highlighted the presence of the four resiliency factors identified in the literature which allowed individuals who faced difficult challenges to

rebound (Bernard, 1993). When long distance commuting was viewed as a situation of challenge, these students demonstrated the marks of resilience in the face of difficulty. Protective factors were also evident in this study and their presence supported the adolescents throughout the commuting experience.

Protective factors: Family capital.

In this study, the high involvement of parents in their children's personal lives can be seen as the social capital they offered to their adolescents, which in turn served to create the necessary protective factors that promote the resiliency of young people in challenging situations. By providing social capital that protected their children, the families were able to achieve their goals of homeownership and private education.

Findings from the study indicated the presence of protective factors. For example, in each family, at least one adult stepped up to provide care and support for the commuting adolescent. This adult ensured that the child received a breakfast of some kind and made arrangements for supplies. Parents initiated conversation in the car by inquiring about the child's day, and showed their adolescent children that they were interested in their children's maturing lives. The adults also re-arranged their work schedules and/or pick up routines to allow their children to participate in activities after school. These were just a few ways parents made sacrifices to become a protective factor that promoted their adolescent's resiliency.

In addition parents protectively fortified their adolescents both academically and socially by putting high expectations in place. They expected their children to work hard and produce good grades. School came first. When parents spoke of the importance of their children achieving "better" lives and careers than they had, the students understood

that this meant they were charged with finishing their education, attending college, and becoming successfully employed. Such expectations created cultural capital, or resources that would help the students succeed in school.

Socially, parents encouraged their children to interact with adults and peers in different kinds of situations. The adolescents learned how to speak to their coaches, gain sportsmanlike conduct, effectively problem solve, and become well rounded. Because commuting students did not live near their friends at school, they established other peer relationships closer to home (Remy's mom). Participating in a community team, for example, provided an opportunity to develop friendships with young people who came from the same residential area but from different school cultures.

Lastly, parents established a strong sense of membership by building a welcoming and nurturing family unit for their children to belong as well as supporting participation in extracurricular activities. The fact that parents accommodated their children's desire to play sports or participate in academic teams demonstrated that their child's requests were heard; their voices were important in scheduling the events of family life. On campus, these students hung out with friends and represented their school in competitive events. School spirit or school pride was also a part of belonging.

The athletic program offered by Ascension Middle School provided many sports opportunities for such a small school. Almost every student that tried out for the team was accepted, if not for one level of competition, then possibly for another. Athletes could move from fall sports to winter to spring and be involved year around. Commuting students took advantage of these opportunities because their parents accommodated the

practice and game schedules. In this way, students felt a sense of being a part of a larger group.

Finally, in ordinary, random actions, parents offered support. Picking up the sports bag while the student carried his school bag or offering a casual reminder to stay on task while using the computer – these spontaneous occasions created “protective possibilities” (Morrison & Allen, 2007) that nurtured students’ resiliency. However, for commuting families, there was more range and value to the protective factors of resiliency, as was discovered in the findings of this study.

Two-way resiliency.

The review of the literature provided examples of children who became resilient in the face of difficult challenges. It required an adult or peer to intervene on their behalf and put a support system into place. The adult believed that the child was worthy of attending a private school, capable of reaching goals, and able to take control of her life. It was a two partner relationship: the stronger adult nurtured; the vulnerable child received. This customary view of resiliency suggested that the more capable member of the relationship did not have needs, was not fragile, and was “together” mentally, emotionally, and psychologically.

However, the car ride forced the child to be in close quarters with the parent for forty-five minutes or more. Within that period and that enclosed, familiar environment, the child could sense the moods and physical needs of the parent. The fact that the young passenger responded to the adult in a caring and concerned way, demonstrated this protective reciprocity.

Isaac mentioned that “if my mom looks tired, and she looks like she's about to fall asleep, I give her one of the pillows.” He also talked about the presence of a most unique tool in the car and how it was used to relieve the driver.

A back scratcher. For my dad sometimes since sometimes he drives and he gets itchy.

[Who scratches his back?]

Sometimes I do, sometimes he does.

Another example was provided by Joe’s mom who told how she and her son were mindful of each other’s tense frame of mind and tried to alleviate it.

Well usually when he’s all stressed out, I’ll tickle him. And that kind of brings him down...And then when he sees me stressed, he’ll call, “Mommy I love you,” and he’ll just lean his head on me. Or he’ll massage me and I’ll massage him.

Vice versa.

Adolescents also learned when to share a laugh en route, sing silly songs together and create a family memory (Pam). If nothing else, adolescent passengers might hand their parent a bottle of water, or at the very least, they had learned not to say anything at all rather than trigger an upset parent. They sensed the importance of giving that parent some space and time to cool off.

At home, students’ nurturing of parents continued as the adolescent helped to pack mom’s briefcase in the car (Isaac) when something needed to be done, sometimes the student took the initiative to do it, so that Mom did not have to. Yvette’s mom clearly illustrated the concept of reciprocity:

So I think I'm very accommodating with the time, and if they need help... that's why I will do the dishes. Sometimes I see Andrew is really busy, so I'll go and take the trash. You know, and I think they would do the same for me... They do, they step up. And I think, maybe unconsciously they are doing it.

In another family, Joe's mom told about her son's response to her needs:

He can really put out. Like you know, he's really tired, and I say "Joe, you know I need help."

"Okay mom," and he will snap out of his own grouchiness because I said, "I need help." You know, he will forget about himself, you know he's really unselfish.

Yvette's mom spoke of how emotional tensions were defused when older brother went the "extra mile" and packed his sister's bags in the car and in doing so appeased his upset mom as she waited for her daughter, who was making them late. Harry's dad spoke of his son taking an interest in his father's life by asking, "Oh, how is your work today?"

That commuters did more than simply exist has been supported by the findings; the families "survived," in a positive sense of the word. Instinctively devising ways to become protective factors for one another and the transference of family social capital demonstrated how spontaneously adaptive these parents and adolescents could be. How this was further accomplished in their home lives while addressing the adolescent needs of the eighth graders will be explored in the next section of this discussion.

Adolescent Development: A Window into the Commuting Lifestyle at Home

As discussed in the review of the literature, adolescence was a turbulent time of growth, placing physical, emotional, and social stresses on young adults (Susman & Rogol, 2004; Anfara, Mertens, & Caskey, 2007; NMSA, 1992). The challenges of

lengthy commutes superimposed additional difficulties faced by the thirteen year olds in this study. The third research question explored the ways that commuting to school by family car affected families' day-to-day lives at home. Findings from the data provided insight into how the pressures of growing up and dealing with commuting demands were handled.

In order to promote healthy adolescent development certain optimal conditions were recommended: adequate sleep, proper nutrition, physical exercise, opportunities to socialize with peers and adults in positive ways, and emotional and psychological nurturing. While it is true that all adolescents, both commuters and non-commuters experienced the challenges of puberty, and that parents tried to address these challenges in positive ways, it should be noted that the lifestyle of a commuting family was often at odds with the conditions that would most benefit growing adolescent children. The reason: inadequate time. This was the price of commuting; it was the toll extracted from families on the road and interfered with providing for adolescent developmental needs.

The following discussion depicts how time driven the parents and students were in this study, beginning with this statement from Joe's mom "Weekdays, I am always looking at my watch, always, yeah." It is important to pause and spend a few words to polish this lens of time consciousness through which the findings on adolescent development will eventually be viewed.

Saving Time

That just "five minutes" was considered a valued allotment of time was expressed by several parents: Remy's mom, Yvette's mom, and Harry's dad and students: Kara, Pam, and Tom. Yvette narrated a vignette that impressed this in her memory:

Because I remember, one time we were..... my mom told me we had to get to school early, so then we left like at 6:15, which is when we are supposed to leave to get here by 7:00. And the next day I looked at the time, we left at 6:20, only five minutes difference but then we got to school at 7:30. So my mom says, “See, that's the difference of five minutes.”

For Kara’s mom, even sixty seconds was significant and she tried to cull as many minutes as she could.

Putting their lunch bag on the counter, ready. If I'm really on it then I'll pack some stuff already, like snacks already bagged so it's.... you know.... one minute, if one [is] saved... right? Little things. But it helps.

Comments such as these invited a discussion about the need to save time and how this set the tone for activities at home. Time was viewed as a prized but limited commodity, and it was important that everyone’s time be respected. Saving time was what drove the planning, the organizing, and the many acts of preparation – all to avoid stressing, rushing, and making mistakes especially during that crucial morning hour before the car left the garage.

While commuting families in this study did not necessarily have a monopoly on the concept of “saving time,” they seemed to speak of it with a greater degree of urgency. The adults and adolescents knew how much time was lost when riding in the car as well as in daily preparations for the commute. This lost time had to be compensated for in some way, either at home, at school, or in the car itself. Tiffany’s mom tried to explain the mind set of saving time in the following quote:

If you have more time, then you wouldn't be so stressed. You wouldn't be rushed, right? So saving time by getting ready the night before means the next day you can just go through your normal routine and you don't have to worry about whether you forgot something or not.

In a household, where each moment was accounted for and treasured, everyone was packing – for work, school, or extracurricular activities and placing their bags by the door, ready to load into the car the next day. Students laid out their clothes, so the next morning they were not hunting for a belt or a pair of socks. Family discussions in the evening reviewed the logistics of the coming day's events to coordinate the driving between Mom and Dad. The organizing parent did a load of laundry to ensure there were enough uniforms for both school and athletics to wear the next day. As Remy's mom says:

...the kid[s] gotta know if they have enough uniforms because if they don't, I don't want to find out that morning... “Oh mom, I don't have an extra pair of shorts.” School shorts. They have to tell me ahead of time so I can wash. And then at least, I tell them, two uniforms, two shorts you have to have at least.

During the weekends, more preparation occurred to ease the finite time available on the week days. Cooking and freezing dinners for several days ahead rather than fixing meals nightly after a long day at work and being on the road was a favorite technique of Harry's dad. All these strategies to save time were teamed with foresight, that is, the ability to look ahead.

From the students' perspective, several acknowledged the urgency to save time. Harry put his view in pragmatic terms on one of his follow up e-mails:

It is an issue; you have more time to do hw [homework] and hang w/ [with] friends than waiting in traffic; time is money; it dictates my schedule so I need to leave on time or earlier because it's better safe than sorry.

In Kara's statement, which follows, she revealed how time-driven her scheduled day was:

Yes, because it takes so long to get to school, and we have to get up early and leave exactly at 6:00; we get home late because of traffic... [saving time] is a driving force because we have a problem w/[with] not enough time during the day; it is a driving force...

Yvette's mother said that she even planned when to buy gas, squeezing it in when her children were at after school activities, rather than sitting and waiting for them to finish. This demonstrated parents productively using every available opportunity for which, in the end, they might be rewarded with a few moments of respite, or a brief instance of relief from the hectic pace of a commuter's life. Without such occasions, the lead parent would burn out. Yvette's mom explained her need this way:

[Laugh] I need to save time for myself, for my downtime. Because I know that if I don't have even... even if it's just 15 minutes, if I don't have time for myself to rejuvenate, I can't do this. I...you know, I am realistic in knowing that I do have to have time for myself to do everything else. So, I have to have that...to sit and do nothing. And not have to think about anything.

[And this is daily?]

Yes.

Harry's dad expressed his wants this way:

Yeah. It's more time I can have for myself. I can at least sit and watch ESPN when I get.... do everything, do dishes, and have at least 15... if I save at least 15 minutes driving, then that's 15 minutes I can watch ESPN, or just have time to myself. Because I don't have time to myself.

In another part of the interview, Harry's dad summed his lack of time by good naturedly saying: "I have no life until he graduates [chuckle]."

On a physical level, Remy's dad found a moment to do some exercise while his daughter was at soccer practice. It was another example of judicious time use.

We live in Mililani, so there's usually practice at Waipio or Corps...most times he [Remy's dad] drops them [children] off, and if he has to do errands, go Costco or something, then he'll go during that time. Because usually it's about two hours, their practice. If not then he just goes there and kind of just walks for exercise.

The prior quotations suggested that parents must psychologically, emotionally, and physically take care of themselves in order to continue to "do" for their families and ensure a successful daily commute. It was similar to the concept that the caretaker must first tend to herself. However, their down time was very minimal, and if this is all they managed to squeeze out for themselves, how much time could they amass to meet the demands of their growing adolescents? Through the lens of time scarcity, the overarching theme of adolescent developmental needs will be discussed in the remainder of this section.

Adolescent Needs: How They Are Addressed by Commuting Families

As established in the review of the literature, the period of adolescent development was not a smooth road. Long time commuting parents noted differences in how adolescence impacted every day habits of their youngsters. For example, Joe's mom mentioned the need for her son to pack deodorant due to the development of teen-age body odor, and foot powder to take care of foot fungus from sweating in his shoes and socks all day.

Isaac's parents remarked that their son took several minutes longer in the bathroom because he had to add the morning ritual of putting in his contacts. Wearing glasses might have been faster, but teens wanted to enhance their appearances by getting rid of facial hardware. Isaac's dad shared:

He [Isaac] wears contacts, so he has to put that in last, right?...He found out...putting contacts in takes a while. (Chuckle)

Isaac's Mom: He's had to add that, in the last year, to his schedule, right? But I think the thing is too, is like, if you don't want to get ready early, then you're just the one to school later, right?

Wendy's mom observed that her adolescent daughter was spending double the time grooming in the bathroom:

But now that she's getting older she's spending more time in the bathroom.

[Laugh] I go, "You got [to] cut down your bathroom time by at least ten minutes." She stays in twenty minutes... Getting ready...yup.... changes.

Yvette herself confessed that as an adolescent, she had to attend to physical changes brought on by puberty, "Now I have to like do extra things before.... like I have to put.... I have to wash my face now, and then put face medicine on."

From the examples above, the students in this study showed themselves to be normal adolescents, concerned with the changes that were occurring in their growing bodies. From skin care to dealing with body odors to seeking to improve their appearances, these were typical teenage issues – all of which demanded more time, as Isaac’s dad and Wendy’s mom had noted; however, so did the greater demands of sufficient sleep, good nutrition, and physical and social development – each of which will be discussed separately.

Sleep.

“We only save time to sleep more.”

– Isaac’s mom

This blunt statement clearly indicated that commuting families did not meet the basic required minimum hours of sleep, in particular, for its adolescent children. Students and adults alike mentioned repeatedly that inadequate sleep was a problem. Coming home after an extracurricular activity could be exacerbated by the lengthy drive. Upon reaching the house, students contended with common place living needs: dinner, showering, chores (if any), and most of all, tackling homework. Going to bed late and waking up early were normal. Taking all this into consideration, how much sleep did these adolescents receive? Most teens in the study gleaned an average of seven hours, which was two hours below the required nine and a quarter hours for healthy adolescent growth (Carskadon, 1999; PBS Frontline, 2002).

When parents in this study talked about sleep issues, they expressed their worry and awareness that their children were not getting enough sleep. They noticed, for

example, that sleeping later was opted over getting up a few minutes earlier to eat breakfast, which was a point brought up by Kara's mom:

If they said, "Mom, I want to eat in the morning," ... I've never really given them a choice, but I mean, honestly if I were, let's say I asked them tonight, "Oh by the way would you like me to cook for you in the morning? And you get up earlier?" Chances are they would probably sleep. They probably want to sleep. I don't think they have an appetite in the morning to eat.

Parents also noted tell-tale behavioral signs in their children due to sleep deprivation which overrode their usual patient natures. Joe's mom recalled:

I think he's actually a lot more tired. You know I can see it taking a toll on him. Really...Bloodshot eyes, the movements are much slower than normal. Even his talking is a little bit more slow. But a lot of times it's a lack of sleep. Like [a] heavy day. ..Sometimes he's up until 10:00 [p.m.]. Sometimes even until 11:00 [p.m.]. And he has to wake up at 5:00 [a.m.]. So that's only seven hours. He needs nine hours to get decent to anybody. You know eight hours is barely cutting it. He'll snap after a certain amount of hours.... So he can't go below nine right now. He gets punchy...I think it's his all-around overall performance. It's not as good as it can be because of sleep.

When Joe's mom noticed that they were no longer conversing with each other, when "We are at each other's throats, 'What!' we are screaming, not talking already...That's the first sign, we had enough for the day, and let's just go home." After school events were skipped and they arrived home earlier for a better night's rest.

Kara was honestly aware of how her interactions with siblings changed when she had inadequate sleep:

I learned that when I am really stressed, I tend to get more angry and I fight a lot more with my brothers because I am mad. And I'm just stressed out and I just don't know what to do...Because I'm tired, and I just want to go home and rest.

On the other hand, Wendy was not cognizant of her character alterations, until her mother informed her of them: "I guess my personality changes when I'm tired, but that's according to my mom. And I didn't really see it in myself. So...I guess I get like grumpier [chuckle]."

These displays of irritable behavior fell in line with research findings that adolescents with too little sleep had a difficult time controlling their emotions which led to conflicts with others around them (Dahl, 1999). When both parents and adolescents suffered from lack of sleep, it was clear that tensions could elevate. At that point the parent must take control and defuse the situation by calling it a day.

What strategies did parents employ to help their children manage their disagreeable behaviors that resulted from sleep deficits? Tom's mom talked about how an angry outburst was addressed after a cool down period. Mom or Dad explored its cause, debriefing the situation calmly and patiently, maintaining the understanding that everyone was on edge after a long day. Family members received attention in a positive way, and issues did not remain unresolved.

But I think for them, the commute, the long commute makes them tired and sometimes grumpy, and so that, along with being an adolescent, [it] sometimes gets rough, but you know for the most part they are, they are very good-natured

kids. You know. And then everybody gets grumpy so...we let them be, and then after that then we say, "Okay, let's find out what happened. Why did we explode?" Because we all do that. Even I do that, Steven [her husband] does that, I mean that's just part of it. Everybody's tired.

Another strategy, promoted in two different households, was to set bed times, where the entire house shut down to force everyone to sleep. In the case of Pam's parents, mom admitted to being "early sleepers" and when there was no television in the house, everyone was in bed by 9:30. In Remy's family, Remy's mom tried to accomplish all the tasks early, then it was lights out.

We sleep early at our house too. If they have no real homework, you try to get everything done. We're in bed, I mean the whole family, we are in bed by 8:30. So we do sleep really early and, I mean, that's all of us, go to sleep, not just my kids, all of us go to sleep early since we all know we have to wake up early.

During the interviews, it became evident that there were two prime times when families tried to catch up on lost sleep. The first was on the weekends when adolescents were allowed to sleep in as much as they wished. The second was to gain more sleeping time during the commute itself. The adult drivers observed that once the family was in the car, everybody but the driver slumbered on the way in and frequently dozed on the way home after a brief "How was your day?" conversation. With blankets, pillows, a towel, or a jacket to curl under, the students adeptly reclined their seats, plugged into their ipod music, and napped. But even if the conditions were not optimal, and the seats were not comfortable, the younger family members found a way to slip into sleep.

All the adolescents confessed, at some point in their interviews, that for the most part, they slept through the morning commute, which suggested their unruffled acceptance of being in the car at an early hour and for long periods. Although morning commutes hosted family conversations, homework completion, eating breakfast, and test preparation, these activities occurred less frequently than on the afternoon rides home. When asked during the interview “What can you tell me about the ride into town?” typical student responses were:

Sleep [The whole way?] Yeah. (Tom)

I don't know. I fall asleep...I just put the chair back, and then I rest my head on the other seat. (Tiffany)

Well I don't know because I am mostly sleeping in the car. I pass out. First I eat breakfast, and then I will start to get sleepy, and then I'll just like pass out in the car. (Kara)

On mornings that did not start off well, sleep was the definitive solution to sibling disagreements that arose during the ride or parent-child tensions from the morning's bustle which were brought into the car. Because their adolescent bodies demanded more sleep, road time was an optimal way of meeting this need. The one time being caught in slow traffic could be viewed as a plus was when it lengthened the commute time, and thereby the amount of available sleeping time in the car.

Lack of sleep was not unique to the ten commuters in this study. From the review of the literature, Renee (2007) posted on an internet forum her concerns for inadequate sleep due to early wake up times. The topic of insufficient sleep was also voiced by the parents and adolescents who rode rural school buses to distant schools (Spence, 2000a).

The difference between the participants in the current study and those who were cited in the literature review was this: the students of the current study seemed to have found ways to make up for lost sleep during the ride and at home, and their parents helped them to do so by arranging bed time schedules and making sure the car had the accoutrements that encouraged sleep.

According to Jensen (1998), sleep promotes physical growth and the repair of bodily tissues. However, physical development while the body rests could only optimally occur when paired with proper nutrition. Good diets provided the necessary nutrients for the formation of bone and muscle. Due to time constraints, the findings showed that commuting families did not always have the opportunity for regular, nutritious meals to provide the body's building blocks for their adolescent children. Parents shared their concerns and their solutions as reported in the next section.

Nutrition.

Proper adolescent growth hinged on adequate food intake and quality food intake. Research suggested that the most successful way for adolescents to receive good nutrition was by partaking in family meals, where parents and children gathered around the dining table and ate together (Neumark-Sztainer, 2006). This time-honored tradition had many variations in the commuting family. First, some mothers prepared a full breakfast for their children before they left home. This required earlier wake up times to allow for food preparation and time for the children to sit and eat at the table. Remy's mom talked about her insistence that her children start the day with a good meal and making the time to accomplish this:

I have time to wake up early, so I think it's okay for my kids, to eat a relaxing breakfast. So we don't have to be on the run so fast. I rather have a little bit time to relax, get everything ready, and ummm it's just nice to eat breakfast with them. You know they can talk and they can just enjoy a little bit more the morning time before just rushing. They have a big breakfast, I always make sure they have... they eat a breakfast... they can't leave without a breakfast. And if something happens, they'll eat in the car. You know, we'll pack something to eat in the car. But they always eat... breakfast.

In other families, such as Tiffany's, "breakfast is on the fly." An example of this occurred when the adolescent did not have an appetite, such as in this scenario depicted by Joe's mom: "When he's really not that hungry, just wants a pop tart, or something, then he just grabs that. And a banana."

Between the two ends of the spectrum, were families in which breakfast was prepared for the children, but the parents did not necessarily dine with the family. The adults may eat a quick breakfast themselves, or have a cup of coffee, before calling the children to the table. The parent hustled and bustled in and around the kitchen, continuing to prepare for the day's commute, while siblings consumed breakfast and held conversations not only with each other, but with the parent who was present. In a sense, the family was together, food was on the table, a conversation occurred. This was the closest it came to a family meal for some families. Popular menu items to start the day were quick to prepare dishes: fruit, bacon and eggs, rice, toast, waffles (ready to toast), pancakes (just add water and mix), and yogurt. Cereal and milk were the most desirable

simply because of the convenience. Sometimes the adolescents prepared their own breakfast – if they had time.

The second adaptation of the family meal occurred in the car, in which breakfast was a planned affair. Once again, the children ate while the adult drove. It was still a meal, with parent and children together, in the same space, which allowed for some conversation. Isaac's family meal was described by his mother:

[Breakfast?]

Mom: In the car. We eat in the car. It's whatever I [mom] can grab out of the kitchen is what we eat. Sometimes, it's either yogurt, or sometimes we have sandwiches.

Dad: Or I bake banana bread.

[So you don't eat at home?]

Mom: Not breakfast.

[Always in the car?]

Mom: Yes. [Chuckle]

As another example, Wendy's mom shared her customary breakfast menu:

No. [we don't eat at home]. We eat breakfast on the road.

For breakfast we have oatmeal, mostly every day. Either oatmeal or cereal.

Hot oatmeal. Well I just put it in like a paper bowl. It is already microwaved and everything. Just a plastic spoon. Then I bring it in the car, and we just eat it in the car. Mostly her [daughter is eating in the car], and I [mom] eat mine like after, 'cause I'm driving.

Other families bought breakfast on occasion, but for Harry's dad, it was a regular stop en route. Breakfast drinks which touted vitamins or some kind of nutritional value, orange juice, McDonald's chicken biscuits, taquitos were Harry's favorites menu items.

Although breakfast has been regarded as the most important meal of the day, (Cooksey & Ojemann, 1963; Wolfe, Burkman, & Streng, 2000) supplying energy for learning and working well, some students refrained from eating anything at all. Kara disclosed her morning eating habits with this quote below:

Well like, truthfully, in the mornings I barely eat. Because maybe I'll eat like just a couple of pieces of cereal...if I am in the house, then I will eat, like a bowlful...but if I don't have time I will pack like cereal in a bag and eat in the car. Maybe like every other day, maybe.

When the students arrived at school, some ate on campus, others did not, waiting instead until morning recess at 10:00 before breaking their fast as in the case with Tiffany:

Oh, yeah. I normally don't eat breakfast.

[Nobody eats breakfast in your house?]

No, not really. Only when there is time.

[Do you eat in the car?]

No.

[Do you eat when you get to school?]

No. I'll snack at recess, like 10:00 something.

[So that is the first time you eat?]

Yeah.

[What do you normally have?]

Cereal. Like frosted flakes. And like fruit loop. Or Apple jacks.

[Who packs this?]

My mom. Or sometimes me.

[Do you get hungry w/out eating breakfast at home or at school?]

No.

Parents, aware of their children's growing appetites and skipped morning meals, made it a point to stock lunch boxes with snacks to last throughout the day. Harry's dad provided, "Maybe a fruit, couple of oatmeal bars, or something, some water, and whatever I have...little snacks."

Pam looked forward to "Bananas, some chips, soy beans... I do like my soy beans." She also added that her mother

...feeds me brain food. You know, blueberries are supposed to be good for your brain.

[Does your mom do research?]

Yes, she has gone on the Internet you know, just to get a vague idea of what's some good food for your mind or for your body in general. Once in a while, when I feel like eating something healthy, like I'm concerned...about my own health, she'll go and do this for me. Or like she'll... she'll do small things like whole wheat bread instead of white bread...

In general, parents tried to pack something healthy such as fruit and dry cereal, but chips, brownies, pretzels, cookies, local favorite munchies, and junk foods also made their way into mini coolers or lunch bags. Yvette's brother brought so many snacks for

himself and to share with friends, that his sizable cooler was nicknamed “the refrigerator.”

Dinner was the next opportunity to enjoy a meal together as a family. Eight managed to accomplish this feat every night, and some even set the table with a home cooked meal. The remaining two sat together three to five times a week. When parents did not have time to actually cook dinner at home, they bought take out dishes from frequented fast food places for convenience, then everyone assembled at the table to eat. However, when students were heavily involved in their sport seasons, and homework had to be taken into account, some parents purchased food so their teen could eat en route, to save time. Once home, the academic tasks began right away. This was how Tom explained it:

Sometimes if practice runs late or something...then my dad picks up dinner so I can eat then [in the car], take a bath right when I get home, then I can start my homework already instead of eating dinner together. So that is not as good, because the environment is just different. I don't know it just feels weird. I don't know, I just don't like it how it is like that.

[You don't like to eat in the car?]

Not always.

[You prefer to eat at family time at dinner?]

Yes. But I don't want to go to sleep late, so I would just eat in the car.

Sometimes I feel rushed. Sometimes...

[What do you eat in the car?]

Sushi. Or KFC.

From Tom's excerpt, it is evident that although it is expedient to eat on the road, that is not his favorite thing to do; however, the tactic will help him to save time so at the end of his day, he can climb into bed earlier.

Another challenge to dinners was the varying schedules for arriving home of individual family members. Tiffany spoke of a different dinner arrangement at her house which occurred a few nights a week: "Eating at a different time. I'm either doing something or they [family members] are doing something. My mom makes the food, and when we are ready we can just eat." In Tiffany's family, everyone dined at different times because each person was involved with their own work and conveniently took dinner breaks when they wished. It was another example of the "grab and go" mind set since the family also ate in different areas of the house.

In another household, Yvette ate by herself after late swim practices, since the rest of the family had already done so. However, her mom had the food prepared. Note the lateness of the hour, and that Yvette still has homework to complete before calling it a night.

Dinner is usually after I take my shower at 8:00. But I don't eat with my family. Because usually they eat when I am at swim practice.

[You don't mind eating by yourself?]

Not really. Because usually I'm eating and doing homework. My mom usually cooks for me. She like either cooks pasta or saimin. Or she buys something.

[Do you clean up yourself? Your own dishes?]

Yes.

When Yvette's mom spoke of her daughter's solo dinners, she had this to add:

She [Yvette] rather we not wait, for her. So... because then she feels rushed...because, you know, we are waiting, right? So she prefers that we don't wait for her. And she has been on her own. I usually make her dinner. And it's hot. And it's pretty simple because she likes pasta. So it's usually pasta and vegetables. It's a simple dinner, but I make it.

Despite the challenges of the commute, it was apparent by these different scenarios that parents tried their best to provide regular meals for their children and address their hunger during the school day. Obesity was not a problem that these adolescents faced. The parents also attempted to furnish a semblance of a family meal by their presence and availability to talk while finishing their own chores at home or driving. What also emerged, however, was the sense of regret that more could not be done in this area. Parents sometimes expressed guilt that the menu items were not home cooked, nutritious, or adequate – that is, a completely balanced meal with sizable portions, and time to sit and enjoy it. Kara's mom summed it up this way:

You know surprisingly, I used to enjoy cooking, I still do, I just don't enjoy it now because I don't have time. I think the biggest thing I always feel [is] that we shortchange my kids on their nutrition. We take out a lot, if I do [cook] it's just really quick, and like sometimes I don't have vegetables. It's just like the main dish and the rice kind of thing. Yeah sometimes it's lacking, you know [when I cook]. It's lacking.

I feel bad I'm not feeding them properly. I mean it's hard enough getting food for them, and I I always think, when they are older... what are their memories... like “Mom didn't cook”. ...Or like, “We are eating this again?”

....They're not going to have memory of “Oh mom, use to make the best dinners” [Laugh] .

The findings from the participant interviews revealed the irregular dining habits of the student commuters and the types of meals that the families consumed – some healthy, some not. Meal preparation required time; sitting together as a family to share a meal required even more time. In the face of a lifestyle where time always seemed insufficient, both parents and students acknowledged that their eating habits were not the best.

On a positive note, these anecdotes showed parental support for their commuting children. The entrees were not always the most nutritious, but the parents did the best they could for the family by devising several innovative ways in which they were able to provide meals for their adolescents. Yvette’s mother will have a simple, freshly prepared hot meal for her daughter’s late home arrival, or as in Tiffany’s case, dinner was served but the children ate as early or late as they wished. Tom’s dad made the effort to buy dinner so that his son would have a head start on homework, and for students who skipped breakfast, multiple snacks were provided.

All these instances were in sharp contrast to the stories of students who rode buses to school in rural areas of the country (Spence, 2000a). In the review of the literature, the student bus riders did not speak of being able to eat on the bus ride to school, that munchies had been packed for them in case they had missed breakfast, or that dinner was waiting when they returned home late in the evening. The differences may stem from the fact that the parents in the current study shared the commuting experiences with their children. The adults had more understanding of hunger or sleep deprivation, because the

parents suffered them too; consequently, as adults, they knew better how to support their adolescents over the rough times.

Besides concerns for sleep and nutrition, another aspect of adolescent development involved social growth. As young adults, these eighth graders were learning who they were by interacting with others (Good & Adams, 2008). Opportunities to socialize also required time. For the families in this study, the development of positive human relationships came from different arenas.

Social needs.

The word “socialization” is a derivative of “social” which refers to “of society or its organization, of the mutual relationships of people or classes living in an organized community (Ehrlich et al., 1980, p. 868). While Morehead (1985, p. 525) links socialization to such terms as “keep company with,” “camaraderie,” and “family circle” basically, socialization is creating human relationships, interacting with other people, while developing a knowledge of oneself and others. Socialization also includes learning acceptable language, behaviors, and responsibilities to meet the expectations of society. The findings from this study revealed that the “family circle” provided many occasions for “camaraderie” as well as scenarios for learning social skills in which parents and their children were able to “keep company,” in positive, nurturing ways.

The family unit, even one that spent much of its free time on the road, allowed for the socialization of adolescents. Doing household chores, engaging in family recreation activities, participating in conversation -- these ventures contributed to the development of social skills as well as served to support growing teens socially, emotionally, and psychologically. Although peer relations may take priority over family involvement

during this period of adolescence, the eighth graders were still minors, and as such were required to abide by the expectations of their parents, in whose home they lived. A discussion of each follows.

Chores.

“Because I know when he [Isaac] was younger, we talked [to] him about the laundry.” – Isaac’s dad

In the area of household chores, students reported that their tasks, if they had any, were minimal and demanded little time. Household jobs included washing the dishes, emptying the trash, doing laundry, cleaning their room, taking care of a pet, recycling, or setting the table. Chores might not have occurred every day, could have rotated among siblings, or were saved for the weekends. Despite limited time, the adolescents were taught responsibility by having chores assigned to them. It created a sense of worth and capability in the teen while establishing the understanding that as a member of the house, a contribution needed to be made for the benefit of all who lived there. This sense of belonging to a community and the responsibility of that membership was a social lesson which Yvette’s mom related:

You live here, you are part of this family, and to be part of this family, you all need to contribute...if you see something that needs to be done, common sense is that you should do it...I mean there is no perks for doing it. I mean the only perk is that you get to live in this house [Laugh]. And it's cleaner. You know but, it's still not as clean as we want, and we complain about it, but we know it's our fault...So it's our responsibility.

As a result, Yvette dusted the house at random times whenever she could fit it in,

sometimes during the evenings. Her mother remarked that when Yvette had to think about a paper for homework, she might be dusting.

Due to tight schedules, parents often finagled time to do their own household tasks. If the youngsters were involved in activities both after school and on weekends, the windows of opportunity to finish these duties were few. Parents accomplished chores by working around the activity schedules of their children, and expected everyone to pitch in. The delegation of tasks sent the social message that it took team effort to accomplish all the little jobs that made home life run smoothly. No one was excused. Tom's mom provided an example of this:

...everything revolves around what's their schedule, so I mean the house is ... that kind of stuff gets put off, right? The housecleaning, the laundry, all that kind of stuff so, and we just have to make sure that the uniforms are washed, and ready to go. That's the main thing... the clothes for tomorrow... So that I try to sneak in, like.... right before I go to work. So if I have like fifteen minutes, I'll clean one bathroom. So not everything gets done on the same day. So one load of laundry one day, one bathroom, one vacuum, you know so it's very sporadic on what gets done...And the kids have gotten good about helping with laundry, so when they are home, like the day when... Friday, when they didn't have school, so Tom did three loads of laundry. I asked him to do it.

Parents sometimes took the opportunity to teach their child a new skill when introducing a household task which might come in handy as an adult. Wendy's mom mentioned an example below:

Hmmm... Washing clothes....no, I still have to teach her that.

Cooking rice...well, once in a while, not too often though. Maybe only once I taught her.

The doing of chores, no matter how small or how irregular, established inclusion into the family unit and served as lessons in family socialization: what adolescents learned from the close family society was a parallel to expectations in the larger, outside world. The additional benefit was the acquisition of life skills, taught by their parents and representative of their parents' values. These spontaneous instructional moments built parent-child relationships.

As was pointed out by Spence (2000a), rural bus commuters did not have the chance to work or relax (Howley, Howley, & Shamblen, 2001) with their families. It was something the young bus riders missed – social time at home. The following section unveils the various ways the study participants handled family recreation despite time constraints imposed by commuting.

Recreation and family time.

Although Jimmerson (2007) learned that fewer than half of rural students who commuted by bus participated in after school activities, this was not the case with the ten students of this study of commuting in the family car. Eight of the eighth graders had signed up for sports teams, academic clubs, or both. The other two were engaged in other ways. Kara had piano lessons; Pam went to the YWCA gym with her mother after school. The difference for this high involvement lay with the parents' willingness to accommodate children's after school schedules, unlike the experience of rural bus riders who were tied to specific pick up and drop times along pre-determined public routes.

The findings further showed that student participation in sports or after school activities became a family affair.

“Our family recreation is what they [her sons] are doing.”

– Tom’s mom

For the most part, parents said that family recreation was joining their children in their extracurricular activities, whether it was attending a practice, a performance, or a sports event. In this way, parents showed their support for their teen, and also used the time to meet the parents of their child’s peers. Parent presence at these events, either after school or on weekends, afforded a chance for socialization between parent and child. It provided a common ground for camaraderie and conversation and allowed parents to enter into the lives of their children – something that became harder to achieve as adolescents sought independence and gravitated more towards their friends (Berndt, 1982).

What were other benefits of allowing adolescents to become involved in extracurricular activities even if it meant more time loss and a more demanding schedule? According to the parents, there was much to be gained. On the practical side, parents did not have to worry about leaving work early to pick up their children at 2:30 p.m. or to find some kind of after school accommodation (Isaac’s Dad). He also added that the students were not left to wander around by themselves to get into mischief or some other serious trouble.

Other parents said they would rather see their children engaged in a sport activity to maintain weight, (Harry’s dad), rather than coming home early just sitting down watching TV (Tiffany’s mom), or play computers and Xbox at home (Harry’s dad). In

this way, physical exercise to maintain healthy, growing bodies was addressed. In the review of the literature, one of the concerns of riding a bus to school over long distance was the lack of physical activity. Sitting on the bus, then sitting at school (Zars, 1998) coupled with the reluctance to play on sports teams after school, created an unhealthy, sedentary life style. The long distance car commuters in this study were involved in baseball (Tom), basketball (Harry), soccer (Remy), soccer and volleyball (Wendy), volleyball (Tiffany), basketball and kempo martial arts (Joe), tennis and volleyball (Isaac), swimming and weight training (Yvette), and gym workouts (Pam). Students were sometimes involved in a sport all school year, moving from the school league to an outside league or signing up for a different sport when one season ended. They did not lead “couch potato” life styles.

Of equal importance, parents felt that after school activities kept their children “well rounded” (Wendy’s mom). Children “learn sportsmanship and meet other people in our community, it’s like a social thing for them” (Kara’s mom) and develop “discipline” (Yvette’s mom). Students discovered how to “relate to people differently in different environments” (Pam’s mom). Sports activity was a way to bring “balance... You know, learning how to adapt with schedules like the real world” (Joe’s mom), and from Remy’s mom, participation allowed her children to explore and realize their own talents: “I just don’t want them to just do school work and not have other stuff that they are interested in” (Remy’s mom).

These parents lived the American vision of education as being broad based and extending beyond the three R’s (Berliner & Biddle, 1995). In addition, several parents had noted the socialization value present when their children participated in these

activities: the students were forced to relate to adults outside of familiar family members, build relationships with peers, and develop socially appropriate ways to handle different situations, such as displaying sportsmanship and self-discipline. These sentiments aligned with the research on extracurricular activities conducted by Barnett (2005) who focused on ways extracurricular activities impacted adolescent formation of personal identities. Eccles, Barber, Stone, and Hunt (2003) reported the benefits of adult guidance by coaches and advisors, while Hollrah (n.d.) described the cultivation of lifelong social skills.

On a different social level, Remy's mother explained her reasons for wanting her daughter to play sports in an outside of school league, in addition to her school soccer season:

Yeah, so they can meet other friends...It's so hard..., because they go to school in town, to have friends because everybody lives so far away. So at least when they have some sports, a lot of them are more in the same kind of area...Friendship, the closeness... because I remember I had a best friend that lived close by, and I could invite her over to make cookies... Remy can't...her school friends live so far away. I mean, once in a while, yeah, they can come over, but not like how I was growing up, that they can come over almost every day...And that is the only disadvantage, and I feel bad for Remy because I loved it when I was growing up having that closeness with a good friend. But that is the only thing that she's missing, so I'm trying to have her go meet people in our area.

The findings of the current study revealed the many reasons why parents of commuters allowed their eighth grade children to become involved in both school

sponsored and outside of school sponsored teams and clubs. This discussion focused primarily on afterschool sport endeavors, but the students in this study were often involved in academic teams as well, with speech, math, and drama teams, among the most popular. There was considerable time juggling in order to accommodate the lives of these active students not only on weekdays, but also on weekends when athletic competitions and academic tournaments were held.

After school activities were looked forward to and were a part of school life. The students themselves wanted to join sports and school teams because it was a “stress reliever” (Joe); “to be with friends” even if “it gives me less time to do my homework,” (Wendy); it “boosts your physical stamina” (Pam) and it was a tactic to “relax” and “stay physically fit” (Isaac). It might lead to a “scholarship” (Harry), or participation in a college sport (Yvette), while membership in an academic team, “is helpful in what you're learning” (Yvette).

The bottom line: the adults said there was enjoyment; the kids said it was “fun,” and for these reasons, their children’s participation in extracurricular activities was a form of family recreation, peer socialization, and physical fitness. Tom’s mom described the great lengths to which she and her husband went in order to give their boys the opportunity to play sports:

We always had them involved in sports in Mililani even though it meant hurrying home, if we have to, so that they would make their practices in Mililani. So that would mean my husband would have to cut his day short at work so that he could do the.... you know, so he spends a lot of time doing work at home at night.

Because he leaves the office early, so that he can do the commute, the driving, yeah.

Remy's mom established the high priority that extracurricular activities had in her family life when she said, "I mean I want them to experience... and as long as we have time for it, we'll make time... as parents, we will let them do it." Notably, this same sentiment was shared by all the parents in the study.

To further build fellowship, family members also tried to engage in activities together. For some the event might be as simple as watching television (Tom), playing board games, or shooting some hoops (Isaac), or going to a movie (Harry's dad). Each parent found a niche, an inroad to bring about a social family time. In Tom's family, mom chuckled: "Sometimes they play like the Wiii thing and we play, but I don't think I'm [too] good. I just sit there and I laugh at them and I watch."

Harry's dad carved out some time to spend one-on-one with his son:

...when we have free days when there is no practice, we try to just spend more time. I take him go fishing or something.... I will give him an ultimatum, "You, go home, you finish your homework," I will make sure he finishes his homework, "Okay I will take you fishing." Like on half days, if there is nothing on Tuesdays, I'll try to work on my schedule where I leave a little early, "Okay, you did your homework, okay good.... then I will take you fishing after, if you finish." ...But I check his homework, make sure he is done, no tests, then we just go and relax a little bit. Just do something else, that me and him can enjoy together.

From these examples, parents made the effort to establish ways for the family to be as normal and wholesome as possible, overriding the time lost to driving long distances. Instead of allowing the demands from the commute to consume them, parents were motivated to spend time with their children, and perhaps this was where “quality time” versus “quantity” might be exercised at its best.

Talking story.

“We only have like maybe thirty minutes of family time. We just talk.”

— Wendy’s mom

The final arena of family socialization happened in the conversations that took place between parent and adolescent. Discussions were part of family meals and the long drives to and from school. Dinner talk was more limited, often thirty minutes or less. Eating was the primary concern at the table and once done, adolescents were off to do their homework; parents tackled chores. It was already late in the evening so exchanges were not leisurely or prolonged. But in that short time, parents and children connected.

Topics included talking “about something funny” or “how the day went” (Wendy’s mom), “what happened at school” (Kara’s mom), “volleyball” (Tiffany), “What are you going to do tomorrow” (Remy’s mom), “what needs be done...what is coming up” (Pam’s mom). Isaac said “sometimes my dad... is giving me tips about some of my sports, or “they [parents] talk about what they used to do, when they were kids.” “Jokes” were shared (Wendy’s mom), while Tom talked “about their friends, or even what is happening with [dad] and his work” (Tom’s mom). Sometimes the family watched television and commented “about the show” (Joe’s mom). There was also dialogue on current events (Tom’s mom), or as Yvette recalled, “My grandpa [who dines

with Yvette's family] and my brother talk about like golf," a shared interest. Overall, the topics were light, humorous, or practical and allowed the family to unwind and relax.

The conversations appeared typical of any family, commuters and non-commuters. However, because these dinner conversations were not always achievable on a daily basis and because the dinner hour was affected by time constraints, at least two parents mentioned that the mood for conversations was expected to remain amicable. Pam's mom emphasized: "If we're going to do something serious, [it] is usually not at the dinner table." Instead time after dinner was set aside for addressing weighty concerns, and conversations were directed to the individuals involved, rather than the entire family.

In Kara's family, an accord was reached to maintain congeniality around the table. Kara's mom drew a distinction between discussing global news of a solemn nature and topics that might cause personal tension for any individual at the table.

We try, we made this point...we try to keep negative things out of it. So I remember, it used to get negative sometimes, but then we have this agreement that we wouldn't talk about negative things. Not current events, not current events [bad news]... but mostly what happened during the day.

Apart from setting aside time at home to discuss matters of consequence, when else could such conversations occur? The answer: in the car. Yvette's mom describes why:

Because it is very intimate, you're in the car, so we talk a lot. And you can't just get mad, and walk away. [Laugh] So no matter what kind of conversation you are having, ... you're... they are a captive audience. They can't get away from

you. And I would, and I think they have been more open, mainly because I have had to learn that they are going to say things or tell me things, that I really don't want to hear or agree with, and I can't just go off. You know, sometimes I have to.... I have learned that what they have said, you know what they have told me, whether they made a bad choice or... it is done. And we have to go forward. And, you know, because I can't be driving if....but it has taught us a lot. I think it's kind of like our... "What's said in the car, stays in the car," [Laugh] because it seems like that's when they do come out with it. And yet, because we are all there, it's not...so I think Andrew and Yvette are closer for that too. Because we're... we know everybody's business.

The car provided optimum conditions for serious talk. First it was confidential. No one else was around to hear what you had to say. Even if the conversation was totally private between one child and the driving parent, an optimum moment to hold the dialogue could be chosen when the sibling was asleep. The confidentiality was nearly total, and teens could open up without feeling discomfort. Secondly, there was no escape. For a good forty-five minutes or more, neither the adult or adolescent could put off listening to the other person; it was almost as if you had undivided attention from both parties involved. As Yvette's mom observed, such sustained attention was difficult to attain, even in families who did not commute. Yvette's mom laughed: "I don't feel like the time on the road is.... I've actually come to appreciate it more. [Laugh] because we do have quality time in the car, you know, and I think.....sometimes maybe, some other parents don't even have that [at] home."

From an adolescent's perspective, Remy had learned that she could address any issues that bothered her on the road for just these reasons:

I started to get closer to my mom now that I spend time with her too, more. I can trust her telling me more things about school and everything. Like I can tell my mom easily and I won't feel more ashamed like before I felt.... I would feel ashamed for not being that close to my mom if I tell her something. But now I'm not really.... I can just tell her that and I wouldn't even care but now.

[Why do you think the commute brought you closer to your mom?]

Because of that long time, I can talk about things more easily and well no one else is there but my brother, which is usually sleeping.

Isaac's parents also recognized the difference between car and home talking opportunities. They noted that once the family reached home, everyone went their own way. But while they were "kinda stuck in the car with each other [Laugh]," they were forced to be together and interact (Isaac's dad). Topics that came up were academic and test performances, social concerns in school, or simply time to have a more adult conversation. There was even the occasional lecture or scolding, which parents tried to keep to a minimum in the car.

Parents sensed that the ride home was not the best place to address these types of issues, especially when the child might feel at a disadvantage, having nowhere to escape the tirade. But when a teen wanted to talk, as Kara's mom said, you put everything aside, and listen.

... there are sometimes I notice, that if Kyle is awake ... if you catch them at a good time, he'll start talking about all kinds of stuff. But it's basically you go with

his own mood, because if you ask Kyle, or I don't know, a teenager, and you feel like talking, they won't talk when you feel like talking. They'll talk when they want to talk. Right? So I notice, once in a while, he'll want to talk. And seriously... this is what I try to do... I notice that he's awake, 'cause I've... we had a lot of good conversations in the car, I purposely don't answer my phone. I put it on vibrate. Because I want to take that opportunity, if Kyle is awake, because we've had good conversations when it's just me and him, talking in the car....so I just wait for his cue.

Earlier in this chapter, parents shared their perception of the commuting experience as stressful and rushed. However, when asked what positive outcomes resulted from commuting, if any, they almost all mentioned that the time in the car was a time for talk and bonding. Remy's mom said,

I guess it pulls us closer because everybody is kind of together, you know? So we end up being more... I guess we were always close but just.... You know, we will always have each other now. So it is just closeness. We learned to be more close because we all go to school in town...We come to school together and then we go home together.

Because of the closeness of quarters, discussions in the car were reported as a source of emotional and psychological support for the growing adolescent. Hormonal changes that occurred during puberty initiated stress (Caspi & Moffitt, 1991). For example, the eighth graders had questions concerning uncomfortable bodily changes, difficult decisions, or upsetting peer conflicts. Parents described their vigilance in conversing with adolescents who were vulnerable at this time of life. Although their

commuting children sought independence, parents conveyed the importance of being receptive and available to provide guidance. For a commuting family, riding in the car was a boon to address such issues.

Parents noted that it was during the precious forty-five minutes on the road that teens spoke about what was troubling them, vented, complained, celebrated, bounced ideas, and could just be themselves without sanction. Parents and siblings gave emotional and psychological support to help a family member cope with a bad day. The researcher noted that the car became an incubator for nurturing. Joe's mom mentioned the importance of providing encouragement and optimism before her son exited the car:

We basically talk about what's going on. You should do this, okay... this and that, this and that... give him more positive affirmations to start the day. I remind him of how much I love him, and he falls asleep again, then I wake him up and I say have a good day.

Tiffany's mom specified that the talking time was to debrief the happenings of the day, to release everything before reaching home. It was a way not to bring home what had upset you, a way to move on.

I guess as a commuter you have time to kind of detox before you get home from the happenings of the day. You can spend that time.... and then when you get home, it would be, that is home life.

Kara herself said that being in the car was comforting, a place she could just let things go: "It feels good to just, like, sit in the car I guess, because it's like a chilling place for me." [chuckle]. This suggested that the car environment acted like a safe haven after a hectic day.

In addition, the commute time was not only for serious talk. Parents and their children reported bursting into sing-alongs with music blasting from their favorite radio stations. They spoke of laughter erupting when pointing out observations of other drivers along the way home, and Wendy's mom mentioned girl talk between mother and daughter: "What are we going to do with our eye brows, or she wants to cut her hair." According to Pam, these incidences became family memories:

...when it is fun.... a positive experience because you get to keep that precious memory locked inside your head. ...Or it's like you find pleasure in the moment. You have to take advantage of people while they are here. And you know like every little thing counts because they build on top of each other...and when they build on top of each other, then you start getting monuments of good moments, good memories.

Taubenheim (1979) researched the desire of adolescents to be accepted by supporting peers. The findings of the current study showed that another source of such acceptance and support comes from the family, particularly on the route to and from school – commuters in family cars in this study developed a bonding experience that rural bus commuters did not experience.

Finally, in reviewing all the interview comments concerning conversations en route, the researcher identified one last benefit: family members came to know each other in ways that would not have occurred outside the car. In this manner, the family unit was strengthened. Three examples are presented below. The first was reported by Remy, who came to know her younger brother during the ride and found him supportive to her endeavors:

By staying in the car longer in the commute, I really get to know my brother more. Because before I used to think he was really mean, but now that he tests me [in academics] ... so I came to know the kinder side of him. Because of the long hours every day, I spend about an hour of studying next to him, so yeah I really got to learn more about my family.

The second example came from Harry's dad who valued the additional time during the commute because it resulted in more compassionate parent-child interactive time outside of the car. Harry's dad readjusted the way he related to his son, forming a more adult relationship in acknowledgement of his son's evolving maturity.

I kind of grew a little bond with him. In like a father-son ... where we didn't have it before. Because I was always kind of hard on him in early life and all that, and then I just learned to be more patient with him, understand him, yeah, it's pretty good.

[What in the commuting experience caused that bonding?]

I just see him. I guess, it's not only the commuting, it's everyday life because every day, every weekend I am with him.... I see him every day, yeah? You just.... you do things, you joke around where we never used to do that kind of stuff before. It's almost like he's in puberty now going into manhood, and you gotta treat him like a man already, you can't treat him like a boy anymore. So it's been pretty fun going through that stage with him, going to manhood and all of that.

[And that's in the car?]

Yeah

The last example came from Pam, who rode to school with her dad. She expressed how she valued the commute conversations because she learned about her father's childhood, and saw him up close – something that gave her a vantage point that other family members did not have.

With dad, if we are talking about something, I might ask him about his childhood because I don't really know much about it. Because... well... see my dad had a really cool past...and I have only heard bits... like tidbits of it.

It's pleasant because I am seeing a side of my dad that I don't usually see. I like knowing my dad.

[But you do because you're in the car with him?]

Yes. I think out of all four of us, I know my dad the best....I know his.... the songs he's going to sing to, I know his.... I know his very expressive face, I know his smiling face the best probably too. Because out of the two of us, out of me and my sister, I am Daddy's little girl. Yeah.

For Pam, the unearthing of her "roots" by understanding her father was also a step in discovering who she was as well. The conversations were part of her identify formation. As in Erickson's (1963) fifth level of psychosocial development, Pam matured by listening to her father's stories. She learned about his values, values that she may eventually adopt as her own.

Before concluding this report of data about how commuting adolescents socialized, something must be said about communicating in the digital age. As mentioned before, students possessed cell phones, and at home, they had access to internet connections. Because the students who commuted to Ascension School

generally lived far away from their friends, they used technology to keep in touch. The findings revealed that the ten students of the study used text, computer chats, and their cell phones like any other non-commuting adolescent – to get the latest gossip, to multi-task while doing homework, and to gain information. Most of their peer socializing occurred at home before, during, or after homework tasks were tackled. During the morning car rides, the students slept on the way in to school. On the afternoon commutes, the students were engaged in sleeping, conversed with family, and sometimes doing homework or networking with their peers on the phone. Socialization with peers occurred, but it did not appear to be a priority. In fact sometimes the students preferred not to socialize with peers while on the road, as Harry shared:

No, I'm too lazy to use my cell phone. Because I talk to them every day in school so there's no reason to talk to them after school.

[If they communicate with you, you don't answer?]

No I do, but then I just say, I have to go. And then I don't talk to them again. I talk to them later.

But during off road times, the commuters in this study showed themselves to be normal adolescents with a strong interest to socialize even when time was limited. The average amount of time spent on socialization by computer use was about an hour on week nights. The longest length of time reported for such socializing with peers on week nights was two hours; the amount of time depended on the quantity of homework that a student had completed and how early the student arrived home. This finding regarding time for adolescents' computer networking supported previous research regarding all adolescent students which reported the average adolescent used a computer to socialize

for an hour a day, longer if students multitasked (Roberts et al., 2005). Socializing with friends occurred even when it was getting late and the adolescent was expected to be in bed, suggesting that peer socialization through virtual means was an important part of the adolescent's day. It was also a factor that could impede the acquisition of a full night's sleep. For example, Wendy disclosed:

But like when I get home, then after I'm done with my homework, or sometimes before and sometimes during, that's when I socialize... I usually always end up like 11:00 p.m., about...For socializing I probably do maybe an hour, hour and a half maybe...we usually start texting at around like nine, 9:30 around there.

Overall, when comparing the ways that commuting students and non-commuting students socialized, the most significant difference occurred in the extended time commuters spent in the car with their families. On the road, these commuters had the advantage: they could talk story with their friends using technology, if they so desired, but they also had person-to-person time with their siblings and parents, bonding and creating memories, in the close environment of a car, an environment non-commuters and bus commuters did not experience.

Summary

In this discussion of the findings, the theme of saving time served as a backdrop to view adolescent development and home life. Because of the lengthy drives to and from school, parents and students were aware of the need to save time. This was manifested in the way they organized their home lives and how parents sought to address the developmental needs of their growing adolescents, which is yet another clear theme that emerged from the data. Although lack of sleep was a wellness concern voiced in this

study, students compensated for the limited amount of sleep at home due to late nights and early wake up times by sleeping during the commutes both to and from school. Commuters addressed concerns regarding adequate nutrition by packing breakfast for adolescents to consume on the road, preparing family meals as frequently as possible (especially in the evenings), and stocking a number of snacks to last a hungry teen throughout the day. Students' opportunities for physical exercise came from after school participation in extracurricular activities, made possible by parents who were willing to accommodate practice times during the weekdays and weekend tournaments. These activities also provided family recreation and gave adolescents the chance to socialize with peers and adults outside of the family unit.

Further socialization took place within the family arena itself while doing chores, and participating in both scheduled and spontaneous interaction among family members. Most notably, the commute to and from school offered a moment adults and children cherished to bond and learn about each other. Emotional and psychological support was evident during the types of conversations that occurred in the car's intimate environment. For commuters, home life continued in the car – the extended domain for nurturing, identity formation, and care giving. Adults and children enjoyed a concentrated family time, a solidarity that might not have taken place without the commute. As Yvette's mom put it simply: "Bonding. It's how I would describe it. Because I cherish the times we have in the car."

Parents who spent time at home and in the car with their children were clearly cognizant of the needs of their growing adolescents. However, there was another group of adults who interacted with the students in this study for much of the adolescents' day

at school. How students managed themselves in school, how teachers perceived commuting children, what interventions parents put into place to help their children succeed, and how the school can support commuting children was the focus of the fourth research question and is reported next.

Commuting Students at School:

Perspectives from Students, Teachers, and Parents

In this section, the ten commuting students narrated their school life experiences. To give a fuller picture, the teachers and parents of the participating students also shared their perceptions of what occurred in school and how commuting has shaped the on campus lives of these adolescents.

Adolescent Concerns In School

The data for this portion of the discussion was collected in two ways. First, the students shared their perspectives through two separate interviews held during the school year. As an additional way to gather current information on student life, the eighth graders were asked to blog for one school week. By logging onto a computer during the school day and later in the evening from home, they could spontaneously relay what they were experiencing. For this reason, blogs quoted in this chapter will indicate the time and day that the entry was written. This supplemental information is part of the data itself and provides additional insight into the eighth graders' lives in "real time." Students were prompted via e-mails to blog, and sometimes the teachers reminded them as well. During the course of the five days, the messages were sent inconsistently. A total of 128 messages were received out of a possible 200. All ten students did contribute at some point.

Daily queries were given, but questions throughout the week were mostly along similar lines. At the same time students were reminded that the site was private so peers uninvolved in the study should not be making contributions. The prompts for the week may be found in Appendix F; Monday's, the first day of blogging is provided here:

Here are some things you can write about today -- and feel free to address anything else you want! You don't have to stick to the "script." If you are stuck, these questions might help....

1. How are you feeling? Out of class? In class?
2. What did you do on the weekend? (school work wise and play wise, etc.)
3. How were classes today? How did you participate?
4. What did you eat for breakfast/lunch/dinner?
5. Blog about anything else you wish to say about your day.
6. What happened on the ride to school?
7. Describe your day.

Most students addressed one or two questions in any given blog session. After reading one day's blogs, I responded to the students requesting that they clarify or provide more detail when they wrote messages the next day. For example I asked them what they did during their free time at school or how class activities affected their learning. These questions were intended as a means to identify effective and non-effective teaching strategies, particularly for commuting students. The students did not always elaborate; however, for all ten commuters in this study, long timers as well as "newbies," perhaps one of the biggest challenges was fighting off the urge to sleep while

trying to learn. This theme, called to mind, previous parent concerns that their adolescents were not fulfilling sleep needs. Based upon the findings from student interviews and blogs, these parental anxieties were well grounded.

The challenge of sleepiness.

When I am groggy, I cannot... I can concentrate. But see, like, you know, it definitely hinders how much you hear, or how much you interpret of what the teacher is saying. – Pam

When I asked the eighth graders how they felt during the school day, many mentioned they were sleepy or tired. This did not occur in every class and not all the time. Some adolescents reported feeling sleepy in the morning, like Wendy, Tom, and Remy, others in the afternoon, as in the cases of Tiffany and Harry, who were both yawning during the interview.

The blog messages supported this interview finding. Eight of the ten students wrote about being “tired” at some point during the school day; sometimes “tiredness” was mentioned more than once in different blogs composed on the same day by the same student. Except for Isaac and Pam, “tired” was keyed in twenty nine times and identified as a topic most often written about.

When asked during the interview how he felt in school, Isaac described the state of his mind when he had not slept enough:

Sometimes when I don't get enough sleep, I feel like I am not really listening to the teacher and that I am not really learning that much. My eyes get really tired. My mind doesn't feel like it is awake; it feels like sleeping.

Isaac's quote brought up an important consideration: How much learning occurred when students felt sleepy? The students all reported that although they were sleepy, they were still paying attention, sometimes in a half-awake mode. Yvette said: "I can still like take notes, I would just be on autopilot. I'll take notes and then at home I'll review."

When I asked Yvette if sleep affected the way she learned, she had this to say:

Yeah. Usually when I'm more awake... I notice more things. If like...because sometimes when I am kinda not awake, then the teacher will say something, and it won't register. I'll hear it, but it won't register in my mind. And then when the tests come, I will be like, "I don't remember this..." If it's a test, I will stare at the problem for [a] really long time. And hopefully I'll remember it. But most of the time I do. But it takes me a really long time. And then I have to rush through the rest of the test in order to get it done.

A few students mentioned resting their heads on their desks and listening in a partially awake state, as Harry said: "I tend to put my head down and then I just like, still listen, but I am half asleep and half awake at the same time," or sometimes how he would "put [his] head down and then just wait until the period is over."

Occasionally, one or two of the participants had fallen asleep in class, especially when a movie was being shown. Tiffany said when this happened to her, "You miss out a lot," and that she tried her "hardest to stay up." When asked what her teacher did when she fell asleep she candidly remarked: "Sometimes they don't know." When students were asked how they caught up what they missed, the most common answer was "Ask my friends" (Tiffany and Harry).

For the most part, students claimed that falling asleep in class was a rare event. They all tried to remain awake. Yvette said that she will “usually have to ask... one of my friends, to keep me up” in class. Other students spoke of different strategies they employed to overcome drowsiness and stay alert. At such times, Kara requested to go to the bathroom, to splash her face with water. Joe mentioned how he tried to “get up, or like stretch” to break up sitting in class for “two hours straight until like recess.” Harry spoke of drawing in class instead of taking notes during a lecture. He explained this strategy: “If I draw...it just helps me.... like I get amazed...I just draw anything, and then I get amazed by it, for some reason.”

Being surprised with what he spontaneously sketched kept Harry awake, but did not account for how he would remember what the teacher said, since he didn't have notes. Harry, however, found a way to compensate: “The work. The class work. I depend on like the worksheets because like that's where all the answers are for the tests. So yeah, that's what I do.”

During recess, the boys in particular, opted to play, to become physically invigorated before facing afternoon classes. Tom reported that he did not feel tired, “just at times right after recess or something because I just came back from running around.” Tiffany, however, expressed the sentiments of the commuters in this study when she made these comments about getting sufficient sleep:

That even though you are tired, you still have to pay attention in school, because your parents....because you drove all the way out and yeah. Well because your parents pay to come out, like they pay for gas, and they pay for school too, yeah. [So even though you're tired, you still have to do it?]

Yeah.

In conjunction with being “tired,” students felt sleepy in class for reasons other than commuting, like staying up late the night before to do homework, as Remy related in her blog:

Very tired because I went to sleep last night at 12 o’clock to finish my math homework that I never understood. Today I had got up at five o’clock this morning. (Nov 17, 7:15a.m.)

Teachers said they were aware of the amount of homework they assigned. One math teacher, Mrs. Quon, shared her method of assigning work:

Well in algebra, I only assigned the even numbers for homework....which cuts the number of problems they have in half, and it does seem a little bit more manageable, especially since kids tell me, well... “I’ll spend half an hour, forty-five minutes on just the evens.” So you know if there were double the amount of problems, you can imagine how much longer it would take them to do the algebra homework.

Meanwhile, the other math teacher, Mrs. Kuma, used the technique of breaking the lessons into doable “chunks” that could be accomplished for homework.

Where... rather than doing one lesson a day, one chapter or one section a day, chunk it in the sense that I give them enough material for the day knowing that they have other homework from other classes so I can stay within the..... what is it.... the 90 minute homework limit [policy set by the school for all classes combined].... so every once in a while, I’d say.... maybe two or three weeks, I

ask them, “Okay, how much time did you spend doing homework ?” Just to see whether they ever go over the 90 minute time.

The efforts of the teachers, detailed above, were attempts to make the completion of homework manageable. The strategies might work, if the students were strong in the subject. But as Remy pointed out, she didn’t understand her homework, and struggled with the work, determined to finish, but at the cost of sleep. From her blogs and interviews, Remy said that she came home at 7:00 p .m. because of soccer practice. Even with the teacher’s best intentions, commuting students faced some late nights for the sake of doing school work. Students who lived in town could begin homework as early as mid-afternoon, if they didn’t have afterschool activities. If students who lived in town did participate in extracurricular teams or clubs, they might finish at 5:00 or 6:00, arriving home shortly after. This still afforded these students more time to do challenging homework.

From another point of view, Yvette’s mom made this observation:

I think if they [teachers], and this is only on occasion, when Yvette had said, okay they all gave us a test on this day...So maybe communication between how much homework or the test times, if that can be kind of spread out so it's not, there's not that one time they have it. Because ...I think she's had like three tests in one day or something. Even if you plan it out, you know just to review, for three, it’s going to take a while. [chuckle] ... but that has only happened on a couple occasions.... but as far as the teachers doing anything, it's just more communicating. Spreading things out.

Conscientious students needed time to prepare for exams in order to perform well. If work and exams were not coordinated, it was very stressful for them to finish everything and still have adequate sleep for the next day. If Yvette came home late after extracurricular activities, how feasible was it for her to thoroughly prepare for three exams on the same night?

Kara's mom brought up the suggestion that teachers avoid giving assignments which ate up valuable time. She explained: "That there are other things to do, and a lot of times, teachers do give busy work." Kara's mom implied that "busy work" was neither efficient nor beneficial for learning.

Finally, Isaac mentioned that it was important that teachers "make sure they fully explain like what we are supposed to study and fully explain what we have for homework." Yvette supported this comment with an example written in her blog: "Last night I thought I had no homework that was due today, but it turns out we still have to do it, so I went to sleep really, really, really late." (Nov 20, 7:26 a.m.)

A second reason for lack of sleep came from a combination of factors: a late arrival home after extracurricular activities, homework, e-mail socialization, and the pursuit of personal downtime endeavors. This came out in blogs such as Wendy's:

So I got home about 7 PM. I have soccer everyday ... at Kapiolani until 6:00 PM. I was sleepy in the car, as always. I was tired when I got to my dad's house. I watched some movies, checked my e-mail, and now I'm blogging this. I think I'll go shower and start my homework now. (Nov 16, 9:42 p.m.)

What was noteworthy about this blog was the time that Wendy wrote it. Wendy logged off at 9:42p.m., after which she would *start* to tackle school work. This made for

very late nights. Wendy mentioned being in soccer and watching movies, both of which had placed demands on her academic time. The entry raised the question of time management, a point brought up by teachers and will be discussed in more depth later in this chapter.

On another evening, Wendy spoke of how she became engrossed in a book and stayed up quite late to read it. Here's what she blogged the next day at lunch break:

I was feeling a little tired in second period. I went to sleep around 2:00 AM last night because I was reading this really good book (*Tempted*)... We had really little homework over the weekend, but as usual I procrastinated and played around and slept late. My classes were okay (normal) and I participated once. I slept in the car, as usual. So it was nice and relaxing. (Nov 18, 9:31 a.m.)

Clearly, Wendy enjoyed reading. According to her blogs, she started the book on Sunday night and read until 2:00 a.m. She then continued the book on Tuesday night, and wrote that she stayed up until 300 a.m. reading. Her insufficient sleep was not due to the commute; on the contrary, she was able to catch up on lost sleep in the car.

Interviews and blogs provided other non-academic examples of why students stayed up late at night. Joe mentioned that on Wednesday, he "didn't get much sleep last night because I had to do something for my mom on the computer;" Yvette mentioned she was tired "...because I was up last night playing with my ipod. I couldn't go to sleep until 11:00 p.m. I didn't wake up early enough to eat breakfast" (Nov 16, 7:37 a.m.); and Remy spoke about attending a special event:

For breakfast I had ate a chocolate chip muffin. Nothing special happened on the ride to school. I'm very excited because I'm able to watch the midnight show of "New Moon." (Nov 20, 7:02 a.m.)

The premier showing of a popular book *New Moon*, was held on Thursday, at midnight. Remy and another girl in the study went to see it. This was a weekday night and there was school the next day. It was a special occasion, and sometimes these events occur. Students who did not commute and had more time to do homework, or sleep, might not find these one time events a stretch to attend. Whereas such occasions taxed commuters far more heavily because they were already sleep deprived and pressed for time.

The student blogs and interviews revealed that commuting students were typical adolescents in their desire to socialize, in their pursuit of personal interests, and in their needs for sleep. They also tried to do well in school. Despite the fact that the commutes seemed to intensify these needs because of the time constraints imposed on daily living, the students sometimes followed their own whims or agendas, and did not always make the best decisions in time use.

Isaac, however, reported that it was possible to juggle all the balls and keep them in the air. A particularly high achieving student, he was not the only one in this group of ten participants. This young man demonstrated, via one of his blogs, that despite participating in two extracurricular activities, violin and tennis, he was able to complete homework and be in bed by 9:11 p.m. He did not say how he did this in earlier blogs, nor did he mention using school time to get some work done, but this blog did demonstrate

that commuting students, involved in after school activities, could finish homework, go to bed at reasonable hours, and earn a place on honor roll.

It is 9:10 and I finally finished my homework after coming home from tennis practice. Before that I had a violin lesson, and I felt fine. For lunch I had hot dogs and meat loaf and for dinner I had pot stickers. School was fine but the AMC8 (math test) was hard and during the first period we had honors assembly and I got high honors!!!! Well I'm feeling kind of tired so I'm going to go to sleep now.
(Nov 17, 9:11 p.m.)

While the evidence revealed that student behaviors could compound the lack of sleep, classroom instructional strategies either encouraged wakefulness or sleepiness. According to the students, another reason why students felt tired in school was because of what they were doing in class. Harry wrote that he was “tired because periods 1,2,3...we have many lectures” (Nov 16, 12:13 p.m.); Tiffany blogged that “her first 2 periods were boring [‘]cause all we did was read out loud,” (Nov 16, 12:05 p.m.), while Wendy wrote: “Feeling a little tired. I just endured a boring class” (Nov 16, 12:22 p.m.) and later in the week, “a boring video...I’m not really into [name of subject]” (Nov 17, 11:59 a.m.). Yvette, in looking ahead to her next classes blogged, “I’m going to be bored because all [the teacher] does is talk” (Nov 17, 10:00 a.m.); and on the next day, she mentioned that the teacher “just kept us for a third of our recess and we didn’t even do anything. I feel kind of tired even though I got a lot of sleep” (Nov 18, 10:04 a.m.). Joe mentioned that he “felt tired throughout the whole two [first] periods, which is why I hate tests since they take so much energy out of me” (Nov 16, 9:50 a.m.).

The term “boring” was mentioned many times in the course of the week’s blogs by all except Pam, Harry, and Isaac. The tedious courses were then followed by other classes, including electives, that afforded more activity in which the students became more alert, awake, and participatory. These engaging classes were described by Kara as “fun” or as Joe said “I got to do a lot of fun activities” (Nov 16, 12:03 p.m.). There was no stress,” (Tiffany and Kara, Nov 20, 12:02 p.m.); or “we got to make...” (Wendy, Nov 16, 12:22 p.m.). At other times, classes, at best were “alright,” (Tiffany, Nov 17, 12:05 p.m.); Wendy also described some of her classes as “normal level (it wasn’t hard or boring),” (Nov 18, 10:07); “okay” was Tom’s term (Nov 16, 12:05p.m.); while Kara said they were “easy” (Nov 18, 11:05 a.m.). Yvette mentioned in one blog that “classes were pretty good...I answered a lot of questions” (Nov 16, 12:11 p.m.). More detail was not provided, even though it was solicited.

I asked teachers if curriculum and teaching style affected the way tired students performed in their classes. At Ascension, teachers explained in interviews they had interventions in place when it came to helping their students learn in class and at home. These interventions were not solely geared to the commuting child, but worked well with everyone. For example, all the teachers talked about allowing students to work in groups as a teaching strategy because it provided students the opportunity to interact.

There is a lot of group work. They are always... they tend to be more engaged with each other, you know, just that socialization helps them to stay up in class... as opposed to, “I fell asleep in lecture today...” (Mrs. Quon)

For long two hour blocks, Mr. Sempasa has a routine of different strategies which he employs:

We do small group work almost daily. Not for the whole period, I have back to back periods with my kids, for the core subjects, so I have almost two hours with them. And I chose to do it that way because it helps to prepare them for the high school, but it also allows for me to get in some lecture, their group work, and then for us to come together as a group to share the findings in the big group work or in the smaller group work. And that is pretty much, that's pretty much been my approach.

Another strategy mentioned by two teachers was the use of color when writing on the board. Below Mr. Nichols explained why.

I use a lot more color on the board, I would say. So with certain things... just to get them to be visually stimulated, I might write certain things in different colors, just to kind of put more emphasis in it.

In another class, Mrs. Darthson promoted this 'color' strategy in note taking:

When you're a commuting student, and you have less time, you want to make that time as efficient as possible...I encourage them [her class] to bring in their colored pencils and use it in their own notebooks....[in] any color that they want as long as they're using multiple colors. That way when they go home, for example, all their vocab words are going to be in red. So it makes it very easy.... okay we have a vocab quiz tomorrow, Section 3, here's all my vocab words, they are already highlighted for me. Rather than having to check back through the book back and forth, back and forth.

Some teachers addressed the physical needs of their students as a way of bringing their focus back to academic tasks. In one class, if Mrs. Kuma noticed a sleepy student,

she gave the student the choice of “either go to the nurse.... or run a lap. Wake up, get the blood running.” In this way, the students became physically stimulated, and they became alert. Along similar lines, during long classes when the periods were blocked for two hours, Mrs. Quisantes set aside a few moments to “do some exercise just to get them going in between the two periods.”

Additional strategies included “being personally excited about what is being taught,” (Sempasa), “chang[ing] up the activity...and they [students]actually have to physically get up and move from one activity to the next” (Darthson); “lectur[ing] from different parts of the room” (Sempasa, 187-9), “us[ing] a lot of the projector...to kinda get them to cue in even if the lights were off” (Nichols), and “reviewing, going over the concept and then going around to each student and kind of pinpoint certain ones that I knew were exhausted through the day because of commuting” (Nichols). The teachers reported that these techniques seemed to help students focus and engage in class; however, this did not seem to match student accounts of their in class experiences, particularly those relayed via the blogs. When students were asked to suggest ways that commuters could best be helped in the classroom, they made these recommendations:

Wendy: more modern kind [strategies]. They could do like group projects, so we can interact, and we can wake up, because you're usually happy when you are around people and talking and stuff.

Pam: Well Mrs. [teacher's name], sometimes she has us...get up and move around. You know? But she should...I think she should do that more than once... Because... for her type of teaching, happens to be the kind of teaching where she speaks more than you interact... so for Mrs. [teacher's

name] to get kids to pay more attention...if she doesn't have a hands on activity, then just to make sure that they move around ...just a little bit, to get the blood flowing. And they're more alert.

Kara: [teachers] to be more lively I guess. Because like, if like if it's a boring day, where we're just reading the book, like at least have an activity with it...not just writing [as an activity] like... during science not only just reading from the textbooks but doing experiments.

Harry: Less lectures. More class work that we can do so that I can stay focused. Like class work that we can do on our own. So that the teacher doesn't have to lecture the whole time. Yes, like work on a worksheet. It's going to help because like they won't lecture as much, and I won't fall asleep as much.

Joe: Oh, well she [the teacher] talks loud. See and that wakes up everybody. Yeah that is very helpful actually...She has humor in the class. We usually work in groups, because we're in pods. Yeah that helps a lot.

Isaac: ...Like maybe not as much lectures. More activities. Because it helps to keep the student wide-awake...Group activities.

Yvette explained why these strategies, such as “collaborative work” and “hands on” activities help commuters:

If my teachers lecture to me, and it's like a really long time, I'll kind of zone out at some time, and then afterwards I'll be like, me and my friends will be all asking “What did she say?”

[Do you think you're tired from the commute and that is why you're zoning out?]

I think sometimes, but I don't think it's all the time.

The review of the literature supports team work which aligns with the adolescent need to socialize with peers: “The increased importance of peer relationships calls for small group and cooperative education methods that provide opportunities for peer interaction” (NMSA, 1992, p. 17). In addition, instructional strategies should “Teach young adolescents to think critically” (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1990, p. 13) and provide opportunities to develop emerging higher order cognitive abilities (Anfara, Mertens, & Caskey, 2007). That is, students are encouraged to problem solve, apply, synthesize, analyze, and construct knowledge rather than passively read or listen. Such learning also challenges students to “hypothesize...to grasp long-term cause and effect relationships and...play a major role in their own learning” (NMSA, 2006).

Recommendations made by students in this study aligned with the literature on adolescent development; teacher practices on Ascension seemed to match adolescent developmental needs. Yet the many student references to “lecture,” “reading,” or “boring” implied that students did not recognize teacher efforts to create engaging classes or that these efforts were not done frequently or effectively enough to have an impact on student learning in the classroom. Perhaps the issue was consistency among the teachers to use interactive, engaging teaching methods as the following quotes from two parents seem to indicate.

Harry's father made a comment on instructional methods based upon what he found in his son's notebook:

Just keep it less... I guess for him, he gets bored fast. So less, not less

lecture...make your lecture interesting. Something that the kids can enjoy and

will really want to enjoy, not boring where you're just writing down a list of words and ends up scribble scabbling, drawing happy faces, or whatever.

In contrast, Tom's mom spoke of [teacher] and how the instructional approach promoted learning even when her son was tired:

It was a different method of teaching. It wasn't...with the [name of subject], it wasn't a lecture.... read, lecture, read, lecture.... it was very group oriented and a lot of interesting things for the kids to keep their interest in the....so he [Tom] didn't feel bored. Yeah, so I think it was....they were made into groups and they had to read a paragraph and think about what it meant and decipher it amongst themselves, and a lot of it was not just reading and listening to someone else speak. A lot of it was interactive with the kids.

[And this was successful for Tom because it kept him...]

... Interested.

[Why is this strategy important more so for commuter?]

I think because he's always tired. So he always feels...but he has never really admitted that he has fell asleep in class although I don't know if it has happened.

[Laugh]

Besides adolescent sleep issues, there was also the concern for adequate nutrition. This too emerged as a theme when students spoke about their school experiences. Their comments were coupled with teacher observations of student behaviors, and suggestions proposed by parents for possible improvement of the campus food service.

The challenge of hunger pangs.

A popular strategy to keep awake, mentioned by several students in the study, was eating. This tactic was not only a way to supply needed nutrients for growing bodies, or make up for a missed meal, but also to stave off sleepiness, as Joe stated: “Like you know how we have small recess, I usually I eat something. If I forget to eat something, I usually get sleepy... Like a small snack.”

Remy explained that “Sometimes I feel tired. I just like try to get through it, and fight through it, so that way at recess I can try to eat something to try to make sure I won't be tired anymore.” Yvette said that munching throughout the day held mental sluggishness at bay: “Eating helps. At recess [a snack] and I eat lunch. After school, yeah I have snacks.

Mrs. Darthson, however, shared some disconcerting observations about how students tried to use food to cope with sleepiness:

The fact that coffee for a 13-year-old is not an appropriate breakfast. You know, an energy drink for 13-year-old, is not an appropriate breakfast. It is not an appropriate breakfast for an adult, you know, let alone at their age. And that is how they are personally coping, you know, they are having a Red Bull for breakfast rather than cereal.

Although none of the students in this study drank caffeinated drinks to stay awake, there were many blog entries about food which revealed a spectrum of eating and dietary habits. Breakfast and dinner menus were shared. For example, Tom ate: “a hot pocket for breakfast” (Nov 16, 10:22 a.m.). Joe mention “pop tarts” because he “overslept” on Monday (Nov 16, 7:13 a.m.) and “fruit loops” on Wednesday, (Nov 18,

9:46 a.m.). Isaac ate “gogurt and pumpkin bread” (Nov 16, 7:33 a.m.) and “gau,” a piece of sweetened Chinese rice cake, for breakfast three days in a row (Nov 17, Nov 18, Nov 19). Dinner for Wendy after her soccer practice was picked up a CPK: honey chicken pizza with a chocolate smoothie (Nov 17, 9:15 p.m.); Harry’s “good dinner” was “beef stew...yummy” (Nov 17, 7:21 p.m.).

The students mentioned missing meals as well. Yvette spoke of her “regret for not eating breakfast or lunch” because “I really didn’t have time to go to my mom’s class and get my lunch after I left the computer room, and I thought I could last two more periods without food, so I skipped lunch.” Remy blogged that “on the car ride home, I was starving. Maybe it is [‘]cause I only ate 3 and ½ chicken nuggets for lunch.” (Nov 16, 8:38 p.m.). Snacks of all kinds were mentioned and the students looked forward to their mid-morning recess breaks to munch.

Because the students ate irregularly or consumed foods that were not always high in nutritional value, the question arose as to when opportunities to properly supplement adolescent diets were available on campus. According to the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development (1990), “Schools should...serve nutritious foods” (p.22). In addition, access to healthy menu choices that supported adolescent physical and brain growth were part of the middle school concept that addressed the needs of the whole child. It was not enough for campus food service programs to plan meals that furnished nutrients for developing bone and muscle. Jensen (1998) emphasized that “Food must supply nutrients necessary for learning” (p. 25), and that meals should cater to the “brain’s learning requirements” (p. 25).

The school snack bar at Ascension began service at 7:00 a.m. Teachers had observed students who arrived early to school as they purchase food items and found a place to eat. According to Mr. Nichols, the breakfast service was not necessarily targeting commuters, but any student who did not have the chance to eat at home.

The school instituted a breakfast service in response to the past popular practice of selling chocolate chip cookies before school. Students were purchasing these confections instead of choosing more healthy items for sale. Cookies were taken off the morning menu and since that time a more concerted effort was made to prepare and sell healthier breakfast items. School administration and faculty had pushed for this change. Mr. Nichols noted that the breakfast offerings were a little less expensive, to encourage healthier eating, and added that having a morning meal available did help those who had to drive the distance.

Because I think the kids traveling, the parents may not have enough time to get their kid up, eat breakfast, whereas a non-commuting kid, you know, doesn't have to be at school, can ...leave their house at seven. They might wake up at six, but they've got a good hour to eat a breakfast, a good hearty breakfast, [to] get ready for school.

The question raised about the breakfast service dealt with the nutritional value of the menu items sold. True, chocolate chip cookies were no longer on the menu, but doughnuts had replaced them. Other choices included eggs, rice, bacon, sausage, fried rice, juice, and fruits. Some teachers, like Mrs. Quon, worried about fat content, salt and sugar levels, and cholesterol and that these food concerns and types of snacks continued throughout the day.

They serve breakfast in the morning from starting from 7:15. I don't know if it is nutritious. I wouldn't consider Portuguese sausage or bacon necessarily nutritious foods, but they actually... they are serving breakfast, so that's better than nothing, you know, going hungry. Snacks are always available during snack time. Again, I don't know the nutritional value of doughnuts and chips...or ice cream bars, but that's what the kids have a lot. And then again at lunch, you know, if you don't buy the actual school lunch, which is probably more nutritious because it comes with fruits, and vegetables and milk, although the kids probably don't eat the fruits or the vegetable or drink the milk, you know, they again will just buy the usual spam musubi, or saimin, or microwave pizza and... I mean it's lunch, it's food, they have nutrition, they are eating, but, you know, this is not apples, bananas, oranges, vegetables, and salads, here. And after school again it's more snack food, and snacks for the kids.

When students spoke of the snack bar, they didn't make many suggestions of what they would like to buy for meals and snacks, except this one by Yvette:

They serve breakfast... at school... at the snack bar.

[Do you buy breakfast there?]

No. The food is not that good. Sometimes it's really oily, sometimes it doesn't look like it's cooked.... like bacon... They should probably offer like more fruits because I don't know if they still.... because they still offer like apples.... I don't know if they still do that. And they used to have salads but I'm not so sure about that anymore.

Parents, however, had more to say of food quality and quantity served by the snack bar. Remy's mom reported:

I think they need more [quantity] because every time she goes, a lot of it is sold out. We need more of the items [not portions]...Because by the time she gets there [it's] all sold out, then she ends up getting something she doesn't really want to eat, but that is the only thing that is offered. So she ends up doing it that way. Yeah, I think that lunch would help a lot if they could just get even an extra line.

Joe's mom said:

It's the same old food... Spam musubi, saimin...doesn't look very nutritional.

[Does he buy the regular plate lunches?]

No, because he says it tastes really horrible.

[But he buys all the time?]

Yep. I give him \$40 a week, and it is gone...He buys musubis, sometimes burritos, saimin, barbecue burgers.

Tom's mom made a point, however, when she remarked that what her son bought in school, she really could not control; he made the choices, which perhaps, were not the best.

Well I guess it's hard, because they make their own choices. So he doesn't buy.... you know he buys what he wants which is usually saimin, pizza, spam musubi and he passes on the hot lunch.

[So he buys lunch every day?]

Yeah. I don't even really know [what he buys for lunch], I think he buys snack during recess so.... whatever heI'm not sure.... what they sell... and then I

think for lunch, he'll have a pizza or saimin or spam musubi. So not real filling, not real nutritious but that is his choice, I guess.

The difficulty with having better quality service was partially tied to the facility that housed the snack bar. Mrs. Quon spoke of the limitations that the concession manager worked with.

They could serve healthier meals, but then again, their facilities are very limited in what they can do in terms of refrigeration and it's very hard to store a lot of fresh fruit and vegetable when you don't have, you know, a whole lot of refrigeration space.

Although the school's snack bar has tried to improve the quality of its menu offerings, sometimes, as was pointed out by Tom's mom, the adolescents themselves do not opt to buy the healthier items. The situation is somewhat of a vicious cycle. The snack bar, which is an outside concession, must remain profitable. If students are not in the habit of purchasing nutritious foods, then serving them is a moot point. If the demand is for saimin, spam musubi, and pizza, then it will be supplied in order to remain economically viable.

That challenge paired with limited available food choices due to the lack of facilities, made it difficult for the school to fill the nutrition gaps for growing young people. The alternative to snack bar fare was to bring food from home, home cooked or microwavable fast foods, which many students did. This meant the parent or adolescent commuter had to plan and prepare for their own nutrition needs.

Eating on campus, particularly breakfast, raised another concern: the question of safety. Where did students eat before school started since there was no cafeteria?

Safety.

How early have I seen kids dropped off? When I was here today, I got here at five, 5:15 a.m. Nobody was on campus. I would say the earliest, I would say, maybe six. Six would be the earliest. 6:00 a.m., 6:10 a.m.

– Mr. Nichols

In a previous discussion, findings showed that students in the study came to school early. Few teachers, if any, were around. This was particularly problematic during the winter months when the sun rose later and the campus was dark. Where did these early arrivals go? They sat on the lanais on the first floor because the gates leading upstairs were usually locked. There was no supervision on campus at that time.

Although it was usually the older students who were dropped off earlier, they were still minors and vulnerable. The school formally hired one adult to canvass the campus. He was on duty at 7:00. Some teachers, who came to work early, opened their rooms and allowed students to come inside, but this was done on a voluntary basis.

According to the school handbook, under “School yard supervision” the following information was provided to parents:

Supervision of the students on the school grounds is provided during the hours from 7:00 a.m. to 3:00p.m. (until 12:30 p.m. on early dismissal days) although it is unwise to leave younger children on campus before 7:15 a.m. During all other times, responsibility for supervision and safety rests with the parents. (p. 21)

Students did not talk about early morning supervision except for Wendy, who did not view it as worrisome.

My friends are always there. Because like Maddy has to come early too. And Nancy comes early and Yolanda comes early, so they are all already there.

[What about adults being around?]

I'm not really too worried about that, because well, we're already inside the campus, if someone might come in, and the police and stuff.

As can be seen, Wendy felt safe on campus despite the fact that no adults were assigned to supervise in the early morning. She was not alone and was confident there was safety in numbers. Although the students did not bring up the concern for safety, the adults had a different point of view. This was because Ascension was basically an open campus, with easy access to the grounds from the adjacent public streets. When teachers were asked about the potentially unsafe situation of students on campus without an adult, the issue of liability was brought up. Mrs. Quisantes shared:

We tell them [parents] that we don't have any supervision before 7:15 or seven o'clock....So if they [students] are dropped here before that, to make....well this is just my take....to make accommodations is in itself implying already, accepting responsibility for them....When parents drop off their kids here as early as 6:30 a.m., it's a liability issue, right? But we tell the parents that there is no supervision. But the moment we say, we understand that there [are] kids coming in before 7:15...if anything happens, the moment you start saying we will provide something, implicit in that is an acceptance of liability. And I don't know...I'm not a lawyer, I'm not privy to what the consequences are or what the impact might be. Is it a good situation? No, the only solution to that is don't drop off your kids that early, but parents will do that...Should the school be doing it? ...to provide

something would be accepting liability for that. I don't think the school is ready for that.

Teachers who saw students on campus unsupervised did express concern for the situation. On a voluntary basis, they allowed students in their classrooms – an act, which placed teachers in the position of liability. Another alternative suggested was to have students report to a designated classroom or the library for a supervised study hall, but that meant implementing a formal morning program.

While some parents mentioned the breakfast service, and others mentioned the after school care program, most said they were not aware of anything in place for commuters, or were sketchy on the details of the few things that were, including what was available for students who came to school early. Pam's mom commented:

I don't know if I am aware of anything that has been proactively told to parents as to what has been done. Except I guess... and I take that back because I know that they have before school care and afterschool care. So maybe that is aimed at commuters.

[Before school care is?]

I'm thinking... I thought they had...[Laugh] and maybe they don't. Do they not have any?

[No, they don't.]

Ohhhh, okay because some schools.... in her [former] elementary schools, they did have before school care. We could drop off ...6:30. Okay so I guess Ascension doesn't have that.

On the liability issue of morning supervision, Yvette's mom divulged her perception from the "other side of the coin" so to speak:

Because I think it is a liability? ... because there really isn't anyone around, you know supervising until seven. And yet there are.... at seven, there's a lot of kids here already. So, as far as before school care, there isn't any. Maybe that's something we need to think about .

From some teachers' point of view, acknowledgement and making provision for students who arrived well before the start of school indicated accepting responsibility for the students. This meant consenting to facing liability issues if anything went awry. But from Yvette's mom's point of view, knowing that students were on campus unsupervised, and not putting something in place as a safety measure, was already to be in position of liability. Ignorance or overlooking the situation was not going to make the dilemma disappear or the school less responsible.

As stated by the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development 1990, "Schools must be safe places" (p. 22) which suggests that even before instructional time formally begins, the welfare of students who arrive early to school should be considered. The provision of a safe school environment is also one of the tenets of the middle school philosophy and is stated on the NMSA website (2006): "The school environment is inviting, safe, inclusive, and supportive of all." When teachers voluntarily open their doors, inviting students to take refuge, have a place for breakfast, complete homework, or socialize, they demonstrated support for commuters. These faculty exhibited the best understanding of the middle school philosophy and addressed the needs of the whole child.

Arranging for student safety before school uncovered a complementary need to provide a place for students to go after school. When students were dismissed from school, not all of them had the luxury of going to a nearby home. Commuters waited until their parents finished work, usually until 4:30 p.m. or 5:00 p.m. This was at least a two hour wait, since the school day ended at 2:30 p.m. For younger children, generally up to sixth grade, an after school care program was available. Young adult leaders, usually college students, supervised groups of students in classrooms until parents arrived to pick them up. After school care ended at 5:00 p.m. Activities in after school care included down time activities, homework time, and the provision of a snack. The cost of after school care ran \$1,900 per school year.

Middle school students preferred not to enroll in afterschool care, feeling that they had outgrown the program. Enrollment figures obtained from the director of the program showed a definite decrease starting with sixth grade with 31 students enrolled, seventh grade, 24 had enrolled, and eighth grade, 15 were enrolled for the 2011-2012 school year. Instead, students in middle school, particularly in eighth grade opted to participate in afterschool activities such as sports, clubs, and teams to take up the waiting time. However, these activities did not meet daily and year around. What happened when the student was not in a sports season or attending a math team meeting that only convened once a week?

By 3:00 p.m., students who were not involved in some club, sport, or team were required to be off campus. If not, they were picked up and placed in afterschool care for the day. Parents were charged \$25.00 for this service. The only study hall available after school was for athletes who reported to do homework before their practice began.

Teachers suggested that an afterschool study hall should be available for all students, whether they were in sports or not. Mrs. Kuma remarked:

And after school, it's everybody gotta be off by three o'clock. And a lot of parents aren't done at three o'clock. So unless they pay \$1000, what is the kid supposed to do? It's not like the kids need afterschool care, they just need someplace to go.

Students also expressed the desire for an after school study hall, or as an alternative, teachers could assign class work instead of homework because Wendy said, "I don't think [my teachers] know I get home at 7:20 p.m." But Tiffany wondered why the school offered study halls only for athletes:

Because the study table, [study hall] that we have now, it's just for the people that are involved in sports. And not like for other people. 'Cause like, [it would] give us more time to do stuff. Because like some people live super close and they can finish it fast. Because they get home early, and they have more time. And it is not fair for the people who live farther because they have less time and they are more tired.

Tiffany raised an issue of fairness and astutely understood that a study hall would benefit many other middle school students who must wait for their parents to pick them up in the late afternoon for a late arrival home. From an adult's point of view, her mother, expressed concerns about adolescents, who, left to their own devices, might end up in trouble:

And I think most parents would appreciate that [study hall], because it gives their kids time to do their homework. And gives them someplace to be while the

parent cannot pick them up, you know instead of being out on the sidewalk and wandering about.

In addition to scheduling an afterschool study hall, Pam's mom wanted more information on school clubs and teams that convened in the afternoons because she was not fully knowledgeable about after school opportunities for her daughter:

I think having more afterschool activities. I know that they have some clubs but I am not even really aware of everything, what kind of clubs are available. I know that the drama was during a certain period of time, there is speech, I have recently heard there is a math club, but I didn't know about that until recently. So I think more... oh and there is sports. So I think, publicizing it a little more would be helpful.

In the school handbook, there had been a short write up of the teams/clubs available that students could join. However, there were no descriptions of the activities and no information of when and where they were held. If students were involved in after school activities, this could provide a supervision solution for the parents who retrieved their children after work. Furthermore, since many of these activities did not cost, student participation would not incur additional expense as would enrolling in after school care or paying the additional \$25.00 fee for not picking up their children on time. Such after school activities had the potential to provide adolescents the chance to try something new, continue an interest, or have opportunities to socialize safely. As documented by NMSA (1992):

The rapid physical, social, and intellectual development which occurred
...requires the inclusion of brief but intense interest-based activities...Mini-

courses, exploratory courses, service clubs, special interest activities, and independent study projects are among the means of providing such activities. (p. 18)

As a brief summary, students reported being tired and sleepy throughout the day due to a variety of reasons, which included homework completion, socialization, and the pursuit of adolescent interests. The students employed several strategies for staying awake and alert in class with varying degrees of success. Although teachers claimed that their instructional approaches were engaging, students frequently mentioned sitting through non-interactive classes of lecture and reading.

Besides being tired or sleepy, food and eating habits arose from the students' perspective of school. Students emphasized the importance of eating throughout the day to rejuvenate. While student blogs revealed a gamut of irregular eating habits and unhealthy diets, the school food service as supplement to home diet was limited and struggled to fill in the gaps to provide the nutrition that growing adolescent bodies needed. Lastly, was the theme of school supervision; the school only partially addressed issues on safety before and after school. Morning supervision began at 7:00 a.m. and did not take into account students who came to school earlier and after school study halls were provided only for athletes, not commuters. Commuting families wanted more information on extracurricular activities as well. What the students reported about their own behaviors at school, served as a lens for the following discussion on how teachers perceived commuters in their classrooms.

What Teachers Saw

Insight as to how commuting students were viewed in school was provided by their teachers. Six core subject teachers were interviewed once, and at least two teachers were well acquainted with each student participant. For logistical purposes, the teachers were aware of the students' identities because these teachers were homeroom teachers as well. If students had a blog training session during lunch, they had to be released by their homeroom teachers in order to attend. Students were required to eat in homeroom before recess began. Another example of logistics: if I interviewed a student before school and the session went over a few minutes, the homeroom teacher was informed that the student was not absent for attendance purposes. Teachers were also asked to allow participants to use the computers during the day in order to do their blogs, since the computers were located in the various classrooms. Although teachers knew who the participants were, confidentiality was strictly maintained. Teachers were not informed of what students shared during their interviews and vice versa. With this agreement, students and teachers' remarks remained private.

At Ascension School, each middle grade level was divided into two teams. Teachers, assigned to one of the teams, taught multiple subjects to the same group of students. This concentrated interaction followed the middle school philosophy that teachers should know their students well. Such familiarity supported teachers' efforts to design needed interventions to help struggling students, and to establish relationships that ensured every adolescent would be well known by at least one teacher and establish strong peer relationships. As explained by Jackson and Davis (2000), "a team provides the valued group that young adolescents need to support their intellectual and

interpersonal development. Teams provide a psychological home within the school that helps reduce the stress of isolation and anonymity” (p. 125). To further strengthen the team members, all the teachers worked in an advisory class which met once a week. A brief portrait of the six teachers who led the two eighth grade teams at Ascension School and who also participated in this study follows.

Mrs. Kuma had been at the school for over fifteen years. During the last several years, she commuted to school with her daughter on the public bus; prior to that she commuted in the family car. She taught two content area subjects, an elective, and managed a homeroom.

Mrs. Quon taught at Ascension for seven years. She drove to school daily; her commute was approximately thirty minutes. In addition to a homeroom and two electives, she instructed two content area subjects. She was the only teacher who worked with the entire eighth grade class. Thus she knew all the students in the study.

Mr. Nichols served as both counselor and a classroom teacher. He commuted to work, but later rented an apartment in town. He has since moved back to an outlying district and commutes again. He taught one content area and one elective. As the school counselor, he was acquainted with all the students in the study.

Mrs. Darthson was a recent hire of the school, and had been with Ascension for a little more than two years. She came to Hawai‘i from the mainland, but had lived here for several years. Mrs. Darthson taught one core subject to only half of the eighth grade class, but also worked with other grade levels. She lived in town, very close to the school; however, she mentioned commuting to school with her family when she was growing up.

Mrs. Quisantes was a long time teacher of the school, having taught there for over fifteen years. She met students for three core subjects, one elective, and hosted a homeroom. She drove in daily for a shorter commute of about thirty minutes or less.

Mr. Sempasa was originally hired to work in an administrative capacity at the school. During the last two years however, he stepped into the role of a classroom teacher. He taught three core subjects, one elective, and worked with a homeroom. He also had a commute and drove daily to school.

Although teachers were aware that commuters were enrolled in their classes, they did not know how many. Depending on the times they left home, student commutes took anywhere from 30 minutes to an hour. Ascension School did not draw its students solely from the surrounding community.

With that in mind, findings showed that teachers had different ideas on the size of the commuting population. Mrs. Kuma, for example, believed that the number of students who commuted was a very small percent that did not necessarily merit school attention. Mrs. Kuma said:

And I honestly don't think the population is large enough to merit something for the school to do. Because when you say six of your study kids are in my homeroom, but I think in the bigger picture, [that] is just a small percentage that commute from a long distance.

Other teachers, such as Mrs. Quisantes, “assume[d] that...it's more like the normal thing for them, that most of our kids are commuters.” Because of these differing views, teachers looked at the individual efforts of the adolescent – their ability to time manage, complete assignments, be prepared for class, perform well on tests and attitude

towards learning as the cause for student success. The subject of commuting and its possible effect on student performance did not enter the picture, from teachers' perspectives.

The most striking discovery from the teacher interviews was that, in general, teachers could not distinguish commuting students from non-commuters in their classes. As Mrs. Quisantes admitted: "I don't know who are my students who are commuters." This overarching theme, which emerged from the findings from interviews with teachers, surfaced in several ways: an inability to "see" commuters in the general student population of a classroom, the attribution of the challenges commuters faced to other adolescent causes, and parent contributions that reinforced the issue of anonymity.

Indistinguishable commuters.

Previously, in her honest statement, Mrs. Quisantes admitted that she was not aware of the commuters in her classes. She echoed the sentiments of the other faculty interviewed, who were equally candid, as Mr. Sempasa shared:

[In class you can tell commuters apart?]

I can pick them apart only because I know who they are right now...

[If you didn't know them as commuters could you tell them apart?]

Probably not.

Most teachers felt that commuting did not have a significant impact or any impact on student performance. Instead, more key factors suggesting school success were that individual students had a strong motivation to do well, possessed good study habits, or exerted consistent effort.

The teachers of Ascension eighth graders were aware that some students who lived outside of town caught the bus, car pooled, rode in the family car, or a combination of all three. However, once the students took a seat in class, the commuters blended in and teachers no longer saw them as students who possibly lived a different lifestyle with heightened demands. In conversation, the teachers acknowledged commuters, but were reluctant to agree that long road times might strongly influence student performance. They maintained that success in school was the result of individual effort, with *possible* impact from the commuting life style. Mrs. Quon clarified:

It depends on the students themselves. There are some commuters who are intrinsically motivated and so, regardless of whatever circumstances they are in, they are going to try their best to achieve no matter what. They could be dead tired on their feet, have a band concert [at] night, they can have practices in the afternoon for sports or other extracurricular activities, and then stay up until midnight doing and completing homework. But they are going to persevere no matter what, they are in. There are other students, whoif they are the least bit distracted, they are their academic performance goes down quite a bit.

[So in general do you notice any trends for commuters in general?]

I think it's more individual.

From the previous quote, Mrs. Quon believed that what leveled the playing field was individual effort. Commuters, like any other student, performed well if they had the drive to do so. Conversely, commuters, who did not do well, were like any other student who demonstrated a weak performance: they lacked focus. The teacher alluded to the tremendous effort of the commuting student to “stay[ing] up until midnight

doing... complet[ing] homework” but this idea, while acknowledged, received limited careful consideration. This study highlighted lack of sleep as the cost of such student self-discipline, something recognized as an unhealthy practice for the developing adolescent. In another student case scenario, commuting students who were less academically focused might have “their academic performance g[o] down quite a bit” due to sleep deprivation and an inability to pay attention in class.

Research studies have shown that lack of sleep made it difficult for students to handle the demands of school (Wolfson & Carskadon, 1998). Dawson (2005) noted that sleep deprived students are less likely to be alert. Dahl (1999) reported that when adolescents were sleep deprived, they lacked motivation. However, these potential problems for commuting students did not seem to be part of teachers’ awareness, and therefore not considered as situations requiring school or teacher intervention.

When teachers were asked if they noticed the commute having an effect on students in their classes, the concern of adequate sleep was raised, but this was quickly qualified by the possibility that the adolescents were losing sleep socializing at night instead of getting to homework promptly. Mrs. Quisantes suggested that parents become savvy in the management of technology use at home to alleviate this latter problem: “If they [students] are on the computer, there are ways to check they are working really on the homework and not chatting.” With parental supervision students can begin to complete academic tasks early, and this could lead to earlier bed times. Mrs. Quisantes, not convinced that late hours were due to commuting time constraints, had this to add about teen socialization:

Is it sleep deprivation? I don't know. And I don't know whether the sleep deprivation is even...can be really pointed to, oh, it's because of the long commute. I mean from what I have read teenagers are sleep deprived not because it's a long commute, it's because they are texting at night when they should be asleep. But for me, that is a different story. Not because it's a commute for them.

In another conversation, Mrs. Kuma gave a different explanation of why students succeed: natural talent.

This child commutes, or this child doesn't commute...I don't think that.... it's more ability, just innate ability to do good work or not. I really haven't thought of it as...oh, he's a commuter and she's not...

This idea suggested that if students were naturally smart or capable, they performed better. The possibility that a commuting student with “innate ability” might be underperforming because, for example, she had inadequate time to study, did not seem to be a consideration. Yet, Mrs. Quon heard commuters speak of the time limitations these students wrestled with:

The most common comment is, “I got home too late and so I”.... “I didn't have time to do my homework” or, “I got home so late, my mom just said eat dinner and go straight to bed,” or sometimes it's... “Oh, I have to work on this in the morning because I didn't finish it last night, I got home late” and then that's when the, you know...when the late... the late time getting home has an effect.

Mrs. Quon continued her own thoughts on the issue of why commuting students might exhibit a lackluster performance:

Well if the commuting is interfering with their study habits, like especially if there's... you know the kids are in sports, and things like that, you know, they don't have a whole lot of time at home for those... for the academics, then that can be a problem because then they are not achieving as well as they should be.

The findings from teacher interviews revealed almost two levels of awareness when it came to commuting students: the teachers knew about commuters and some of the difficulties these students faced; intellectually, the teachers were cognizant. But these same teachers, when they stood in front of a class, the line between commuters and non-commuters blurred. The teachers slipped into a different level of operational awareness that prevented them from seeing possible root causes for individual performances other than what was applicable to all students: motivation, effort, and ability. In teacher interviews, a strong theme was that commuters were just like everyone one else.

Muddying the waters: adolescent issues.

A second discovery identified in the findings was that teachers were reluctant to acknowledge the role commuting played on student success in school. The real culprits seemed to be involvement in extracurricular activities, socialization, and lack of time management. For example, Mrs. Quisantes gave this advice concerning extracurricular activities to parents who attended open house night:

Don't over schedule your child in their sports... That's the first thing I said at the very beginning of school year... because what's happened now is sports or something else, whatever it is, it doesn't have to be just sports, it is a heavy demand on them. And when you over [schedule] your child, for everything...throughout the year, it can be very stressful for the kids...Be aware

that now that your child is in eighth grade the work load is going to increase, and that means your child will need to make...find ways to manage their time more wisely.

The fact that extracurricular activities consumed a large chunk of a student's time was clear from Yvette's blog description of her daily swim practice:

"I had Pac-5 swim practice. I can't believe it lasts three hours!! I'm so surprised I haven't collapsed yet. Afterwards I was soooooooooooooo tired...and hungry"
(Nov 19, 8:51 p.m.)

A grueling three hour practice, piggy backed with a commute home was not an easy regimen. At 8:51, almost 9:00 at night, Yvette must still finish nightly homework before she can let herself "collapse." There was definitely some truth in Mrs Quisantes's observation about monitoring after school activities, and even more so for those who have a longer drive home. She continued her impressions:

It impacts more on...children who commute. Because more of their time is limited, which means that they have less time to do homework especially the getting into sports, which means that they might be coming to class tired. So just let the parents be aware that the work load does increase and that they....they have ways to control how their child manages their time at home, which is, take away their cell phones at night. No surfing on the net. No chatting. Bring the desktop to the living room or the dining room, not keep it their bedroom and checking up that there is a certain time for bedtime, regardless.

Mrs. Quon shared a similar view, as she clearly pinpointed the responsibility of managing after school involvement on parents:

You know, they [parents] may have to limit their afterschool activities, and I know this is a culture where we thrive on saying our students are well rounded, meaning more than just academics. They have sports, the clubs, they have teams, or they have other sorts of activit[ies], music lessons, and that is all great, but if the kids are getting home so late at night and not getting enough sleep, and then having to face an academic demand, and something's got to give, then a lot of times, it's unfortunate that, it's the academics that gives because you know, the parents are into, "Ooooh.... my son's basketball game" or "They've got tennis practice" or, "Ohhh but their piano recital is coming up, so they have to focus on that." And so a lot of time the academics just gets shoved away, so you know, just watch how many things, your extra things that your child is in, simply to help them better time manage.

What was interesting about both excerpts was that the suggested interventions from teachers are for parents to implement in their home life not for teachers to implement at school. Because parents and children chose to do sports or signed up for academic teams, they had the responsibility to accept the consequences of time loss. Good time management was mentioned by more than one teacher, and it was the parents whom teachers suggested figure out how to best support the child in this regard. It seemed apparent that the teachers perceived their role as simply to inform and give advice, which included addressing adolescent development. As Mrs. Darthson remarked:

Just to try and make sure that they [parents] are aware of the fact that, you know especially at the middle school age, it is a huge transition time for them [students], physically, emotionally, and socially. So to be aware of those changes, and they

cannot make the same adjustments time-wise as adults can. They need nine hours of sleep. So if that means that they are getting home at eight o'clock, then there needs to be some accommodations made by the family as to how the student can get their work done before that so they are not doing homework until 10 o'clock.

Besides involvement in extracurricular activities, teachers brought up the issue of socialization. Mrs. Quon pointed out that although socialization was important to this age group, eighth grade students did not have a good sense of time, which was in keeping with the research by Medrich and Marzke (1991). Mrs. Quon continued:

I know it's very difficult, but again, you know, cutting out some of that social time, whether it's their cell phones and other things like that might just help. Half an hour of talking on the phone, you could've done your math homework in that time. You could have studied for your Japanese quiz. So, you know, it's just some of the time management issues... it's very easy to jump on that computer and...oh, check e-mail, or oh check.... all my friends are on...chat together for a few minutes, and then, you know, a few minutes chatting sometimes becomes hours of chatting, and then the academics gets pushed to the side, and then, oh, time to go to bed, so...

Remy shared that although it was late, she still concluded the night with a few moments of socialization with her friends. The additional minutes pushed her bedtime to 10:00 p.m. or later, but her decision to stay up underscored the high priority friends played in her life and supported teachers' views that commuting was not necessarily the sole cause of lack of sleep.

Well since the commute is kind of long, I rarely have any time to do anything myself, which is why I usually go on the computer like at 9:30 or 10 o'clock, after I'm done studying and everything. So it really pushes everything back.

[You use the computer for recreation?]

Yes. Like talking to other people.

[Chatting?]

Yes. For ten to twenty minutes a night [with my friends].

The bottom line for these teachers was that all adolescents were social creatures, highly involved in extracurricular activities, and if students did not perform well in class it was because of “just poor management of time” (Mrs. Kuma). Commuting was simply an additional consideration, but only one factor among several which accounted for the possible reasons why students might experience limited academic success. Finally, it was the responsibility of the parents to exert “control” and help their children overcome these impediments to academic success. Mrs. Quisantes clearly stated this view:

I would say I don't think it's an obligation of the school. I think when parents choose to bring their kids to Ascension, they have made a choice and part of that choice is the awareness that there is a commute... I mean, it's different if you live in Mililani and go to school in Mililani, and you decide you want to take your kid to Ascension. I don't think the school needs to say, be aware. I think part of the consideration has already been a part of the discussion that.... it's a long commute but I still [want] my child to come to Ascension. I think that's a family decision and that they have to make those accommodations or be aware of the... cons of

choosing to commute to a school rather than sending your child to the neighborhood school.

Parents' role in obscuring commuters in school.

From previous discussions, parents were clearly aware of the challenges that came with the commuting life style, but as Mrs. Kuma sensed, they did not wish to take advantage of the situation: "Because I honestly, I don't think the parent wanted to seem like they were using it as an excuse for their... for the lack of whatever their child is doing." Another teacher, Mrs. Darthson said that she suspected parent reluctance to bring it up is because it might be seen as a handicap: "I haven't actually heard concerns from the parents, but I feel like it's one of those things they don't really want to talk about because they don't want to make it sound like their child has a disadvantage."

The sentiments expressed by these two teachers underscored the idea that parents chose to commute rather than live in town or send their child to a neighborhood school. That choice came with an almost an unspoken concurrence that adolescents of commuting families would receive the same consideration in school as everyone else, no favors expected. In light of this, it was what students and their families did at home or on the road that served as equalizers.

As further evidence, although Mrs. Darthson and Mrs. Kuma speculated about why parents did not voice their concerns, in actuality, the teachers did not hear from the parents about commuting except in two cases. Mr. Nichols heard that "Traffic was terrible," and Mrs. Quon mentioned that parents expressed, "It's hard to get up early in the morning or to get the kids up early in the morning." Therefore, if parents did not discuss anything other than road conditions or getting up early, it gave the impression

that the school had no real need to seriously consider the life style of commuting families, and its impact on school life, because these issues were outside of the school's domain.

While the fact that parents of commuters did not complain might be admirable, even a display of stoic parental attitude, it might also work in a detrimental fashion for their adolescent commuting children. Parents had not considered their right of addressing the needs of their commuting children in partnership with the school. Instead, they accepted the full brunt of the responsibility to manage the experience for their families – which was well and good outside of school – within the confines of the car and home life. However, within the school day itself, parents had not given serious consideration to the idea that they could also exert influence on behalf of their children concerning school-related commuting issues that affected their child's learning.

In addition, parents seemed to have accepted the faculty point of view that teachers were not necessarily responsible to be aware and address the needs of the commuting children they teach every day. Yet, according to the middle school philosophy, the education of young adolescents required collaboration with families to provide developmentally appropriate instruction relevant to each child. This was a clear recommendation by Jackson and Davis (2000) which emphasized that educating adolescents called for a team effort or the formation of partnerships between the school, parents, and the community.

Suggestions for Collaboration.

With an interest in exploring the potential of such a collaborative approach, commuting parents were asked how the school could better support them. Despite the initial disinclination to speak on their own behalf, which the teachers had noted,

commuting parents, when invited to do so, did have some practical proposals that could provide support for their children. Their ideas comprised a parent “wish list” that could bring students and commuting families logistical relief.

For example, when teachers did engage students in group work, students were assigned projects to do collaboratively. Meeting outside of school to work on these enterprises was a challenge in logistics and travel time. Here were two ideas from parents that addressed the realities of commuters.

Isaac’s mom offered this possibility:

I know what a good thing would be, is if they had a study hall or rooms where, if they have projects due, they can meet after school instead trying to figure out whose home they are going to on the weekend when everybody lives, you know, between Hawai’i Kai and Mililani... it's kind of far. You can't really come to school because there's no facility to meet on the weekend.

Another way to get around facilitating group work meetings was to have students, who lived near each other, placed in the same collaborative team. Kara’s mom related how this occurred once and how much simpler coordinating meeting times among the students was.

If they have projects, I am thinking that it would be better, if...I think they did this last year too, the teachers specifically says, “Okay you guys, since you live in Mililani, I would like you guys to work together.” And so instead of getting together after school or something, you know, and waiting that period, because you want to go home right away, they can get together down your side of town like on a weekend or something.

[How did that work?]

It was okay...it worked out well because again it was all the Mililani kids. Come to think about it, the person that they met, was within... walking distance from our house. So that was a good thing. So that worked out fine.

Another logistical issue that the school could consider was brought up by Remy's mom. It concerned arrangements to allow students to stay on campus after school until their commuting pick up time, even when they were not remaining for after school activities. She made the point that a safety concern was involved:

I think they could, like after school, we have to pick them up... if we don't pick them up at certain time they have to go to afterschool care. But we just need an extra ten minutes. So now Remy has to wait off campus which is a lot more dangerous versus her just waiting on campus for just an extra ten minutes. So she... just waits at the bus stop...It's just small things like that, if they could do like a little grace period, it would be more helpful. Because a lot of people, I see, is waiting at the bus. And Remy is a lot more older than a lot of the other kids. I see a lot of young kids waiting at different bus stops, and they are young. And they are just waiting for a ride because they can't wait on campus.

Another innovative suggestion came from Isaac's mom:

There is only one issue that I can think of, like if they have sports and they have something after, they really don't have shower facilities they can use. Like today he [is] supposed to...he has track practice and then he's supposed to be at Kennedy Theatre for some school thing at 6:45. But, you know, it's kind of hard

because he...it's too far for us to go home but he really should be showering before he...especially if he's going to the theater.

Isaac's mom provided an example of how students who were involved in several different school events on the same day needed a place to attend to basic hygiene needs. Strahan, L'Esperance, and Van Hoose (2009) wrote frankly about unpleasant body odors and increased sweat as teens physically developed. Adolescence was the time when the young people themselves are aware and sensitive to these physical concerns. Inviting students to use the shower facilities at the school gym could easily resolve Isaac's dilemma.

When the adolescents were asked how the school might better support commuters, surprisingly, three students did bring up a new logistical consideration to benefit commuters: delay school start times. They suggested that school begin as late as 8:30 or 9:00 to give commuters more time to sleep and to relieve some of the rushing they had to do in the morning (Tiffany) and to make up for lost sleep because of staying up late the night before doing homework as Remy said: "Because that is what another school does, that I know. But some kids actually stay up longer, because some of the work is a little challenging, so they start school like 30 minutes later." One of the students, Tom, even calculated ending school at 3:00 or 3:30 if the morning start time was delayed to 9:00 a.m.

In general, the students themselves, like their parents, did not openly and frequently discuss their commutes with teachers, perhaps taking an unspoken cue from the adults. Nevertheless, the students themselves were very aware of their long road times. One of the most humorous student comments about commuting was picked up

from Mrs. Kuma. On the rare occasion that the topic was brought up, it was a point of "bragging rights" to see who traveled the furthest and endured the longest drive. The teacher put it this way:

The only comment that comes to mind is when, for some reason, the discussion centers around where they live, and so then it becomes almost competitive to see who lives the farthest. You know....someone says...."Well I live...."

"I gotta commute from....come from Mililani"....And someone says, "Well I gotta come from Ewa Beach." You know it becomes a competitive thing....Almost.... almost like the farther you have to travel to come here, means you have to invest a lot more time. So in that sense.... well you know....

“ ‘cause I gotta come all the way out from Ewa Beach,” that means I have to spend more time to get here and I take more time to get home. That is what I think is competitive about it. I don't know how positive it is or how negative it is, but it does come out. It does come out.

Only one teacher, Mrs. Darthson, mentioned a complaint lodged by a commuting student, who was not a participant of this study.

I've heard complaints about not being able to participate in.... you know for example... speech or math team because they are picked up, they have other siblings, they cannot participate in those afterschool activities because they then are going to have to spend you know, forty-five minutes in the car. And it makes it difficult for them because they feel they're being limited on these opportunities, these social times, you know, sports, extracurricular because they have to do the commute instead.

This, however, was not the case with the study participants, most of whom were long time commuters, and managed to be very active in after school activities both school and non-school sponsored.

Tardiness and Preparedness.

When considering commuters in general, there were only two behaviors mentioned that seemed to suggest a child commuted, and distinguished her from her peers. The first to emerge dealt with being late for school, and it was brought up by Mrs. Kuma. “The kids that are tardy are not long-distance commuters. They are nearby, and they just wake up late.” This observation was an important one because one of the great concerns for commuters, who traveled forty-five minutes in family cars, was to leave home on time to avoid heavy traffic. Even when an incident on the road slowed everyone, the commuters, more often than not, still made it to school on time. Because of their strict morning schedule, a commuter arrived much earlier to school than other students. Most participants in the study, for example, were dropped off around 7:00 a.m. The earliest student walked on campus at 6:30 a.m. while the last to arrive did so at 7:30. The first warning bell sounded at 7:45 a.m., but students were not marked tardy until after 7:50 a.m. This meant that many commuters, arriving around 7:00 a.m., were usually on campus a good forty-five minutes before the official start of the school day.

Although commuters were rarely tardy, it was suggested by Mr. Nichols that students who came from long distances should not be held accountable for being late on the few occasions that they did not arrive to school on time due to traffic conditions. Under freeway closures, accidents that bottle neck driving lanes, or inclement weather, the student should not be penalized and marked tardy.

I think for commuting kids, especially knowing where these students are coming from, I think the school has some kind of responsibility to be able to give these kids an extra time, possibly, especially if we know that there is a traffic accident, not marking them tardy. We know they are commuting from such a long distance, we don't want to penalize them for that.

As a complementary comment about the tardiness issue, Isaac's mom felt that the school "understand[s] when the kids are late, like if there's a bad accident, I mean, all the teachers and staff...they know the kids are going to be late, but that is not that often.

Generally when teachers came early to work, they saw commuters sitting on the lanais, stairwells, or bleachers. Mrs. Darthson said:

Usually I am here earlier in the morning, a lot of commuters are also here very early and they are doing their homework then, which means they probably are not doing it when they're getting home. You know, they are doing it in the mornings instead.

Mrs. Kuma added that she had seen commuting kids:

...the ones who get dropped off early. They are in here studying. Preparing for a test...that day. And it can be math or science; it can be English or social studies.

It can be Japanese, but they are in here studying.

This latest observation might be attributed to the second identifying behavior of commuters: they seemed prepared. Although not every commuter used the before school hour for academic work, some did, and this might explain why their homework was completed or why they seemed ready for class just as other students who did not commute and had more study time at home.

The hour before school started was not the only time that commuting students tackled their homework, especially if an afternoon study hall was not available to them. The students were aware of the need to time manage and think ahead of homework needs, during the school day, and they often resorted to utilizing their recesses. Wendy blogged of how she spent her free time:

During recess (during soccer season) I am staying inside 8C (now a study hall, supposedly) to do homework because I get home late and don't have much time to finish all my homework (Nov 17, 10:06 a.m.)

Wendy and other students reported employing various free moments between classes; to study their flashcards at lunch recess either in a classroom or in the library; to finish assignments from the first two classes during the shorter morning recess and save the longer recess for play (Harry); to enroll in a study skill/study hall elective (Kara); or to check into study hall after school (Joe). Pam blogged about using after school time efficiently as she waited for her sibling:

I'm finally home @ 6:30 I might say! My sister had to stay late at school to work on something. Anyways, I worked on my *Strega Nona* script for speech while waiting (Nov 17, 6:55)

Socializing with friends also happened during these times of informal study, and classmates tended to work together and simultaneously enjoy recreational discussion. Sometimes, as Wendy admitted, the socializing and studying became counterproductive.

Just as students did not wish to leave the house without everything they needed for the day, commuters said they must be sure to pack well before departing from campus. Students spoke of double checking their bags by using their agendas, glancing

at the homework board, reviewing the next day's schedule, and sometimes relying on memory. Remy explained her after school method of packing and why:

Usually I like triple check my bag so that I don't forget any homework because I don't really want to stay up late at night thinking about the homework that I forgot...Like first I usually check with my friends. And then I go over to my teacher, just like ask them like "Is this all the homework?" Then after that I just check my agenda, and that's it.

Isaac was also conscientious when he loaded up at the end of the day. He recalled forgetting something in first grade and his parents' refusal to drive all the way back to school to retrieve it. The drive was just too far. Since then he said, "I check my agenda every day to make sure I have everything, and then I stack them all on my desk, and check it off [in] my agenda." If by chance he reached home and he did not have what he needed, especially if it was a handout, he had learned to ask a friend to either fax it or e-mail it to him.

Teachers also remarked that during the school day, some students used their free time to do homework, to get ahead, and avoid staying up late at night. If students were given a few moments at the end of class to start their assignments, they took advantage of it. Some students reported to after school study halls sponsored for athletes. In this way, some commuters tried to keep current with work demands, thereby accommodating their participation in afterschool activities. These teacher observations seemed to support what students had previously mentioned in their interviews and blogs about utilizing free time at school.

In addition, being prepared meant more than having assignments done. Mr. Nichols provided a telling example:

I think because the parents are, you know, so... concerned about the commute they seem to be maybe a little bit more prepared. Because they've got to pack things earlier, prior to getting things, or just the way the parents... because they have to make that commute, seem to prepare the students a little bit better than other kids who walk to school. For example we had a kid yesterday, a sixth grader who forgot his project, and so the dad asked if he could walk back home, which is like right across the street, and ... pick up his project. So those kinds of examples, I think kids are more prepared knowing they have to travel a distance to get the school, and being able to have that prepared. You know, they don't have the ability to just walk home. They have to remember to catch everything.

Mr. Nichols's observation related to several ideas mentioned earlier in this chapter. Every commuting family was concerned about being provisioned with what they needed for the next day; packing supplies, clothes, and book bags the night before to avoid forgetting anything once they left home. These students had learned that there was no going back once the family was on the road; therefore, they were prepared.

As Mr. Nichols spoke of preparedness, he also made a connection to his own commuting experiences noting that when he lived in town, he discovered he was less prepared because he could have easily gone home to retrieve what he needed.

I think I was better prepared when I was commuting, just because I knew I had to get to work. Whereas, I was less prepared when I wasn't commuting. You know I knew it was such a short distance, I felt like I didn't have to plan as much.

Whereas because I was commuting, I knew I had to get things ready, because I knew there was that uncertainty of what might happen, so... but that's as an adult.

On the whole, teachers participating in the study were not able to distinguish commuters from non-commuters in their classes. Generally, all students were viewed the same and treated the same, in contrast, commuters felt differently because they were tired. Either the students had hidden their sleepiness well in class, or the teachers were oblivious to them. However, the researcher identified in interviews the curious finding that when teachers knew the names of the specific commuting students in this study, they were able to provide far more information about these students' behaviors in school. Access to a name was like giving the teachers a new pair of prescription glasses. Suddenly, the commuters came into sharp focus.

The difference of a name.

A closer look at the participating commuting students was provided when all comments directed at one particular eighth grader were compiled. In this way each student could be viewed from the different teachers with whom he or she interacted. The teachers spoke of each student in a knowledgeable manner. For example, Mr. Nichols made this remark about a couple of the boys in the study:

I would say with these boys...Harry and Joe you could see [they] would get tired. Or they would get hungry. You would see them start to eat a little bit more... I can see them kind of like...if I bring out my lunch, they would be like, "Oh Mr. Nichols, where did you get that from?" You could just see them craving something.

Another snap shot came from Mr. Sempasa who commented on a different commuting student in his class:

Tom, he... it varies. I know he is an athlete also, but Tom, I'd say if I had to guess, 30% of the occasions he appears to be tired. He has red eyes, he yawns quite a bit in class, and I hope it's not because I'm boring him. [chuckle]

There were equally specific descriptions of the girls in this study as well. For example:

I was gonna say that I notice, Tiffany, eats a lot. Like...well... grazes, so it's not like she eats a lot quantity wise, but... snack time, lunchtime, after school she's always got something to eat and she eats it...Some of it is fruits, some of it is snacky, cookie kinds of things... sweet things. She has it in her lunchbox, and everybody knows it too. She's the only one that has that habit. She always had something to eat.

In the examples above, teachers described commuting students as tired or in need of food, possibly to re-energize. In addition, other comments made by teachers noted how organized or disorganized the ten students were, whether or not they were prepared for class, detailed student behaviors in class, and identified the ones who might be struggling. The faculty seemed aware that these participants were involved with their own group of friends at school and were engaged in after school activities.

The teachers would also praise the students who performed extremely well in school. Mrs. Darthson had this to say about Yvette:

Yvette is always supplied well. She's academically high. Always on top of things. But I do notice that towards the end of the day she does seem to be more

tired. I think that it is her internal drive, of the academic push that really keeps her on top. You know the end of the day definitely, seems to be a little bit more of a struggle for her than it is for other students.

while Mrs. Quon shared this about Isaac:

Isaac, he is a high academic achiever. He is... no matter what he's into, he is going to make sure that he gets his assignments done and he turns them in. And he tries to do a good job on everything. He is another one who is in a lot of different activities, and so he will sometimes get home very late at night because he is in tennis, speech, or he has a late band concert, but regardless of those things, you know, he will make the effort to remember his books, remember his schedule. You know he oftentimes knows more about what's going on in school than some of his classmates who aren't commuters. So he's got high achievement.

The previous findings revealed how much teachers seemed to know about specific, commuting students. After sharing the observations they remembered about various commuters, four of the six teachers mentioned later in their interviews that being able to identify the commuters in their classes was important. These teachers gave several reasons for this turn around. Mr. Nichols had this to say:

Once the teacher is made aware of it, it does benefit them. Benefit the teacher and the student himself.

[Do you think that not being aware is detrimental?]

I would say so. Only because of the fact that it would... they might see it as a behavior problem where, because they are not being attentive, when they are not... you know, the teacher might say, "Well, you're not paying attention and

you're losing out on this” and behavior wise, they might get on that rather than, if they had understood where the student is coming from, and why he was ... he or she was tired at the end of the day then, you know, they could kind of work with that a little bit better.

As a core subject teacher and counselor, Mr. Nichols was also concerned that teachers would misread the behaviors of commuters. Earlier in the findings, parents noted changes in their child’s behaviors when there was inadequate sleep. Their children became irritable, grouchy, and less patient. The review of the literature also noted that when students lacked sufficient sleep, they may pose as behavioral issues (Dahl, 1999) in class. However, if a commuting student was “acting up” it may not be due to belligerence or “giving attitude” but simply lack of sleep, and as suggested by Mr. Nichols, the teacher’s way of addressing the issue might change.

Mrs. Quon commented that knowing a student commuted long distance might help her problem solve academic failure.

...or you know what they could be doing if they had enough sleep, or they didn't have to get up so early in the morning, or if they were dropped off so early in the morning at school because, you know, the parent wanted to avoid whatever traffic [than] coming in later on during the day.

[So being aware is important?]

It is important, at least just to know that there are some kids that... we may need to find... other ways of helping them with their academics.

For Mrs. Darthson, just the cognizance alone was seen as a beneficial reminder that commuters might experience a different life from students who resided in the vicinity

of the school. Sometimes it was necessary to pause and take a closer look at how adolescent development and commuting brought challenges for the eighth graders.

Just that I think sometimes we overlook the impact that it really has. You know, as adults we commute all the time whether it's to work or to something else and you know we are so used to adjusting for that, that it just kind of comes as second nature. And we forget what it's like to be 13, hormonal, and trying to adjust to the changing time, and "I have a sport," and all that stuff. So you know, just to...have ...teachers and other faculty be more aware of students who are on campus and the fact that they may be here at seven o'clock but that they also drove an hour to get here. You know so they have been up almost two and a half hours by the time school actually starts. So just the awareness.

Because putting a name to a commuter seemed to make a difference as to how the commuting students were perceived, the following discussion was included to give a specific example of this phenomenon. Harry was the only first time commuter in this study; he also had the longest commute. He came to Ascension School after having attended a community public school until sixth grade. As a new admission to the school, he had to adjust to an unfamiliar learning environment and the lengthy road time. Although he entered Ascension in seventh grade, which was a year prior to when teachers were interviewed for this study, their memories of him were fairly fresh. Here's what the four teachers who taught Harry had to say about him.

Mrs. Darthson initially noted that Harry had become more organized since the previous year, when he used to be

jamming things in, multiple folders that didn't necessarily go to a specific subject.

This year he has gotten better.

[Do you think the commute had anything to do with that organization last year?]

Oh, he was new last year?... Very possible.

She also mentioned that Harry tended to use humor to mask when he was upset so that it appeared that things did not bother him. When asked if the commute motivated his use of humor to handle mood changes, she said:

You know, it's gotta to effect even if it's to the minimal.... a small portion because when you are losing that time, you know in the car, that means he's also losing that time that he could be at home playing with friends. Or you know, at home with family. And you know you start to lose bits of those connections and it can be draining. You know so then when you come to school, and someone says something, you know spending time with their family or we did this, and he kind of jokes about... "Well we spent the whole weekend in the car, blah, blah, blah," you know you can tell that he is playing it off to try to make himself feel better.

[Has he actually said that?]

He had actually said that...

From the comments of Mrs. Darthson, two observations emerged. The first was the difference in organization between Harry's first and second year on the campus. Being new to the road, he may not have developed those essential routines which long time commuters had already established and his disorganization might have been a reflection of this. Now that a year had passed, he and his family have had a chance to put some of those routines in place. Secondly, Mrs. Darthson mentioned Harry's use of

humor as a possible technique to cover up his frustrations, particularly the long drives he endures not only on the week days, but also on the weekends. As a student who has never had to commute, he was now aware of what it was like to spend so much of his time in the car. His remarks seemed to display a resilient humor which stemmed from trying to adjust to this new life style.

Mr. Nichols added his observations of Harry:

I noticed, knowing his commute from Ewa Beach, I know that was always a struggle.I know that concepts were okay for him and teaching him was okay. You could tell he would be easily distracted though later on in the day. He'd be asking more questions, or not raising his hand, or with just kinda blurt out the question without really going to the right process. He normally would have to sit next to me, from what I remember from last year, fifth and sixth periods, just so that way I could get him to focus on his homework. During tests, I know that he struggled, he had a lot of questions, later on in the day, whereas the beginning of the day he would function okay, he would still ask questions but it wasn't as numerous as it was in the fifth and six periods.

In the discussion above, Mr. Nichols noted that Harry's behavior changed as the day wore to the afternoon. While below, Mr. Nichols spoke of evidence of irritability with peers which might be attributed to being on the road.

With Harry the commute would determine how well he interacted with other people. I would say more so than anybody else on the list. Because you could see when Harry was tired he was irritable with things, little things that [another

classmate] would do...I would say the commute would be a cause if it was long and drawn out where he just got exhausted from it.

From the first remark, Mr. Nichols pointed out why it was difficult for commuting students to learn at the end of the day when they were tired. There was also the issue of Harry displaying irritable behavior, which is one of the classic signs of inadequate sleep mentioned in the review of the literature (Dahl, 1999). Because Harry was a first timer to commuting, he might not have built up stamina to endure the long days.

Mrs. Quon added:

I see him for algebra all the time...his achievement is up and down, up and down, up and down. And part of that is just he himself. And you know it depends upon what kind of distractions that he is facing other than that commute. If he's distracted in class or if he feels the need to be very talkative, then, you know, even if he's tired, he doesn't have any focus. There are other times when he is focused well, ...and he's got that achievement...and when he's tired...then his academics falls.

She also mentioned that if Harry was offered food, he would “jump on it and he’ll munch and eat.”

From Mrs. Quon, we learned that Harry was a capable student, but sometimes being tired affected his performance. From the way she described his attraction to snacks, it almost seems like an intuitive behavior of survival – by eating he could maintain energy and possibly rejuvenate. Earlier in the findings it was noted that students tended to eat throughout the day as a way to keep awake and alert.

From his last instructor, Mrs. Quisantes had this to say:

He might get tired, but I don't see the commute as being the primary problem. I think more, it might compound this problem. He is very physically active. He does a lot of... like basketball, so I think that maybe the commute, going back home, and the long afternoon practice maybe contributes to that. Because I think the time he gets home, he says it's about 7:30. So yeah, I guess that would impact on his... which means that he has been here at school... well.... practice begins at four and, um.... 4:30 and he has been at it from four, 4:30 to 6:30, that's a long day.

Above Mrs. Quisantes calculated the length of Harry's day. The late arrival time at home was the result of an after school sports practice. In doing so, both she and Mrs. Quon brought up the point that other factors might affect Harry's performance and behavior in class, but they also acknowledged the added impact of the commute.

This student example demonstrated how differently commuters appeared once they were identified. The teachers above earlier mentioned that they could not distinguish commuting students from the non-commuting students. When viewing a "sea of kids" nothing stood out, as far as commuters were concerned. Yet once Harry was identified, a number of observations relevant to commuting emerged. While Harry's behaviors could not solely be attributed to being on the road for long periods of time, the teachers were not able to totally dismiss the likelihood that the long drive to and from school had an effect. In Harry's case, this was particularly important because he was green to commuting and new to the school. It appeared that for first time commuters, teacher awareness and some simple interventions might alleviate some of the difficulties of adjusting to life on the road and assimilating into an unfamiliar school.

A new awareness.

It was only after the interview brought awareness of the commuting population that teachers suggested two new recommendations to help first time commuters to the school and their families to adjust. The first was to set up a mentor program in which a student from the school took the newly admitted student commuter “under wing” so to speak: invite them to eat breakfast, go along with them to study in the morning, sign up for extracurricular activities; these might be some ways the mentor student could provide support for the new commuter.

The second suggestion was to provide an information sheet or orientation handout specifically to help commuting families establish routines or time-saving techniques, including helpful hints from teachers, commuting students, and their families. The tip sheet could also be discussed at open house nights as well. Mr. Sempasa mentioned that an information handout “would be beneficial. Well, because I think parents may not be aware, or even thought of the struggles maybe, that their children are having with the commute. Especially for first timers.” As Mr. Sempasa noted, the adjustment for new students may be difficult because the student and her family might not be cognizant of what life on the road entailed. There really was no support in place and new commuters were on their own to problem solve by themselves. Another teacher, Mrs. Quon was also in favor of helping new commuters adjust to the school, and she detailed her reasons:

I think if it's a new incoming student, especially those they just accepted into the school, that might be a valuable piece of information, especially because some of these commuters have only been to their local public schools, and it's, you know, five, ten minutes away from their house. And so they don't know what it's like to

get up at four o'clock in the morning, every single day. And they don't know what it's like to try to have a set bedtime. You know, the kids always complain... “Oh, I have to go to bed early,” but... and they don't understand, “Why can't I stay up late?” without realizing maybe the impact of why they have to go to bed early, and then realizing the impact of what happens when they don't get enough sleep during the day.

Another way to help commuters, especially those new to the school, was to address key issues that commuters faced and provide students the skills to handle them. In the course of the interviews parents spoke of the importance of having course offerings that could support adolescents; these courses were themselves interventions on behalf of the commuters.

For example, Kara's mom spoke of an elective which was being offered that her daughter found helpful:

Kara, I think she's taking a class on more like your psychological needs. How to...dealing with stress, and I think it's an elective...Like when you're stressed, what can you do? So I think that has been a positive thing they have started.

Living with the stress of limited time, the morning rush hour to leave home before traffic build up, the desire to balance socialization with academics – student commuters needed to learn coping skills. Although Kara's class was not geared to commuters, but to adolescents in general, as this parent perceived, it proved to be a boon for commuters who traveled every day in stressful situations. This was a good example of how adolescent needs and commuter needs dovetailed and it demonstrated that addressing

these shared needs in a formal curriculum was possible. As recommended by NMSA (1995), all middle school students would benefit from:

A comprehensive health and fitness program deals with such topics as nutrition, substance abuse, mental health, safety, peer mediation, sexual harassment, and health services. These areas provide opportunities for developing and practicing healthful decision-making, coping, and refusal skills which are reinforced elsewhere in the curriculum. (p. 30)

From another angle, Tom's mom spoke of a health class that her son was taking and mentioned "I'm sure they're talking about..... I mean they always talk about [the] food pyramid and that type of thing," hoping that what he learned in class will help him to make better snack bar purchases. Along the same lines, Mrs. Darthson suggested that PE/Health classes might be a good venue to address adolescent eating habits as well. She said, "I think it is something that maybe should be more addressed in PE/health. You know, healthy eating, the fact that they need to have breakfast."

Mrs. Darthson also added that advisory classes were appropriate to discuss other problem areas and provide strategies to overcome them. She specifically mentioned time management.

Time management would be a really good one for advisory. You know, how to address the fact that you are spending three hours on one assignment and ten minutes on the next. You know, what's the appropriate amount of time to be spending on different types of assignments? You know, how long should I be writing this in my agenda? How long, you know, should I be working on this at home? If it is taking me more than x amount of time, what are different strategies

that I can take on? If it's taking four hours to read a chapter, what are better reading strategies to get through that reading in a shorter amount of time but still understand the material?

The advisory class is unique to middle school. According to the literature the “advisory period during the school day is potentially an important time for educators and students in middle grades schools to develop strong interpersonal bonds” (Jackson & Davis, 2000, p. 143). If every teacher knew her advisory students well, she could better advocate for their needs. No student could “fall through the cracks.” The curriculum for advisory can include topics like team building, goal setting, test taking skills, health, social relationships, and adolescent development issues. Advisory in middle school has been the ‘go to’ place to address time management, setting priorities, organization -- key points for all adolescents, and particularly commuters. However, when speaking to the teachers, it seemed that different advisories did different things, and if the above topics were not addressed, teachers suggested that perhaps they should be via a health or guidance class. A clear, unified curriculum was not evident.

Overall, the advisory class period at Ascension, which varied in curriculum from teacher to teacher, did not seem to provide interventions for the needs of the commuter. Given that faculty reported that commuters were not a noticeable group; they were not a substantial part of the student population, and they were not treated any differently from anyone else, the lack of commuter-relevant curriculum in advisory is to be expected. Teachers had concluded that no special attention or interventions were perceived as needed.

Thus far the findings have described how the commute influenced the adolescent's daily life in school as reported by the participating students with added commentary by their teachers and parents. To get a full picture of ways commuters adapted effectively, in terms of academic learning, it is essential to see how parents promoted their children's academic success and overrode many potentially detrimental effects of the daily commute. In essence, parent presence in the school arena modified commuting adolescent's school experiences, a key theme identified in the findings. What follows is a closer examination of what parents did at school, at home, and in the car to give their children that extra "edge" in academic performance.

Parent Involvement at School

Because I want to know what my child is doing, because we have such a long period of not seeing each other, I don't know, within a ten hour window, what's going on, yeah? I need to know his academics, because that to me is so important, you know?

– Joe's mom

Despite the hectic schedule, tight time, and the long days, commuting parents made it a point to participate in school activities. Eight of the ten parents regularly volunteered at the school either by chaperoning or helping at a school event. Because adolescents preferred that their parents not be present for social events, parents said it was becoming more difficult to take part in school functions. This phenomenon was supported by the research of Hill and Tyson (2009) who found that adolescents did not want their parents to be on campus or wished the adults not intrude during homework

time. However, attendance at sports or academic events was acceptable; therefore, in these areas, parent involvement was one hundred percent.

The parents in the study believed their involvement affected their adolescents in several ways. Besides giving the students a “push,” it established clear expectations.

Tom’s mom presented the dilemma this way:

I think getting involved, helps us.... helps him to see that we are genuinely interested in how he's doing. How he's doing in school... and everything about his growing up. Because I think if we didn't care, probably he wouldn't care either.

All the parents in the study came to open house to learn about course requirements. They met the teachers to put a face to the name in order to facilitate future contact if necessary. They planned to return a few months later for parent-teacher conferences to learn how their child was progressing. As Harry’s dad said:

I do everything...for... academically wise I go to everything. Sports wise, I attend everything. Me and my wife we go to... when she's here, we make sacrifices; we go to everything.

In between these events, the lines of communication remained open via phone calls and e-mail, through which parents asked questions if they were “not sure of a certain situation” (Wendy’s mom); “to arrange for her[daughter] to maybe get extra help,” (Tiffany’s mom); or “to verify like... they have a test or something” (Remy’s mom).

Parents became involved with more than academics, as was the case of Isaac’s mom, who once intervened with other parents from her son’s upper elementary class to trouble shoot student-teacher relationships to maintain a positive learning environment:

Isaac wasn't the only one having an issue with the teacher... We realized it was a class issue. A classroom management issue... I guess the sad part was, all of us [parents] that were at the meeting, all our kids were doing well academically. I mean it wasn't like our kids were failing and we were concerned. We weren't even concerned about the grades, we were concerned about how it was affecting them, you know, in other ways, right?

Another example of a parent's proactive attitude in support of academic success was supplied by Remy's mom, when she spoke of a time when, due to a switch in class schedule, students suddenly faced a test that they were not prepared for:

They switched classes and then she wasn't supposed to have that class and they're going to give a test, so one of the students told.... went downtold the principal... that they switched it and they didn't study for it, so why should they take a test that day? So they changed it. I mean they [students] went the principal came up, talked to the teachers. But if that... but if they had to take a test and Remy did bad, then I would really say something.

In their desire to stay on top of their children's schooling, to help them succeed should they start to fall, parents wanted immediate and current information. Harry's dad explained:

Actually, e-mail. Or phone. Depends, if we have a situation where there is an emergency, we call right away, because we want an answer quickly. Oh just when... you know... little deficiency notices coming in and it's a concern to us, especially when it's so late in the quarter, that I need to scramble to try to bring these grade [s] up.

Note that in the preceding excerpt, Harry's dad did the "scrambling" to make changes in his son's school performance. The parents of this study did not take a "back seat" attitude when it came to their child's academic welfare. This sentiment was echoed by Kara's mom, who said she would not let her children fail. According to her, talking to a teacher, even for fifteen minutes was like "gold."

A second benefit to being involved was networking with other parents. Tom's mom stated:

Because as you meet parents, you can talk to them about.... because not always do the kids share with you what is happening so, from other parents, sometimes you can find out what's happening in the classroom or if something big happened at school.

Tom's mom also shared how parents occasionally helped each other by purchasing supplies and sharing the cost. By making such arrangements, parents were kept abreast of what was being taught at school and could follow up at home.

Well I guess then that way we [parents] can find out if...like project[s]... something is coming up or if we, you know help each other, if we need to buy supplies, if we don't need all that, we can all share, that kind of thing really helps. Or if one person needs a ride, we can help with carpooling, so it really helps to get to know people in...everything, you know, ...whatever your child's involved in so that can...ease the stress I guess on everybody else, if we all help.

To become an active participant in school affairs, parents altered their work schedules, or did not go in to the office for a day, as Wendy's mom has done: "I would

ask if I can take off [from work] to go to their functions and whatnot. Sure, sure I would rearrange my schedule.”

Parents planned ahead and arranged to stay in town for the evening if needed, which included providing dinner and a place for their child to wait. For example, Tiffany’s mom told how the family planned to stay in town for evening events:

If we do something after school, we won't go home. We stay in town.

[But if that extends your day...]

Right. But that is a planned activity, it is not like an unexpected accident on the freeway to cause you another hour delay. So if it is planned, then we know what we're going to be doing, and what to expect, we're going to eat and everything like that.

These parents rarely drove home and returned to campus. Everyone just stayed in town, unless one parent took the children home and the other adult remained. The findings also revealed that parent involvement was not bounded by participating in school sponsored affairs; it continued at home as well.

Parent Involvement at Home

I think we are all on them, all the time about homework. And “What [do] you have?” And “What test is coming up?” Trying to help them be ahead because they are so busy that they need to know that the weekends, sometimes you don't have free because you're trying to do homework for the next week. —Tom’s mom

The parents in this study were highly proactive and found many ways to support their child’s learning at home. Some of the adults helped in concrete ways such as

answering content area questions because “I’m usually homework help, (Kara’s mom), tutoring (Tom), monitoring computer use so the student stayed on task (Pam) and ensuring that the printer and computer were in good working order (Pam’s mom), providing supplies at home (Tiffany’s mom) or running out to buy supplies at night (Wendy’s mom), and helping with projects (Yvette). Tom spoke of how his parents pitched in to help him save time while working:

I do all the research, and then I cut it out, and then I tell them to paste it so it goes on faster. So I can just keep on cutting they just place it where I tell them to, so it is a lot faster. It just keeps on going.

Joe’s mom guided her son by giving him what he needed to find the answers, but not the answers themselves: “He has asked me searching questions, and I said, ‘Well you need to look it up.’ And I give him access to what he needs to get to...the answer.”

Harry shared how his parents helped him with writing assignments: “Like if I need it [help] on big papers, then they help me with it. They....sometimes we edit together, and then if it's a mistake, then it's a mistake. Then I need to change it and stuff.” Remy’s mom tested her daughter, and Pam’s mom at times typed Pam’s papers because her daughter was slow at the keyboard: “in the... need of time, I'd say, ‘Just tell me and I'll type it faster.’ But her words. But that's really been far in between, if I ever do that because she's gotten much better.”

Sometimes parents left the student to work alone, but periodically checked on her. By occasionally dropping by, the student was aware that she should be focused and finishing homework. Wendy’s mom shared: “I check up on her every once in a while to

be sure it's homework, not just other things, and she's doing homework." In this way, Wendy's mom demonstrated an informal monitoring of her daughter's homework time.

In some families, homework time had evolved into a version of family time. Parents and children gathered around the dining table and everyone worked together.

When we get home and they're doing their homework, I'm around when they are doing their homework. Because they do [it] at the dining room table, and I'll be, you know, reading the paper, or doing my mail, whatever right, in that same area. So, we're still together. My husband comes home and he tries to do his work at the table...

The students themselves reported that parents regulated their work time. For example, Isaac's parents informed him when dinner would be ready so the he could plan to work around the meal (Isaac). It was a good example of the efficient use of all available time because in a commuting household, time was valuable.

They usually arrange a time for me like after dinner. They usually tell me a set time when I can do my home work. For example like last night, they told me that dinner will be at, Um..... A certain time and then they tell me I could do it [homework] before that time or after.

[So they let you know when is the best time to do homework?]

Yes.

[They help you to plan time management?]

Yes.

Or Remy explained how her parents taught her to set aside study time:

Well they tell me by a certain time I should start studying already... Like they tell me like by ...nine o'clock I'm supposed to be studying already, instead of 9:30, because they don't want me to stay up that late. But sometimes I have no choice, and I have to stay up kind of late so I don't fail that subject.

Within the home a place was provided to study (Yvette's mom), and parents tried to ensure that enough time was available to finish work. They even did extra chores so their teens could spend the time on homework instead, as Tom's mom recounted:

I mean they [the boys] would do it, they're responsible for the trash, recycling, and cleaning the bathroom. But sometimes the cleaning the bathroom doesn't get done because, to me, their responsibility is school, and if it doesn't get done, I do it... The taking out the trash... dad will do it. Somebody will pick up for them because the schoolwork is going to be first.

An important way that these parents promoted academics at home was through the formation of work habits in the child and providing emotional and psychological support. For example, Isaac's parents allowed their son, at a younger age, to vent about his struggles in school, but in the end, he learned that he still had to face the task.

Well, we just gotta let him complain, eventually he has to do it, right? So I guess he's worked out the fact that you can complain but it's not like mom and dad will come up with a sentence and give it to you, right?

Work habits from Harry's dad included "hints, like how to be more organized, and he's kinda been doing it, like getting all his book...his subjects all in order. Getting it done, and just finishing projects at a good amount of time" – which were really lessons in time management and the avoidance of procrastination. Pam's mom tried to help her

daughter “to think ahead” and Yvette’s mom worked on the concept of prioritizing – even to the extent of exercising the option of not attending an extracurricular activity:

I tell them because of all of their afterschool things is not a *have to*, you can always say no to those. I mean those are choices, really, but the school is something that they have to do, so they have to plan it. And if, you know, that...you have to prioritize. And that [school] comes first.

What was interesting about these excerpts from Isaac, Remy, Harry’s dad, and Yvette’s mom was that, at least from their end, parents did work on time management. This was a need discussed by teachers – that it was parent responsibility to manage the activities of their children and instill the concept of effective time use. These parents were doing that.

The parents also proposed several ways that the teachers could assist in the time management education of commuting children. For example, Tiffany’s mom suggested: “... assignments that are given a couple of days in advance, I think that helps. That’s the whole time management thing, that the kids have to learn.” This request directly connected with time limitations at home and the need for students to avoid procrastination, look ahead, and plan. In conjunction with this, parents also asked that teachers e-mail information home so that the adults received advance notice – crucial for mapping out what needed to be accomplished. Harry’s dad reported why he wants more e-mail communication from the school.

... send home e-mails every day.... Knowing....okay I have this, I have that.... this needs to be done, this test needs to be signed, it's so convenient for me so I

don't need to go to his daily planner. Because sometimes he doesn't even do his daily planner.

Additionally, a strong academic performance was underpinned by the transfer of parental values of education to the adolescent. Earlier in this chapter, a brief glimpse of what grounded parental education values was given. The question is: How did these adults communicate their values and expectations, which they had learned from their parents? If the values were adopted by the children, they would be intrinsically motivated to do well and put in the effort to do so. This in turn affected how they approached their school life. The findings showed that parents had chosen different venues to share their expectations. Joe's mom said she provided hypothetical examples from life.

I asked him, "What do you think about school?" He goes, "I don't know, I wish I were a rock star so I can be a multimillionaire, so I don't have to go to school." So I said, "Well, then, that's [a] good job, Joe, if you could do that, but how are you going to finance the money that you make? Are you going to depend on someone else? What if they rob you blind? You're going to have to know [the] business stand point, and the only way you're going to know about [the] business stand point, is if you go to college. Do you understand that? Because they can rip you off." He goes, "Oh yeah." So I said, "Even if you want to be a rock star, that's up to you, get your education anyway. And that way you'll know what's in front of you. So you know what's going on. You can't rely on someone to take care of your business or your money. You have to do it yourself."

[Has it impacted him?]

Yes, a whole lot. He's striving to get better. You know like, this quarter, he had four B's and two C's. Which I'm pretty impressed, actually.

Other parents talked with their children about the importance of education, doing well in school, and working hard. For example, Wendy's mom related:

I am always telling her... just study, focus on your studies, that way it will help you to get a good education, and then something to fall back, to go to college... to get a good job. Um...I want her to be more better than what I am. You know, I want her to be one step higher than I am.

Remy's mom spoke of other family members who made disappointing decisions. She recounted the story of a nephew who dropped out of a mainland college, and was now working at a local store.

And we're telling Remy, "How far do you think he's going to get in [name of the store]?"

"Not far."

And even if he ends up working there, and moving up as a manager, is that what you think you want to do? She said, "No." And then I go, "That's why you have to get a good college degree so you can get the job you want...So I tell my kids, kind of to scare them a little bit [laughs] so they are aware.

From the students' side, have the talks hit the mark? Many adolescents said they wanted to attend college and have a good career. To attain these goals, Wendy acknowledged that now she must "study and do my homework and pay attention;" Kara said her objective was "to try my best in school. Just do the best I can...I want to get B's and higher than that. This quarter I am trying to go to all my teachers and ask them for

help.” Yvette was ambitiously aiming to “at least get honors;” and Tom stated his very practical approach of “just getting my work done.”

Did the parents notice behaviors that evidenced that their children had internalized their spoken intentions? Wendy’s mom affirmed her daughter’s follow through: “Yes. She shows that every time we go home, I do not have to tell her to go do homework, she goes straight to her room and does it right away. She knows what to do.” Remy’s mom had also expressed similar observations: “just by getting good grades. She always studies hard. I mean we always notice that, for my daughter.” Harry’s dad remarked that he’s seen his son “sometimes trying to be more assertive in school and trying to do more homework, and trying to push that effort.”

Kara’s mom spoke of her daughter’s reaction to grades: “ ‘Mom I didn't get this or mom I got this,’ and she gets disappointed.” For Kara, lower grades was particularly disheartening because she shared her self-discipline to tackle school work in the following quotation:

Well I can't watch TV or go on a laptop, or anything, so if I ever get a text message on my phone, then I'll just have to like, wait till I'm done. That's my rule.

[How did you come to set up a rule?]

Well, first my mom said... to my brother, “Oh shut off the TV, you're not supposed to be doing that.” And so, I said to myself, “I need to do that too. I need to like not watch TV while I am doing my homework.”

In some families, parents had worked with their children academically since grade school. Parents admitted that as the child grew into adolescence, the adults tapered off.

Still from what had been presented previously, adult involvement remained a prevalent part of home life. They did it because “by reviewing at home, there was a better chance that he [brother] would do well on this test” (Kara’s mom) which was what was done for Kara when she was younger too; and to place a priority on education as Tom’s mom related “to show them [her sons] that it needed to be done; that it was important.”

Yvette’s mom confessed that her involvement was year round:

I did [help them at home] mainly because I felt that, you know when they came here to Ascension, so they had very...they had solid foundations. But I needed to expand on that, going deeper, and so we always worked at home, after school and during summers. Mainly taking what they did in school, or doing their homework, especially like social studies, you know going deeper into it, you know if it is just scratching the surface...So they always read and ...we kept up on ...with the math skills, we did a lot of vocabulary work.

The parents, having made a huge investment in time and money, wanted their adolescents to know that success in school was the number one goal. This emphasis did not end with being a presence on campus or ranking academic tasks as the foremost in priority. It also extended to extracurricular activities because parents would notify coaches that their child was not attending practice for any given day. This was shared by Remy’s mom: “If homework does get a big test, then we will just call the coach and say she can't make it. I mean, that's it.” Throughout the day, the conversations on education, the homework help, the academic bolstering continued – and as the next section will show, even during the commute itself.

The final way to explore whether or not students internalized the educational values of their parents came out in the adolescents' responses when they were asked what they valued about their private school education. Here are quotations showing what some of the students had to say:

Joe: I guess we have more interactive teachers than other schools because they would usually help us a lot more, than like public schools I guess.

Harry: The difference is like we get more tests, and we have more homework, in private school than public school. We have to study a lot more.

Isaac: I feel I can get a better education at a private school. I can learn more.

Tom: I think it is harder.

[Here?]

Yeah. My friend is getting 4.0 and it's not that hard. He doesn't study at all. He is learning the same thing now that I am, and he is in ninth grade.

Tom was not the only one to compare his learning with someone else attending a public school. Wendy spoke of this same point as well and came to similar conclusions – she was ahead in content learning.

Pam: I value the academic opportunities I have, because, it is kinda stereotypical; it is stereotypical, but people come out [of] a private school usually do better than people who come out of public schools.

What these perceptions of private school students, particularly Pam, showed was that the adolescents had assimilated the same views as their parents: private schools provide a better education than public. This was the prevalent local attitude explored and

contested by Bayer (2009); it was what prompted the participating parents to choose the commuting life style, and it led to student acceptance of their parents' decision.

Furthermore, the students readily acknowledged all the things their parents did for them and spoke of the many different ways their parents were involved in their school life. Joe felt that his mom helped him to set goals and he appreciated her encouragement him when he struggled. Isaac liked the fact that his parents passed on information that might help him accomplish his work, and they asked about assignments to be sure he was working on them. Pam said her mom gave her positive comments and having parental support made her feel better.

Having committed themselves and their children to attending a private school, these parents accepted the cost in time, distance, and tuition. This was a sizable investment, and parents wanted to be sure the returns were worth the price. Besides getting involved in their child's education at school and at home, they also continued their involvement in interactions focused on the value of private schooling in the car.

Parent Involvement on the Road

Because I'm programming him to get ready... we're going to work [as in a job]. You can't be thinking about playing because you do that during recess, you know. Your job is going to school, getting geared up, studying. – Joe's mom

In Joe's mom's words it was important to establish a mindset during the drive to town. It was not a time to play games, but to fix in Joe's mind that school was serious business, and she expected nothing less than quality performance. Besides instilling in Joe a "professional" attitude, she followed up with actions that displayed the perspective

of the other parents in this study: academics first. On the afternoon route, in particular, adjustments were made to ensure students had enough study time. Joe said his mom asked him how much homework he had; based on his answer, she planned what to do next.

“How much homework do you have?”

And I would be like, “not that much.”

Then we won't like rush home, we might do like couple of little errands.

But if I say I do have a lot of homework, we go straight home.

Two other parents, Isaac's dad and Pam's mom sometimes stopped at the library so some homework could be done before going home. Here's what Pam's mom said:

Ummm... if we need to go library to do work, I'll schedule that instead of doing errands you know, while we are waiting [for older sibling] before we go home. If she needs her computer, I make sure it is charged. You can still do computer work in the car.

Another commuter, Remy, explained that she was picked up after school and went to her mom's work place. There she changed her clothes for soccer practice, but before leaving, she tackled homework even if it was just for a short period of time.

My dad takes me to my mom's working place. From there I have to change and go to my soccer practice...If I'm early, usually I try to do my homework so I don't have to stay up late at night. I just find that chair that no one is using, and just sit in a corner or something. I can use two different types [of computers].

[How long do you usually do your homework there?]

About ten minutes.

For those parents who viewed road time as an opportune chance for their children to do something constructive, provided that the adolescents were not sleepy or in need of down time, the concept of turning the car into a “study hall” was not unusual. As Tiffany’s mom relayed:

Instead of wasting the time... it seems like we should make use [of] that time in the car instead of just eating or watching a movie, but they did those things too. It's like a lot of time being wasted; it's two hours a day.

The general parent sentiment was if some work was done in the car, there would be less to do at home (Tom’s mom) and it stimulated their minds to think (Remy’s mom). Parents talked about testing their children on the ride in to town. How did they accomplish this feat while driving? Some had already memorized the material from working with their child the night before. Others kept the list of vocabulary words, for example, next to them, and they glanced at it from time to time. Sometimes they asked questions about the material read for homework.

When siblings waited for each other, parents encouraged them to do their homework. Even if a lap top was not available, there were still assignments that could be done. Tom’s mom tells how her son learned the habit of working while waiting:

Well I guess for Tom if he's... has to be, you know, the tag along, he does his homework where ever he happens to be. Well, I guess he gets picked up and he kind of had no choice ...they just head out to wherever Jacob [older brother] is going to be. And they wait. ...I don't know, we just probably told him this was the time you... it's a good time to do it because it's...you know you have the time...maybe we did say something like, you should do your homework. Take

your backpack out and do your work. And maybe he just sees the other kids doing it too, I don't know.

Parents who had been commuting for many years told stories about how they promoted learning in the car when their children were much younger. Pam's mom spoke of how she would try different ideas to give Pam an "edge" in school.

Well I think society... well both my husband and I have advanced degrees. And I think society in general is always telling you, or often promoting various ways to keep your kids, your child, or help your child succeed and, you know, just learn faster, just learn better and things like that. And so, you're just trying to make them be the best that they can be. So if you hear of something then you do it. You try it out, and if it works you continue to do it.

Wendy's mom added that she had read about it and started when Wendy was in her womb with listening to classical music; Yvette's mom recalled "Because that's what the book says to do. [Laugh] Your child's growing brain or mind, or something. I read a lot." These three mothers showed that they kept abreast of research on how growing children learned by reading child rearing books, and they found and tried out ways to nurture the growing minds of their children.

Joe's mom employed conversational strategies to give Joe practice in cognitive thinking when he was younger.

Every single morning. Okay like we'd go, fill in the blanks. Or I ask him a hypothetical question, and he'll try to give me his scenario. For example, "This is what the story is... This is what happened to this girl going over here, what is your conclusion?" Word problems, try to solve it, so his mind thinks. So I'll give him

a couple, one or two, depending how tired his day is, and then he'll just go sleep.
Every morning.

Wendy's mom did workbooks each day with her daughter to pass the time while waiting in the school parking lot. Since they arrived so early from home and the school yard was deserted, they completed workbook pages just to provide her grade school child that extra boost, to give her "a good foundation" that she could build on. From all these efforts, there seemed to be positive results as Wendy's mom related:

Yeah she became to be a bright kid.

[Why do you think the commute affected that?]

Maybe we had more time, I don't know maybe we have more time spent together on the road.

As a point of comparison, Harry was the last student in this study to begin commuting, starting in his seventh grade year. When his father was asked about doing educational activities in the car with Harry, his dad responded "No, because he was in public school before so we would just walk to school." The researcher wondered whether students who commuted in the family car since childhood had an advantage in the classroom over non-commuters or bus commuters because of the "car schooling" they received.

With the considerable parental involvement that was the rule in this study, eighth graders, when asked about their performance at school, replied that they were doing well, keeping up with assignments, and getting good grades. Several made honor roll, and some were struggling, but all were earning C and above, with many in the higher range. Although the commute was a factor that must be reckoned every day, it was parent

involvement that compensated for any liability it might have caused and brought about success in school.

Summary

The purpose of this report of interview and blog data was to explore the ways students' school life was changed by commutes. From the teacher's perspective, as reported in interviews, a distinction between commuters and non-commuters was not evident in school, except when the commuting students' names were specifically noted. Teachers also felt that managing the challenges of long commutes was the rightful responsibility of parents, and that individual student effort and ability, not commuting by car or not, made the difference in a child's academic achievement. Commuting was viewed as just one of several adolescent factors that influenced student performance in class. In only two instances did commuting students apparently have a slight advantage: they were rarely tardy, and they seemed prepared.

The students themselves felt they were capable of keeping up in class, despite struggling with being tired or sleepy or hungry. They discovered simple ways to rejuvenate themselves during the day by being physically active and snacking. Participation in extracurricular activities provided a means of further exercise, and socialization. Through their blogs and interviews, the researcher discovered that commuting students were also typical adolescents who wanted to socialize and go to special events even on school nights. They spoke of the challenge of living within time limits and their tiredness became more evident when their school classes were not engaging.

What seemed to have the greatest bearing on school life was the way parents participated in the education of their children, another theme that emerged from the findings. The adults in this study were highly proactive and motivated to step into the academic arena of their children because of their own education experiences.

Opportunities to be involved brought parents on campus for various school events where they talked with teachers and networked with other parents. At home the adults directly helped their children accomplish school work, fostered work habit development, transferred their values of education, and provided emotional and psychological support for the students. On the road, parents continued to instill values and found creative ways to continue setting the foundation for their children. It was mainly through parental efforts that possible ill-effects from the commute were addressed. In this way students had a successful school life.

After reviewing data from the current study, the researcher was left with two key questions: Could the school collaborate more with parents to better serve commuting students during the school day? How might that impact student learning and development? It seemed likely that suggestions from both students and parents could open the door to school-wide conversations about commute concerns, and thereby promote a team effort to meet each child's needs between home and school, much in keeping with the middle school philosophy and best practice. Recommendations to support a unified effort between home and school are presented in the next chapter along with a discussion of how the adaptive behaviors and values held by the participants of this study, united them into a distinctive group worthy of recognition.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to explore commuting to school in the family car as perceived by students and parents and to discover how it affected schooling at one private middle school. Although there were several different ways to transport children to school, this study focused on middle school students who traveled in the family car. It is important to learn more about students and families that commute because currently little is known about the impact of this life style upon adolescent development, home life, and school success. Such knowledge can facilitate the design of relevant and appropriate interventions.

The story of commuting was presented by the participants themselves in their own words. Adults and adolescents shared their experiences both in and out of the car to enhance others' understanding of the commuting phenomenon. Their accounts added to the literature on bus commuting, and related a different dimension and story about conveying adolescents to school over long distances, one that was grounded in families' choices for their children.

Electing to Drive

The findings showed that parents freely chose to enter the commuting lifestyle because they wished to own their own homes, a priority that was made possible by purchasing a house some distance away from Honolulu, the hub of island life. Because of their own education experiences and their families' aspirations and value of education, these parents sought a private school education for their children and were willing to pay the cost in tuition, time, personal health, and long distance driving. Finally, parents

desired to give their children opportunities to participate in extracurricular activities that were sponsored by Ascension School and outside leagues in order to promote the development of social skills, healthy bodies, and well roundedness.

Despite the challenges of long distance commuting, the parents demonstrated commitment to their choices because they were highly motivated to accomplish specific goals for their children and themselves. Their belief that what they were doing was right led to their willingness to make sacrifices and adjust to the demands of the road before, during, and after the travel time itself. This resulted in a high level of involvement in the school lives of their children and the acceptance of a difficult, often stressful way of living.

The parents communicated that commuting was not a storybook perfect way to raise a family when they candidly discussed their worries about their children's health, particularly in the areas of adequate sleep and proper nutrition. Although the data showed that these families were successful in creating pockets of family time and that the students were doing well academically in school, the effort expended to make commuting doable, clearly indicated that it was not a lifestyle suitable for every family. There was also strong evidence that these families were able to adapt, problem solve, and accept the difficulties, in part because both parents and children, together, shared the commuting time and experience every day. In doing so, the families of this study exhibited certain similarities which distinguish them as a unique group.

Culture

During the interviews, families spoke of the differences they sensed between their lifestyles and those of non-commuters. The study participants not only felt a distinction

in their way of living, but also related that non-commuters did not understand what the commuting experience was all about. Some parents suggested that it was a dissimilar mind-set, or that non-commuters thought differently because they did not have as much planning and preparation to account for. The findings of the study suggested that commuters, though individual in their family routines, had a common culture.

The discovery that commuters had a culture of their own came from comparing data to “find similarities and differences” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 54) from different interviews – between the ten parents and ten students, and between data gathered in two rounds of interviews. The discovery involved moving from the concrete (data) to the abstract (theory) and finding consensus among those who lived the experience of commuting (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 73). The process of moving from data to theory fulfilled two requirements: “fit” and “relevance” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 54). “Fit” referred to how well themes aligned with the realities of the participants. “Relevance” was the abstract, theoretical frame through which interpretations occurred. In this study, “fit” referred to how the data provided evidence that demonstrated the existence of different traits that defined culture. The concept of “relevance” established the importance of acknowledging this culture by both commuters and non-commuters. “Fit” and “relevance” are discussed on the following pages.

Fit

Anthropologists have wrestled with the concept of culture for many years. To date, there has not been one all encompassing definition that has spoken to the many properties that comprise culture. Perhaps the simplest way of understanding “culture” is

to view it as “generalized patterns of behavior” (Moore, 1980, p. 2). How these patterns came into existence has been, in part, what anthropologists have explored.

Ethnography widened the study of culture to the modern day study of any group of people who interact for a lengthy period of time and eventually develop a “culture” with a shared intersubjectivity and the possibility of it “being passed on to new group members” (D’Andrade, 1992, p. 230). In this study, the concept of culture was applied to adolescents who shared lengthy commuting experiences with their families. Although the individual students and their families did not frequently interact socially over a long period of time; what made them a “group” was their common experience of commuting. Their particular experiences conveyed likenesses that distinguished their common lifestyle as a “culture,” and for this reason it was possible to use applied ethnography to underpin the findings.

From isolation to shared.

In the many attempts to develop an acceptable construct of culture, some attributes emerge more frequently than others. Himes (1968, p.74) suggested five key facets: culture is socially created, socially shared, learned, gratifying, and integrated. Although each of these traits could be applied to a “culture of commuters,” the first two features might possibly give an altered rendering of what “socially created” and “socially shared” means. This was because the commuting culture began in the isolation of individual families. Each of these social units, small, and insulated, was challenged by the day to day demands of being on the road for lengthy periods of time. Alone, the families devised their own unique responses to daily living needs and laid out a routine

method of handling them. In this way, the resulting commuting culture was socially created.

As an example, for a commuting family, the location that impressed a sense of belonging was the family car. Each family had its own method of adapting their vehicles into an extended home. Fashioning their individual spaces in the car demanded collaboration with the other family members; it was a social process. Each person denoted his or her own “quarters,” accessorized with special possessions, and each respected the domains of fellow passengers. In all cases, the family members agreed on what was to go in the car, for what purpose, where it went, and how each area was to be used. The fact that each family had done so was a shared cultural phenomenon. Whether it was a large, roomy van, a work truck, or a sedan, the vehicle became home. It physically resembled home, and it felt like home. It was the place where family life continued seamlessly on the road as students consumed meals, conversed, argued, and finished dressing before setting off to school. Both students and parents cited traveling together in the family car as a positive aspect to commuting.

Remarkably, without consultation or communication among the ten participating families, they each answered the need to continue home life by devising a way to take their homes with them on the road. This too suggested that their responses were “culturally shared.” The commuting culture emerged from isolated, yet socially engineered family decisions, which gave rise to a practice common to all. Having met the first two criteria of culture proposed by Himes (1968), the behaviors of commuters appeared cultural.

Another example of a shared similarity among all ten families was the presence of a lead parent who orchestrated the commute experience. This designated organizer was up first in the morning to start the day's scenario. The responsibilities of the lead parent included maintenance of the calendar, provisioning for the next day's road trip, planning the logistics for the afternoon commute home, performing extra tasks around the house to ensure they got done, and overseeing everyone else in the family to keep them on task.

Furthermore, siblings and spouses in all family units were delegated their own roles to play, whether it was packing the night before, loading the car, making their own lunches, or laying out their clothes. Preparing for the commute was a concern in every family, and this made it a "shared" priority as well as a shared responsibility in each family. This shared concern, in turn, led to the cultural practice of developing ways to save time, which was evident in all ten participating families. To make the best use of time, routines were quickly established to reduce stress and increase efficiency. Once everyone knew the "routine," preparing for the commute went smoother because all family members did their part. Each adolescent and adult was highly aware of time; how limited it was and how even a few extra minutes made a difference. The commuters shared a life style that was time driven and the consciousness of time constraints pervaded life both on and off the road.

As mentioned before, the ten families did not converse with each other about their family habits, nor did they do so with others outside the study, or with non-commuting parents. When parents attended sporting or school events, the topic of conversation was rarely about commuting tips and routines. The dialogue focused on school concerns instead. The few times that the subject of commuting did arise, parents discussed driving

routes and ideas for dinner. Parents reported that, for the most part, they learned to handle the commute on their own from trial and error. It was striking, that from isolated social family behaviors, common, culturally shared practices emerged.

A final characteristic implying common culture among commuting families and displayed by all ten families was the presence of resilience in response to challenging conditions of long distance commuting. The students showed resilience in the face of a stressful life typically punctuated by inadequate sleep, lack of time to eat well, the morning rush, traffic, long drives that consumed time, and a late return home to face academic responsibilities. To offset the difficulties of long commutes, parents provided a strong support system and put protective factors in place for their adolescent children. This support system included the adults actively taking part in their children's school lives, setting high expectations and communicating them, and providing the necessary help their children needed. Finally, parents established strong family bonds which embraced their adolescents so that whether on the road or at home, the eighth grader always felt she had a valued place and a voice in the family unit.

In addition, because the parents commuted with their children, the adults were also subject to the same challenges that their children faced. These parents modeled sacrifice and stoic acceptance of the consequences of their choices of where to live and where to attend school. In a sense the high expectations they had for their children, became the same high expectations they had for themselves; everyone worked together to achieve the same goal: success in school for future success in life. In essence, the parents modeled resilience as they reached out to support their children.

Although no one taught resiliency parenting to the mothers and fathers of this study, they seemed to act intuitively on their own accord to build support for their children. Further discussion about how culture is acquired follows.

A learned experience.

In addition to being socially created and commonly shared, the findings also revealed that the culture of a commuter was learned. This facet of learning also characterizes culture (Himes, 1968). No individual was born genetically wired to commute. The life style came from choices families made and the resulting need to develop an accommodating way of life. If the challenges of the commute made demands on families, they had to learn how to live under such conditions. Linton (1936) explained that culture included a “conditioned emotional response” (p. 288). In this study, several parents spoke of ways they devised a response to individual household needs. It appeared also that the response gradually developed into learned patterns of behavior. Hence, the culture of commuters could be considered a set of coping or adaptive strategies, learned in order to resolve and surmount the strains of limited time and maximize opportunities both on and off the road.

Adults and adolescents of commuting families in this study evinced similar learned behaviors. In some way or another, all parents tried to demonstrate, coach, or teach behaviors that facilitated a smoother commuting experience. From a student’s point of view, Wendy, for example, also mentioned that she learned how to commute because she did it every day, the same thing, until it became a habit.

In addition to learning pro-active behaviors, the student commuters acquired a commuter’s mentality. The parents were frequently hurrying their children along,

reminding them that “five minutes makes a difference,” hustling to finish needed chores, and coaching family members to make use of their time – both on and off the road. Eventually the children themselves absorbed this mental attitude, internalizing the sense of urgency, so that they too began to echo the familiar phrase “five minutes makes a difference.” Thus the commuting culture was learned on both behavioral and cognitive levels.

Contentment.

The fourth facet of culture, gratification, (Himes, 1968, p. 74) was evident in commuting families. If the parents and students endured the long rides, the stresses of managing limited time, fewer hours of sleep, and meals on the go, they also received some kind of fulfillment or satisfaction from the experience. There was the commonality of enjoying home ownership. All the parents and at least half of the students liked where they lived – in the privacy of their own residences, located in communities away from busy Honolulu, where they commuted to private school. The house in the suburbs was a matter of pride and a symbol of successful middle class status. The house itself was a artifact within this culture of commuting.

Within the confines of the car, gratification came in the form of creating a comfortable environment that encouraged family time, bonding time – something difficult to achieve once the family reached home, and everyone attended to their own affairs. Yvette’s mom remarked that families who do not commute might not experience these moments of intimacy, even though they lived close to Honolulu, and had more time to spare. These moments of private family dialogue in the car also opened opportunities

for emotional and psychological support and satisfied the need to develop interpersonal family relationships despite commuting demands.

Having children attend private school, a parental goal, was another form of cultural gratification. These parents had a strong preference for private school education over public school. Enrollment in these private educational institutions was what marked a commuting family. It was a visible representation of the education values that parents held. On the students' side, the adolescents performed well in school because they knew they were in a private school for a reason: to get ahead in life. The adolescents also valued their education, and their values concurred with those of their parents: attending Ascension School had advantages over walking to a nearby community school.

Additionally, the proposed culture of commuting furnished gratification through the provision of protection (Moore, 1980, p.3). When a culture's constituents are protected, the culture and its membership are resilient. This protection ensures survival. The findings indicated that parents shielded their adolescents as much as possible from the disadvantages stemming from being on the road for long periods of time and reported in the literature on bus commuters. However, the findings also showed that the protector became the protected. Parents too had to rejuvenate their energies to sustain the commuting lifestyle. Commuting adolescents responded to their parents' needs and became protective factors for the adults. Children nurtured their parents and built resiliency in their parents. This two way resiliency proved to be a noteworthy feature of this culture.

There were several times when the parents expressed how arduous the commuting life could be. They spoke of the non-stop demands, the adherence to schedules, the

added responsibilities of managing the preparation and planning. They frequently mentioned being tired. Students in this study rallied to support their parents and contributed to parental welfare, because sometimes, even the parents admitted that they could not do it by themselves. This reciprocal relationship between commuting parent and child became evident in the course of the interviews with both parents and their children. Cresswell (2003) said that when a researcher “derive[s] a general, abstract theory of a process, action, or interaction” (p. 4) that is rooted in the data provided by participants in a study then she has constructed a “grounded theory” (p. 4). In the current study, it was the actions of the adolescents that provided the evidence that resiliency was a two-sided coin.

And while parents infused the priority of school work and instilled the values of education in their children, the child’s positive response by doing well in school reverberated to the adults and served to confirm that their herculean efforts were indeed, worthwhile.

Interwoven layers.

When students commuted to school in the family car, the fifth facet of culture, integration, (Himes, 1968) was also evident. Integration concerned the way that distinctive cultural patterns, which came from different sources, interconnected and worked together to successfully carry out social activity. For Myres (1927, p. 16), the patterns reached across time, from the past, to the present, and could potentially influence the future. A second source of integration reflected the idea that human beings possessed several layers of culture which simultaneously co-exist” (“Layers of Culture,” 2011).

In the first instance, data indicated how the past childhood experiences of the parents influenced the decisions they made on behalf of their own children. The parents in this study lived through some powerful events that shaped their values of education, so much so that the adults were willing to endure the commuting lifestyle because they believed that their adolescents would have more opportunities in school and later in life. Granted each parent grew up differently and in unique family cultures, but for all of them, the message was clear: Education was important then; it is still important now. To them, the definition of a good education was a private school education at Ascension School. The parents' education values have underpinned behaviors that prioritized schooling for three generations.

Today, the manifestation of these values is evident through high parental presence in school affairs both from home, in the car, and on the school campus. Parents not only instilled in their children the mindset of the importance of successfully acquiring a solid education but also tried to teach their adolescents skills that would facilitate achieving that goal. Another way to think of this phenomenon is the transference of cultural capital, which refers to accumulated family resources including personal and ethnic values, attitudes, work habits, traits, disposition, and prior knowledge that can assist their children in advancing within a particular context. A strong match between home values and school values increased students' academic success (Lee & Bowen, 2006, p. 213).

Tangible results of this transference were identified in the students, themselves, who spoke of plans to attend college and their desire to perform well in school so as to attain this goal. Clearly cultural capital and shared goals from the previous generation had journeyed through time to affect the future of these eighth graders.

Furthermore, the transference of cultural capital occurred not only between parent and child but also between grandparent and child. The senior generation, no longer targeted their own children, but instead aimed their support or capital, at their grandchildren. The students and their parents spoke of instances when grandparents were involved with the grandchild's school life. During family dinner, grandparents informally inquired how things were going in school (Kara's mom); another grandparent played chauffeur to logistically help parents transport their children to various school events (Yvette's mom); one grandfather provided homework help after school when the children were younger (Tom's mom); another shared school stories about his own years of education (Pam); and one grandfather expressed disappointment toward another family member's decision to drop out of college (Remy's mom).

Other grandparents provided support by pitching in to cook a meal or clean the house (Wendy's mom) or making a little something for breakfast in case the grandchildren were hungry (Yvette). The passing of cultural capital was clearly a multi-generational effort; all but three students in the study mentioned that grandparents had provided some kind of assistance that promoted the importance of being successful in school.

The second source of cultural integration was visible in the different layers of culture that influenced the decision to commute. In the case of Remy's mother, ethnicity was one such layer. She was a member of the second generation from a Filipino immigrant family and witnessed her own father's efforts to ensure success for his children.

For two others, the cultural strand was religious. Wendy's mom spoke of attending a Catholic school and how she wanted her own daughter to grow up in a Catholic environment. In the same way, Kara's mother wanted to give her daughter a religious education as she had had when she was going to school because she wanted to raise her children Catholic.

Another strand that came into play was social economic status. In the findings, Joe's mother spoke of how poor her family was, but her father made sure she received a private school education because it was the only way out of the "rat hole."

Outside of the different cultural facets presented in each family was the imprint of the U.S. national culture, where home ownership was a sign of success. This pattern of middle class, working adults buying a home, was a cultural value for the parents in the study. All ten participating adults mentioned that possessing their own home was something they would not give up – even if it meant being close to town and having more time.

On the regional level was the pro-private school influence, which was part of the island culture. Private school education was viewed as superior to public school education, and this mindset appeared to characterize the thinking of families in this study. While parents in the study did look into their community schools and various private schools as well, their discoveries seemed to underscore a notable Honolulu trend which may be characterized as: if you can afford it, enroll in a private school. Even the students themselves preferred to attend a private school and the reasons they cited echoed the sentiments of their parents. In so many words: to get a better education.

Both family goals of home ownership and private school enrollment for their children were elements of national and regional layers of the U.S. middle class culture which had been assimilated into the commuter culture of all ten participating families. The common aims provided overt evidence of behavior patterns grounded in shared values with other families with middle or higher socioeconomic status. These layers also worked in conjunction with cultural influences from the past to the present as well as in tandem with social class, religious, and ethnic values that could be found among the parents in this study.

In summary, the five facets Himes (1968) contended defined a culture – that it was socially created, socially shared, learned, gratifying, and integrated were identified in the current study of students and parents commuting in the family car. However, because of the isolation experienced by the families, it was difficult for them to step back and view the commuting cultural patterns that they all shared. Moreover, other prevalent signs that this culture of commuting existed within the larger middle class culture, were more difficult to detect. The findings suggested two reasons for this difficulty.

Relevance

The concept of “relevance” refers to the importance of acknowledging the commuting culture by both commuters and non-commuters. The discussion begins with exploring why this culture has gone unrecognized and moves to why awareness is important.

An Invisible culture.

Many people did not view commuters as culturally defined. Comments from teachers at school made this perspective clear. All the teachers interviewed could

distinguish no difference between commuters and non-commuters in their classrooms until they attached “commuter” with a particular child. In fact, although the teachers acknowledged that students commuted to the school, they could not identify the ones they interacted with during the course of the day. Teachers knew students arrived on campus very early and recognized them as commuters, but in class performance, behavior, physical needs, and social interaction, the commuters did not stand out for them as a group.

For teachers, students were viewed on an individual basis. Each teacher attributed students’ academic performance to singular effort and innate ability. Because commuting students did not initially stand out as different from non-commuting students in these areas, the school itself did not make many accommodations on their behalf. The school did not help new students and their families adjust to commuting for the first time to the school. Having early breakfast service and campus supervision at 7:00 were the only two concessions made by the school that directly impacted early arriving students. Still, the morning surveillance did not start when the earliest students arrived on campus.

Another interesting point about this invisible culture was that commuting parents spoke of being “immune” (Harry’s dad) or said, “it’s like breathing” (Pam’s mom) when they conversed about their own commuting life styles. For many families, the children did not know anything else because they had been on the road for many years, some since they were kindergarteners. One parent even mentioned that no matter where one lived, the hectic rush to get ready for school occurred in every household (Tom’s mom) and therefore, except for the drive, she perceived herself as not being different from any other parent in any other family.

The invisibility of the commuting culture bounces back to the parents, who, without realizing it, established a sense of the ordinary.

An arranged normalcy.

Commuting parents wished to give their children a normal life and did not want to penalize their child for their decisions of home ownership or school selection. For this reason they went out of their way to ensure that the adolescents in the family had the same opportunities as everyone else. This was evident in several different arenas: family life, school life, and extracurricular participation.

At home adolescents were required to be contributing members of the family. They were expected to find the time to pitch in and help around the house. Everyone's voices were heard around the dining table at family meals, home cooked or not. Although their diets may not have been the best, they did eat at least two meals a day with snacks in between. Childhood obesity was not an issue for the students of this study. Parents also tried to save a few moments for recreation as a way of strengthening family bonds.

When students arrived on campus, they were generally prepared. For the most part, academic tasks had been completed. Contributing to this accomplishment were the parents who became involved in supporting their child's academic challenges at home, after school, and during the car rides. Because of parent involvement, the ten commuting students were able to meet deadlines, pass tests, and participate in class.

After school, students were encouraged to sign up for sports, clubs, and academic teams because parents willingly juggled pick up times between mom and dad. The

students were allowed to pursue their interests. Despite the late homecoming hours, parents found ways to ensure that homework could be addressed upon arrival at home.

The ten participating students appeared in this study to be socially well adjusted, active, and well rounded. They were earning passing grades or better. For the most part, they managed to stay awake in class – at least enough so as not to call attention to themselves if they were tired or sleepy. When needed, they had learned to camouflage their mental weariness and physical ups and downs well. For this reason, teachers did not notice them in class. The kids were normal, blending in with their peers.

The commuters socialized at recess on the basketball courts, they “hung out with friends,” and because they were regular middle school kids, they did not always make good choices with the way they used their time. In this manner, they were typical teenagers, so teachers could justly indicate that commuting was not the sole factor that affected student performance: time management, organization, the amount of socializing, and involvement in after school activities all made contributions. Most importantly, the students themselves felt like regular students. The eighth graders never asked for special considerations when they left something at home, but instead either problem solved creatively or faced the natural consequences.

Along those same lines, the teachers mentioned that the parents spoke little about commuting because they expected no favors or special considerations from teachers. Travelling long distance to school would not be viewed as detrimental to their child’s school performance. The additional fact that the parents were highly involved and visible around the school added to the aura of normalcy. Their availability hid the amount of planning they did to be present.

Importance of recognition.

Findings in this study revealed that round trip family car commuters had a distinctive life style of their own, and researcher analysis suggested that their culture should be acknowledged. Culture, when seen as a mediation between a group of people and their environment also provides insight into the way people construct their realities.

If everyone on earth perceived the universe in the exact same way, we would all belong to the same culture, living the same way, thinking along the same lines, and exhibiting the same behaviors. The fact that there are multiple cultures in existence – ethnic, social class, gender, age, geographic, national – just to name a few, attests to the idea that there are multiple ways of viewing reality. To a constructivist, there exists the possibility of many truths. Guba and Lincoln (1989) referred to this view of truth as “relativist ontology” and defined it with the assertion that “there exist multiple, socially constructed realities ungoverned by natural laws, causal or otherwise” (p. 86). The challenge is not to superimpose one’s reality on another’s. This can happen when groups of people do not recognize, understand, and respect a culture different from their own.

In the findings, commuters expressed the awareness that there was a distinct difference between themselves and non-commuters. Remy’s mom had related her experiences with her daughter’s soccer coach who was a non-commuter and adamant about punctuality. Should Remy arrive late for practice despite a long drive from town, she was penalized with extra laps to run while her teammates were dismissed and allowed to go home. Could Remy have realistically arrived on time, if the traffic on that particular day was relentlessly slow? Was it a fair punishment?

Remy's mom later mentioned that when the coach's daughter enrolled in a private school and had to commute, suddenly, there was understanding about traffic and punctuality. Until the coach experienced commuting for himself, he judged Remy's tardiness with his own construct of reality: if he could hustle and make the effort to get there on time – even though he might not have to drive as far, then she could do the same. No excuses.

Part of the commuting culture was the acceptance that after a certain point, one's best efforts could not override conditions on the road. Traffic, as Harry's dad mentioned earlier, was something he could not go out there and physically change. What made it possible for Remy to do the extra laps after practice, unfair as that consequence might have seemed, was the development of her own acceptance or acquiescence – which was cultivated, ironically, through commuting itself. Therefore, one of the purposes of recognizing a culture is that it promotes an attempt to perceive reality through different eyes and to acknowledge the existence of multiple realities. It can lead to more humane relationships.

Individuals who belonged to the commuting culture behaved in similar ways. However, what happened when behaviors from different cultures appeared the same but had different meanings? A good example was provided by two teachers when they spoke about the same student.

In the findings, Harry, an eighth grade commuter was described in detail by his teachers. Mrs. Darthson mentioned that Harry used humor to defuse situations that upset him. He would be funny and try to be amusing. She felt this was his way of coping with

“emotional stress that he has from work and being tired and everything else that they go through at this age.”

Mr. Nichols mentioned that when Harry was tired in the afternoon, he tended to ask more questions without waiting to be recognized. He’d just “blurt out the question without really going through the right process.” Mr. Nichols also had Harry sit up front so as to better help the student focus on his homework.

In both instances, Harry’s behaviors could have easily been misinterpreted. To Mrs. Darthson, he could appear to be a class clown, “funny” and “amusing” or “making jokes to the people around him,” but at the same time being disruptive and attention getting. In Mr. Nichols’s class Harry’s behavior would be seen as rude, possibly unruly, or undisciplined because he did not raise his hand before speaking, but instead talked out of turn.

Both Mrs. Darthson and Mr. Nichols were able to recognize that his behaviors could have stemmed from being a commuter, once they knew he commuted, and they could understand that dealing with inadequate sleep was part of his culture. Someone else who did not recognize the tell-tale symptoms could misread his behavior as unacceptable in a classroom situation and look at the young man in unfavorable terms. This was because teachers are most apt to operate with a construct of what is acceptable behavior that characterizes the culture of the school. They may judge student actions and verbalizations by this standard and deem them inappropriate if they do not measure up to expectations. Some teachers might even interpret such behaviors personally, as disrespectful affronts to their authority and they may even have a student expelled from the classroom.

But what if Harry's behaviors had no malicious intent? What if they were, as Mrs. Darthson explained, Harry's coping mechanism when he was tired? Such occasions for misreads can be avoided if the cultural behaviors of commuters are made known. This was not to say that Harry's behavior should be ignored or that he should be given any special favors, but perhaps recognizing his behaviors for what they were, would better guide the teacher's approach to designing interventions that support Harry's learning and well being. From a constructivist point of view, reality is formed by people involved in the process of "making sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world" (Merriam, 1998, p. 6). In this case, the construction must come from the joint efforts of two people: Harry and his teacher. Recognition of the culture of commuters facilitates the communication process.

Harry's use of attention getting behaviors, asking numerous questions, or speaking out of turn, were a cue to the teacher that the student was tired and needed to do something active to stay awake. By learning Harry was a commuter, the teachers knew Harry in greater depth – a plus in light of the middle school philosophy that advocates that teachers see the whole child. Cognizance that Harry was a commuter is part of knowing him well, which is one of the goals of a student centered school. It is an example of the opportunity of perceiving the reality of the student, rather than having the teacher impose her own. It is also a reminder that such cognizance should be expanded to include all students who commute. They too could display similar behaviors in class that could invite misinterpretation.

In the findings, commuting parents related that non-commuters were not able to fathom the arduous life dictated by lengthy drives. They would shake their heads and

incredulously ask “Why” would anyone deliberately choose this inconvenient life style? It seemed to be an unwise choice. Other responses shut down the conversation with finger wagging blame – you wanted to send your kids to private school, so don’t complain. At school, one teacher had mentioned that the discussion surrounding commuting should have taken place when the student applied for enrollment -- know what you are getting yourself into, and be ready to accept the consequences of that decision. Reactions such as these effectively close off dialogue, and as a group, commuters essentially are left with no voice; their children tend to be invisible to teachers, the school as a whole, and even to peers.

It is difficult to imagine a culture of “one.” Since culture is socially shared, it implies that a collection of individuals is involved; there is power in numbers and in affiliation. Currently, one commuting student or parent might voice a concern or suggestion with the possibility of two consequences. First, the request could be viewed as being a singular instance, and since no one else has an issue with the way things were, and no other commuter is complaining, no changes needed be made. Second, the concern might be addressed for the one individual case, without realizing that other commuters may benefit. Here again, these two scenarios can easily be broadened to include all commuters, not just those who ride to school in the family car.

However, as was evidenced earlier, the commuters in this study shared a common view of the world, though they did not seem to be aware of it. They were all time driven; they lived highly scheduled lives; they planned and planned and planned. They possessed an intense desire to own their own homes, and an equally indomitable desire to send their children to private school. They all highly valued education and were actively

involved in the academic pursuits of their child. Due to these commonalities, the ten commuters had formed a culture. Patton (2002) has proposed that culture is a “collection of behavior patterns and beliefs” (p. 81). Goodenough (1971) further detailed that these patterns create a conformity or:

...standards for deciding what is, standards for deciding what can be, standards for deciding how one feels about it, standards for deciding what to do about it, and standards for deciding how to go about doing it. (pp. 21-22)

Yet these families all operated on the mindset that they were alone. Their decisions were made in the context of individual families; their needs were viewed in the context of individual families. However, because it has now been shown that commuting families stood on common ground, the recommendations that they made as reported in the next section should be given thoughtful consideration. These suggestions were made not for the benefit of the singular case, but for all commuters even those who catch the bus or car pool to school. Perhaps these issues are relevant to non-commuters in middle school as well.

Recommendations

Parent Issues

Based on the findings in this study, students who commuted to school in the family car seemed to have several positive advantages over students who took the bus to school. The car ride allowed for flexible scheduling that accommodated the participation in after school activities; parental and sibling nurturing took place during the long rides to school; and adolescents fared better health wise because they had the ability to take naps and eat meals en route.

In the case of the ten student commuters, a high degree of parent involvement buffered the possible adverse affects caused by the commuting experience, and this suggested that parent interventions were essential in a culture of commuting. The adults pro-actively networked with teachers and fellow parents to gain valuable social capital which could be transferred to their adolescent. Their interventions helped to establish a “normalcy” for their children at school. The following practical suggestions made by parents might be taken under advisement. Many of them are aligned with and validate the middle school philosophy (NMSA, 1992), which focuses on attending to the needs of adolescent development. The first five, listed below, are linked to the belief that middle schools serve students best when they address concerns of adequate sleep, nutrition, and health because, “Young adults must be healthy in order to learn” (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1990, p. 20).

1. Establish “a place to go,” such as designated classrooms, before and after school, to allow commuting students time to complete homework or socialize safely. This will require addressing the liability issues regarding the provision of early morning supervision for students who arrive on campus well before the start of school. Currently, with no arrangement in place, liability issues may already exist. Because the campus is an open campus and access is relatively easy, students are in a vulnerable position when no adult supervision is available. According to Jackson and Davis, (2000) “Every middle grades student has an absolute right to guaranteed physical safety at every moment while in school” (p. 170).

2. Provide nutritious food in school menus not only for breakfast but also for lunch and snacks. Nutrition is an issue, especially for commuters who “grab and go” or “eat on the run.” The National Middle School Association (1992) has written in one of its resolutions that “ middle level schools promote programs and practices which ensur[e] the improvement of the nourishment...of our emerging young teens” (p. 34)
3. Coordinate among teachers a test/project schedule so commuting and other students are not overwhelmed with preparing for too many tests and projects in any combination on any given night. Commuting students arrive home much later than non-commuters and have less time to study well for multiple exams or to do quality work on projects if several are assigned. This coordination at the school level would alleviate the problem of students’ late nights resulting in less sleep. Such interventions, considered from the perspective of best practice in middle school stem from “a thorough understanding of the human growth and development of 10-14 year olds...the foundation of all middle school practices” (National Middle School Association, 1992, p. 15).
4. Make shower facilities available for students who remain in school for evening events, in particular, students who move from a sport practice to a more dressy affair that requires a change of attire. Showering between activities promotes good hygiene, in particular for growing adolescent bodies. The National Middle School Association (1992) made it a point that middle schools should attend to the “hygiene, safety, and health” (p. 34) of their students.

5. Offer an elective or use advisory classes to address topics that teach adolescents how to control their lives, deal with stress, time manage, and problem solve. This ties into the middle school belief that the needs of the whole child must be considered. A course such as this would teach students – commuters and non-commuters important life skills as well as support emotional and psychological well being. Jackson and Davis (2000) described advisory as

...a particularly important time to focus on personal development and social relationships. Middle grades students need continuing assistance in comprehending, analyzing, accepting, and coping with the various emotional and social components of their lives. (p. 134)
6. Create a detailed directory of the after school extracurricular activities that are available for students to join. The information should include a description of the team or club, a meeting schedule, and the advisor’s name and contact information. Knowing what is available after school will provide students the opportunity to explore their interests in a positive manner while gaining supervision on campus until parents pick them up. This recommendation aligns with the commitment of middle schools to furnish “exploratory experiences [to] acquaint students with enriching, healthy leisure-time pursuits, such as lifetime physical activities, involvement in the arts, and social service” (National Middle School Association, 1995, p. 24).
7. Create the opportunity for two-way communication, with teachers both initiating and responding to parent e-mails. This would address parent requests for more communication from the school in order to better assist their commuting child at

home. It would also promote collaboration with parents to support student learning. Through teacher to parent e-mails, parents will be aware of assignment deadlines, tests, projects due dates, and up-coming school events to allow sufficient time to plan and accomplish these tasks. In this way, commuting families can better allow for study time, purchase supplies for projects in a timely manner, and arrange to attend school functions. In a time driven culture, the ability to foresee the future is crucial to success and the reduction of stress. This recommendation is in conjunction with the commitment of middle schools to team with home and community to better support student learning. The Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development (1990) recommends that middle schools “Offer families opportunities to support learning at home and at school” (p. 23). According to the findings of this study, commuting parents would welcome knowing what transpired in the classroom so as to better assist in the learning experiences of their children.

8. When teachers assign collaborative projects, form groups by the areas in which students live. This would ease logistical issues encountered by commuting parents who must drive long distances round trip so their child can meet with peers. This recommendation would remove the cost in time and gas needed to transport their children to different areas on the island, some even further than going to the school itself.
9. Designate a place on campus for students to meet after school to work on group projects. This would also alleviate the need to meet and work together on the weekends and, thus, it would reduce driving and save time.

10. Institute after school academic study hall which is opened to all students. Adult supervision would be needed to ensure that the study hall is used appropriately – to do homework.

Student In-Put

From the student standpoint, the adolescents recommended three items:

1. After school study halls should be open to all students, not just athletes.
2. Teachers should use teaching methods during class time that keep students engaged. It is hard to fall asleep in a collaborative setting. However lectures, reading in class, watching videos, and periods of sitting without activity are times that invite sleepiness. Intuitively, in making this suggestion about teaching strategies, the students have addressed another key middle school focus: to instruct young adolescents in a developmentally appropriate manner. The National Middle School Association (1992) has promoted “instructional practices which are developmentally responsive to the special characteristics of the young adolescent learner” (p. 32) in order to meet the needs of adolescent intellectual development. Middle school students are just beginning to develop critical thinking and problem solving skills. In instructional scenarios where students do the thinking and talking, they are better able to develop cognitively. Additionally, socialization is important to students of this age group; therefore

Since young adolescents learn best through engagement and interaction, learning strategies feature activities that provide hands-on experiences and actively involve youngsters in learning. (NMSA, 1995, p. 25).

3. School start times should be delayed by at least thirty minutes to allow more time for commuting students to prepare in the mornings with less rush and less stress. Although it may not seem like much, the two students who suggested this recommendation also felt that a few more minutes of sleep would be much appreciated.

Teacher In-Put

In addition to mentioning their concerns about morning supervision, food service menus, and after school study hall, teachers also made three new recommendations of their own.

1. Develop a student mentor program for first time commuters. The mentor would show the new student how to manage the early morning drop off, look into breakfast, study with the student, and be source of support.
2. Create a tip sheet for first time commuters to the school to be distributed at either the new student orientation or at open house night. Tips on the sheet should include suggestions from teachers as well as students and parents who commuted.
3. Identify commuting students. Although this suggestion was not directly stated by the teachers, it was implied from their conversations that it would be beneficial to know who the commuters were in their classes.

A perusal of these recommendations, especially the suggestions from parents and students, can benefit not just commuters, but all students in the middle school. In requesting animated classes, enthusiastic teachers, and collaborative and hands-on learning experiences, commuters hoped these teaching approaches would keep them

awake, focused, and learning. These types of instructional strategies also support the learning of non-commuters and are promoted by middle school advocates.

The need for schools to serve nutritious foods, create after school opportunities for students to explore their talents, design curriculum that taxes critical thinking, and establish both advisory classes and electives to teach students socialization skills, time management, and stress management, are also issues held in common to all middle school students. The commuting student shares the same growing pains as his non-commuting peers; however, road time can bring about scenarios that magnify these concerns. When they are addressed, other students can benefit.

Limitations and Next Steps

This study explored ten middle school students and their families who commuted for at least forty-five minutes in the family car to a small private school. The study endeavored to discover how these participants perceived long distance commuting and how the long drives affected home and school experiences of adolescent children. One limitation of the study is its particular context, the unique setting of Honolulu, where parental education values have been marked by the popular local view that private schools offered children a better chance at learning and getting ahead in the future than public schools do – one of the primary motives families accept and prioritize for the commute.

The parents participating in this particular study were highly motivated to provide the best education for their children because of their own childhood experiences. The parents had witnessed the struggles to acquire an education in the previous generation. The current study highlights the need for future research, including an investigation of

how a family's education values, passed from one generation to the next, impact the decision to select schools that require a commute.

Another limitation of the study stems from the participant sample, middle school eighth graders who travel to one private school in the family car for forty-five minutes to and from school. Perhaps different insights could have been learned if all ten families were first time commuters trying to adjust to life on the road or if all had been long time commuters in which the students never knew any other life style. Future research is needed to focus on students who are new to commuting in middle school. What are the challenges they face as they adapt to a new life style that includes adjusting to the demands of a new school and road time? How do they learn to cope and what are their coping strategies? Can they benefit from a mentoring program or a support group?

The current study did not examine commuting by bus or car pooling with other families. Bus experiences, as reported in the literature, have not allowed for family time, yet commutes in the family car did. Other research questions to consider are: How do bus commutes affect school life and home life? How do bus commuters adjust to life on the road? What role do parents and family play to support a student who commutes by bus?

Car pools, as opposed to commuting in the family car, also present a different scenario that needs exploring. When students ride in different cars and with different adults, they socialize with peers and adults who are not part of their immediate family. Discussions in the car may be different, so also the activities that occur en route. It may be worthwhile to investigate the social dynamics that commuters encounter when they interact with peers and adults outside of the family during the long rides to school and to

ask questions like: What kind of support system do commuting students receive? Do conflicting values exist between the student's own family and her car pool family? If so, how are these conflicts resolved?

Points of Contention

As mentioned by teachers, other factors besides long road times may have had an impact on student academic success in school. It is recommended that future studies explore these factors. Through such studies researchers can assess ways in which, other facets of an adolescent's life affect social-emotional development, healthy lifestyles, and positive academic performance of commuters with the limited commodity of time.

I suggest further exploration into a commuter's involvement in extracurricular activities. Although parents wanted their children to be well rounded (Wendy's mom) and develop themselves outside of the classroom (Remy's mom), teachers expressed some concerns that students enduring long, physically demanding extracurricular practices, then coming home late in the evening and still having to face homework (Mrs. Quon) had over-extended themselves, to the detriment of their academics (Mrs. Quisantes). Questions for future research to explore include: Does parents' desire to create well-rounded adolescents cause commuting students to become over-involved in extracurricular activities? Does participation cause problems or create opportunities for the completion of academic tasks and the development of adolescents physically or socially? What kinds of prioritization of family goals make commuting work?

In the findings, one teacher reported overhearing a student, not in the study, complain that she could not participate in after-school activities because of the long drive home. This was one of the laments of rural bus riders; many did not participate in after

school events because it would lead to more commuting from activity sites not on the school campus and result in even later times to return home. A future question to explore: Is commuting prohibitive to student participation in extracurricular activities and what impact does this have on adolescent needs for physical activity, socialization, and becoming a part of the school community?

Another area for further research is the role of socialization in the lives of commuting students. Adolescence is the time when socialization with peers takes precedence over interacting with family. In this study, students seemed to primarily socialize at school, in after school activities, and in the car with family. Students reported that they did not socialize much in the car with peers; parents reported that they did not notice their children socializing much at home. However, students did multi-task, or socialized while doing homework. New research may ask: In what ways do commuters' road time demands conflict with adolescent socialization?

Finally a more in-depth future study might look at how commuting affected students physically. It has already been shown that the life of a commuter can be stressful due to time limitations. Are there long term ill-effects for parents and students who live this lifestyle?

Conclusion

In this study, ten participating students and their parents told the story of commuting in the family car. As much as possible, the narration of their experiences came directly from their own words. From their accounts, the findings showed how parents planned and prepared, kept up with household tasks, became involved in their child's academic life, addressed the developmental needs of their adolescents, set aside

time for family, and maintained their own sense of well being. The study revealed that despite the difficulties presented by lengthy travel times to and from school, many positives emerged from the commuting experience as a whole.

The study showed how students juggled the many events of their complex lives which included a full day of school, participation in one, if not more, extracurricular activities, attending to chores at home, and building family relationships during the long rides to and from school.

In the commuters' stories, the car and the road, served as motifs; they underscored the thinking, behaviors, and decisions made throughout the day. The car became the extended home while traveling the highways and hosted all family activities that took place in it: sleeping, eating, dressing, studying, disciplining, singing, laughing, and talking. However, both adults and adolescents recognized that "commuting" did not end when they exited the car at the end of the day. The road seemed to follow the family into the house and continued to influence their actions as they talked at dinner about the next day's schedule, or as they went about their nightly chores in anticipation of the next day's needs, and as they packed and set their bags by the door to "grab and go."

Despite their hectic life styles, commuting students had a low profile in school. Teachers could not perceive a difference between non-commuters and those who endured long road times. This invisibility was the result of parent efforts aimed at providing normalcy in the lives of their adolescent children; student commuters performed well even under the adverse conditions of living with limited time. Yet, as self-sufficient as this group appeared, commuters suggested several types of support that would be helpful from the school to continue their success.

It is hoped that what is now known about commuters and their families will help the school to be responsive to their needs, as well as the needs of other students who commute long distance via other modes of transportation. This responsiveness, in turn, may be beneficial to the general student population as well. Many of the suggestions made by parents and students were directly linked to best practice in teaching and to the middle school philosophy, which had been adopted by Ascension School. The study's findings and recommendations present an opportunity to address these concerns and to demonstrate the collaboration between home and school to support the young adolescent's academic endeavors and to reach toward a fuller implementation of the middle school concept.

The professional literature that served as a foundation for this study showed commuting to be on the rise both nationally and locally. Whether by bus, car pool, or family car, membership in the commuting to school population has been increasing. As a culture, its constituents have much to teach us about stoically facing the challenges of life, creative problem solving, and endurance. They were able to put things into perspective with a sense of humor as evidenced by the many times they chuckled or laughed while sharing the narrative of their lives. I did not expect to learn so much from these ten parents and their adolescent children as they routinely traveled to and from school in 45 minutes or more. Their stories provided examples for living and invite more exploration.

APPENDIX A

PILOT STUDIES

Prior to the formal dissertation study, initial forays exploring the topic of commuting were conducted. Informal conversations were held with teachers from three other private schools in Honolulu, during the Spring of 2009, and one cafeteria manager in the Summer of 2009. The researcher took notes during the casual dialogues then wrote reflectively on the data gathered. As a faculty member for over twenty years, she also included what she knew about Ascension School, for comparison. What follows is a discussion of the findings from this informal collection of data.

The “talk story” conversations revealed that there had not been much research to identify the needs of commuting students in the student populations of the schools represented. On all campuses, a breakfast service was available for students who arrived to school early; however some students did not make healthy food choices. If there was a cafeteria, the students went there to pass the time before classes began. The manager of one of the cafeterias estimated that about two hundred breakfast meals were sold each day. He noted that most of the customers were fifth grade and older; on occasion, about twenty parents ate with the younger children. In particular, the breakfast service catered to students who traveled a long distance to school and purchased their morning meal on campus. The teachers noted that some students walked to nearby off-campus food service establishments, including fast food eateries.

The researcher also gathered information in four pilot interviews with two faculty members, one parent, and one student – all of whom commuted to Ascension School in the family car. None were participants in the dissertation study, but they shared much

about home life and road life as they commuted for forty-five minutes or longer daily. In addition, casual conversation with students in my classes revealed that at Ascension, many commuting families were out the door to beat traffic build up early in the morning. Breakfast in these households was generally an independent effort on the part of individual family members, or meals were packed and eaten on the road. Some delayed eating until the family reached town and stopped at an open fast food outlet. In another scenario, parents gave money to their children so they could buy a breakfast at the school snack bar; however, the adolescents did not always make healthy menu choices. For example, chocolate chip cookies were a popular item until the school issued a policy to ban the sale of the sweets before the start of school. Lunch proved to be just as challenging. While the hot lunch of the day was available, students might opt for a bag of fries and soda or juice instead.

Further informal inquiry with employees of other private schools revealed that supervision before and after school was limited. Offering a place of safe harbor was strictly voluntary on the part of the teachers. On one campus, the Dean of Students roamed the grounds before school, but he did not start at 6:00 a.m. when some of the earliest students reached school.

At Ascension School, an adult monitored the playground before school after 7:00 a.m., however, some parents dropped off their children by 6:15 a.m. There was no formal place or program to accommodate commuting students who arrived to Ascension considerably early (6:00 a.m. and later) due to parents who wished to avoid heavy traffic that extended road time. Informally, if a teacher came early and did not mind having students in her room to work, eat, or socialize, then the students went there.

As far as coping strategies that enable students to manage their academic responsibilities, and health and socialization needs, the teachers from other private schools indicated that it was primarily the responsibility of the family to help their adolescent navigate through the challenges of the long commutes. Addressing time management, organization skills, and prioritizing were handled in some middle school advisories, but not all. No requirement existed for advisors to speak to these concerns.

Another example was the issue of extracurricular activities. If a school did not offer a period of physical activity at least once a day, as was the case with Ascension Middle School, then after school extracurricular activities often substituted for providing physical activity needed to develop healthy bodies. The researcher gathered information from casual conversation with students in her classes, discovering that some students were in sports year around. Practices after school typically started at 3:30 and ended at 5:30 or 6:00. Students who commuted then faced the long drive home, some entering the front door as late as 7:00 p.m. Dinner had yet to commence, then homework.

Finally, whereas new commuters were enrolled in these private schools every year, there was no official school support system to help these students and their families prepare for the commute or adjust to it. Teachers from other private schools did not know of any such interventions, and there was none at Ascension.

APPENDIX B

COMMUTING SURVEY (5/18/09)

All 8th grade students, who were taught in 7th grade by Mrs. Fran Wong during the school year 2008-2009, are being invited to answer the survey below. Its purpose is to identify students and families who commute to school. Currently, Mrs. Wong is working on a doctor of philosophy degree (PhD) from the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. As part of that program, she will be conducting a study in August 2009 to explore students' lengthy daily school commutes and how commutes might impact school experiences. The purpose of this survey is to learn which students might meet the criteria to participate in the study.

In August 2009, Mrs. Wong will contact students and families who commute to ask for volunteers to participate in her study. More information concerning details of the study will be given at that time. Providing this preliminary information does not imply agreement to participate. The purpose of this survey is to learn which students might meet the criteria to participate in the study.

Student's Name: _____ Home Room: _____

Date: _____

Please answer the following questions.

1. In what area of the island of Oahu do you live?

2. Since what grade have you been commuting to Ascension from the place listed above?

3. Do you ride to school with your parents and siblings (if any) in your family car?

_____ Yes

_____ No

If you answered "no," please explain how you come to school.

4. Do you ride home with your parents and siblings (if any) in the family car?

_____ Yes

_____ No

If you answered "no," please explain how get home.

5. How long is the drive to school on an average day? (No severe traffic jams or accidents on the freeways, etc.)

___ 15 min or less ___ 20min- 25 min ___ 30- 35 min ___ 40-45 min.

___ 50-60 min _____more than an hour (indicate how much)

6. How long is the drive home from school on an average day? (No severe traffic jams or accidents on the freeways, etc.)

___ 15 min or less ___ 20min- 25 min ___ 30- 35 min ___ 40-45 min.

___ 50-60 min _____more than an hour (indicate how much)

7. Approximately how many miles do you commute to school (one way)?

I understand that by providing the information requested in this survey that my child is not required to participate in the formal dissertation study next fall. Formal consent for such participation will be sought in August 2009 and more information concerning details of the study will be provided at that time.

Parent Signature: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX C

CONSENT FORMS

PARENT CONSENT FORM

Fran Wong, Teacher
(800) 999-2407

Parents' Consent for Child to Participate in Research Project
Parents' Consent to Participate in Research Project
*Commuting to middle school in the family car: Student and parent perceptions of what occurs
and how it influences schooling*

Dear Parents of 8th Graders:

A teacher is a lifelong learner and often finds herself in the role of student. To that end, I have returned to graduate school and as part the requirements to attain a Ph.D. in Education at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. I am about to conduct a dissertation study. Having already obtained approval from school Administration, I am now seeking your assistance.

My research focuses on the following topic: *Commuting to middle school in the family car: Student and parent perceptions of what occurs and how it influences schooling*. This study investigates the commuting experience of young adolescents, 8th graders in this case, and their families in order to learn of its impact on students' middle school experiences and healthy development.

I ask your permission to involve your 8th grade child and yourselves in this study that will take place in the fall semester of 2009. Your consent to participate would mean taking part in the following:

Child	Parent
1 hour interview at the start of the fall semester 2009	1 hour interview at the start of the fall semester 2009
1 hour interview and/or focus group discussion near to or after the end of the fall 2009 semester.	1 hour interview near to or after the end of the fall 2009 semester.
Brief audio taping or text messaging during the commute and throughout the school day for five school days to describe events as they occur. These are similar to on-the-spot check-ins and last no more than a minute or so. This will occur at the start of the fall 2009 semester; once near to or after the end of the fall 2009 semester. OR Posting a journal or chatting on-line on a private asynchronous website for seven days, for ten minutes per evening. Ten minutes a day for seven days at the start of the fall 2009 semester; ten minutes a day near to or after the end of the fall	

2009 semester. Students will be provided with guidelines for the appropriate use of the site.	
8 th grade homeroom teachers, content area teachers, and counselors will be asked to provide their observations on commuting children in general which may provide some insight into how the commute impacts their learning, socialization, and participation throughout the school day.	

I have attached the questions (for your child) that will be asked during the initial interview with the hope that the interview will not extend beyond an hour. Students will be interviewed on campus either before or after school at a time arranged at their convenience in the school office conference room. I will audio-record all interviews. For your convenience, parental interviews can be conducted either on or off campus in a way that works best for you. Confidentiality of all findings is assured. Individual identities will not be disclosed. Research data will be confidential to the extent allowed by law. Agencies with research oversight, such as the UH Committee on Human Studies, have the authority to review research data. All research records will be stored in a locked file in the Primary Investigator's office for the duration of the research project. Audio tapes will be destroyed immediately following transcription. All other research records will be destroyed upon completion of the project.

A summary of findings from the study will be shared with families participating and will describe commuting experience and identify ways commuting, may impact the adolescents' development, health, learning, and academic achievement in school. The study will also assist educators in making informed decisions that promote commuting students' success in school and healthy development.

Your privacy will be respected. During my research project, I will keep all data in a secure location and have sole access to the data. Pseudonyms will be given to all participants to protect confidentiality. I will not use your child's name or your name in the final dissertation report but use a pseudonym instead. Summarized results and recommendations based on the study will be shared with the school and with all who took part in the study. In the event that the dissertation is published, all names of participants and the school will be changed.

Participation in this project is voluntary. If you do graciously consent to participate, but later change your mind, please feel free to withdraw from the research without prejudice.

If you or your child has any questions, please contact me at (800) 999-2407. If you consent to participate, please sign the consent forms attached and return them to me by: _____. A full copy of the signed consent form will be returned to you. Thank you for considering this.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Fran Wong
Teacher

I certify that I have read and that I understand that my child will be participating in the research project: *Commuting to middle school in the family car: Student and parent perceptions of what occurs and how it influences schooling*. I have been given satisfactory answers to my questions concerning project procedures and other matters. I have been advised that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my child's participation in this project at any time without prejudice. I hereby give my consent for my child

(print name)

To participate in this study *Commuting to middle school in the family car: Student and parent perceptions of what occurs and how it influences schooling*.

Name of parent/Guardian (print) _____

Name of parent/Guardian Signature: _____

Date: _____

I also consent to my own participation in this same study: *Commuting to middle school in the family car: Student and parent perceptions of what occurs and how it influences schooling*.

Name of parent (print): _____

Name of parent Signature: _____ Date: _____

If you have any questions about your rights or the rights of your child in this project, you can contact the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, committee on Committee on Human Studies (CHS), Spalding Hall 253, 2540 Maile Way, Honolulu, Hawai'i, 96822. Phone: (808) 956-5007. E-mail: uhirb@hawaii.edu

STUDENT ASSENT FORM

Mrs. Fran Wong, Teacher
(800) 999-2407.

Student’s Agreement to Participate in Research Project
Commuting to middle school in the family car: Student and parent perceptions of what occurs and how it influences schooling

Dear 8th Grader:

It is important that teachers continue to learn; thus, I am enrolled in graduate school at the University of Hawai’i at Mānoa to continue my education. As part my graduation requirement, I must conduct a research project, and need your help.

My research is on the following topic: *Commuting to middle school in the family car: Student and parent perceptions of what occurs and how it influences schooling*. This study explores the commuting experience of 8th graders and their families in order to learn of its impact on students’ middle school experiences and healthy development. Since you know first-hand about commuting in the family car, your ideas are very important to this study. My hope is that the study will help others understand more about commuting students’ strengths and needs.

If you decide to participate, it would mean taking part in the following:

Research Activities
1 hour interview at the start of the fall semester 2009
1 hour interview and/or focus group discussion near to or after the end of the fall 2009 semester.
Brief audio taping or text messaging during the commute and throughout the school day for five school days to describe events as they occur. These are similar to on-the-spot check-ins and last no more than a minute or so. This will occur for five days at the start of the fall 2009 semester and again for five days near to or after the end of the fall 2009 semester.
OR
Posting a journal or chatting on-line on a private asynchronous website for seven days, for ten minutes per evening. Ten minutes a day for seven days at the start of the fall 2009 semester; ten minutes a day for seven days near to or after the end of the fall 2009 semester. Students will be provided with guidelines for the appropriate use of the site.
8 th grade homeroom teachers, content area teachers, and counselors will be asked to provide their observations on commuting children in general which may provide some insight into how the commute impacts their learning, socialization, and participation throughout the school day.

Your privacy will be respected. During my research project, I will keep all information in a secure location, and only I can use it. Pseudonyms (false names) will be used to insure confidentiality. I will not use your name in the final report but use a pseudonym (false name) instead. Summarized results and recommendations based on the study will be shared with the school and with all who took part in the study. In the event that the dissertation is published, neither participant names nor the school name will be used.

Participation in this project is voluntary. If you do graciously consent to participate, but later change your mind, please feel free to withdraw from the research without penalty. If you have any questions, please contact me at (800) 999-2407.

If you agree to participate, please sign the form attached and return it to me by: _____ . A copy of the signed form will be returned to you. Your parents will also be asked for their consent for you to participate.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Fran Wong
Teacher

I have read and understood that I will be participating in the research project:

Commuting to middle school in the family car: Student and parent perceptions of what occurs and how it influences schooling

I have been given satisfactory answers to my questions about the project and understand what I must do if I agree to participate. I have been told that I am free to stop my participation in the project at any time without penalty. I hereby give my agreement to participate.

Student name: _____
(Print name)

Student signature: _____

Date: _____

If you have any questions about your rights in this project, you can contact the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, Committee on Human Studies (CHS), Spalding Hall 253, 2540 Maile Way, Honolulu, Hawai'i 96822. Phone: (808) 956-5007. E-mail: uhirb@hawaii.edu

ADMINISTRATOR CONSENT FORM

Mrs. Fran Wong, Teacher
(800) 999-2407

Administrator’s Consent for the School to Participate in Research Project
Administrator’s Consent to Participate in Research Project

Commuting to middle school in the family car: Student and parent perceptions of what occurs and how it influences schooling

Dear Mrs. Smith:

I am requesting permission to conduct a dissertation research with voluntary members of the 8th grade class at your school. My research focuses on the following topic: *Commuting to middle school in the family car: Student and parent perceptions of what occurs and how it influences schooling*. This study investigates the commuting experience of 8th graders and their families in order to learn of its impact on students’ middle school experiences and healthy development.

Data will be collected in the following ways:

Child	Parent
1 hour interview at the start of the fall semester 2009	1 hour interview at the start of the fall semester 2009
1 hour interview and/or focus group discussion near to or after the end of the fall 2009 semester.	1 hour interview near to or after the conclusion of the fall semester 2009
Brief audio taping or text messaging during the commute and throughout the school day for five school days to describe events as they occur. These are similar to on-the-spot check-ins and last no more than a minute or so. This will occur for five days at the start of the fall 2009 semester, and once again for five days near to or after the conclusion of the fall semester. OR Posting a journal or chatting on-line on a private asynchronous website for seven days, for ten minutes per evening. Ten minutes a day for seven days at the start of the fall 2009 semester; ten minutes a day for seven days near to or after the conclusion of	

the fall semester. Students will be provided with guidelines for the appropriate use of the site.	
8 th grade homeroom teachers and content area teachers will be asked to provide general observations on commuting students which may provide some insight into how the commute impacts their learning, socialization, and participation throughout the school day.	

Teachers/Counselors	Principal
20-30 minute interviews (One near the start of the fall 2009 semester, one near to or after the end of the fall 2009 semester) on commuting in general.	20-30 minute interview
Spontaneous sharing of observations of commuting students as a group will be on-going throughout the semester.	

Students will be interviewed on campus in the school office conference room either before or after school at a time arranged for their convenience. I will audio-record all interviews. Confidentiality of all findings is assured to all participants.

Summarized findings from the study will be shared with families participating and will describe commuting experience and identify ways commuting, may impact the adolescents' development, health, learning, and academic achievement in school. It is also hoped that the findings will also assist parents and educators in making informed decisions that promote commuting students' success in school and healthy development.

Your privacy will be respected. During my research project, I will keep all data in a secure location and have sole access to the data. Pseudonyms will be given to all participants to protect confidentiality in any reporting or possible publication. I will not use students' names or the school name in the final dissertation report but use a pseudonym instead. Summarized results and recommendations will be shared with the school and with all who took part in the study.

If you agree to participate and to allow the study to be conducted at Ascension, please sign the consent form. If you have questions, please contact me at (800) 999-2407. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Fran Wong
Teacher

I give my consent for Ascension School to participate in this study Commuting to middle school in the family car: Student and parent perceptions of what occurs and how it influences schooling.

Name (print) _____ Title: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

I also consent to my own participation in this same study: Commuting to middle school in the family car: Student and parent perceptions of what occurs and how it influences schooling. I have been given satisfactory answers to my questions concerning project procedures and other matters. I have been advised that I am free to withdraw or discontinue participation in this study at any time without prejudice.

Name (print) _____

Signature: _____

Title: _____

Date: _____

If you have any questions about your rights or that of the school in this project, you can contact the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, Committee on Human Studies (CHS), Spalding Hall 253, 2540 Maile Way, Honolulu, Hawai'i 96822. Phone: (808) 956-5007. E-mail: www.hawaii.edu/irb

COUNSELOR CONSENT FORM

Fran Wong, Teacher
(800) 999-2407

Counselors' Consent to Participate in Research Project
Commuting to middle school in the family car: Student and parent perceptions of what occurs and how it influences schooling

Dear Counselors of 8th Graders:

My dissertation research, which is about to begin, focuses on the following topic: *Commuting to middle school in the family car: Student and parent perceptions of what occurs and how it influences schooling*. This study investigates the commuting experience of young adolescents, 8th graders in this case, and their families in order to learn of its impact on students' middle school experiences and healthy development.

In addition to interviewing the students and their families about the commuting experience, I also wish to collect data about the commuting students' school experiences. This is where I will need your help. During the fall semester 2009, I will be contacting you for your observations about commuting students in general. Any information concerning commuting students' academic performance, or health (emotional, social, physical) as a group would be most welcomed. At least one interview, approximately 20-30 minutes, will be scheduled at the start of the fall semester 2009, and one at the end of the fall semester 2009. Casual, spontaneous observations as they occur would also be welcomed.

Findings from the study will be shared with families participating and will describe the commuting experience and identify general patterns regarding the ways commuting impacts the adolescents' development, health, learning, and academic achievement in school. The study will also assist educators in making informed decisions that promote commuting students' success in school and healthy development.

Your privacy will be respected. During my research project, I will keep all data in a secure location and have sole access to the data. Pseudonyms will be given to all participants to protect confidentiality. I will not use your name in the final dissertation report but use a pseudonym instead. Summarized results and recommendations based on the study will be shared with the school and with all who took part in the study. In the event that the dissertation is published, all names of participants and the school will be changed.

Participation in this project is voluntary. If you do graciously consent to participate, but later change your mind, please feel free to withdraw from the research without prejudice. If you have any questions, please contact me at (800) 999-2407.

If you consent to participate, please sign the consent form attached and return them to me by: August 14, 2009. A copy of the signed consent form will be returned to you. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Fran Wong
Teacher

I certify that I have read and that I understand that I will be participating in the research project: *Commuting to middle school in the family car: Student and parent perceptions of what occurs and how it influences schooling*. I have been given satisfactory answers to my questions concerning project procedures and other matters. I have been advised that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my participation in this project at any time without prejudice.

I consent to my own participation in the study: *Commuting to middle school in the family car: Student and parent perceptions of what occurs and how it influences schooling*.

Name: (print): _____

Signature: _____

Title/Position: _____

Date: _____

If you have any questions about your rights in this project, you can contact the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, Committee on Human Studies (CHS), Spalding Hall 253, 2540 Maile Way, Honolulu, Hawai'i 96822. Phone: (808) 956-5007. E-mail: uhirb@hawaii.edu

TEACHER CONSENT FORM

Fran Wong, Teacher
(800) 999-2407

Teachers' Consent to Participate in Research Project
Commuting to middle school in the family car: Student and parent perceptions of what occurs and how it influences schooling

Dear Teachers of 8th Graders:

My dissertation research, which is about to begin, focuses on the following topic: *Commuting to middle school in the family car: Student and parent perceptions of what occurs and how it influences schooling*. This study investigates the commuting experience of young adolescents, 8th graders in this case, and their families in order to learn of its impact on students' middle school experiences and healthy development.

In addition to interviewing the students and their families about the commuting experience, I also wish to collect data about the commuting students' school experiences. This is where I will need your help. During the fall semester 2009, I will be contacting you for your observations about commuting students in general. Any information concerning commuting students' academic performance, or health (emotional, social, physical) as a group would be most welcomed. At least one interview, approximately 20-30 minutes, will be scheduled at the start of the fall semester 2009, and one at the end of the fall semester 2009. Casual, spontaneous observations as they occur would also be welcomed.

Findings from the study will be shared with families participating and will describe the commuting experience and identify general patterns regarding the ways commuting impacts the adolescents' development, health, learning, and academic achievement in school. The study will also assist educators in making informed decisions that promote commuting students' success in school and healthy development.

Your privacy will be respected. During my research project, I will keep all data in a secure location and have sole access to the data. Pseudonyms will be given to all participants to protect confidentiality. I will not use your name in the final dissertation report but use a pseudonym instead. Summarized results and recommendations based on the study will be shared with the school and with all who took part in the study. In the event that the dissertation is published, all names of participants and the school will be changed.

Participation in this project is voluntary. If you do graciously consent to participate, but later change your mind, please feel free to withdraw from the research without prejudice. If you have any questions, please contact me at (800) 999-2407.

If you consent to participate, please sign the consent form attached and return them to me by: August 14, 2009. A copy of the signed consent form will be returned to you. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Fran Wong
Teacher

I certify that I have read and that I understand that I will be participating in the research project: *Commuting to middle school in the family car: Student and parent perceptions of what occurs and how it influences schooling*. I have been given satisfactory answers to my questions concerning project procedures and other matters. I have been advised that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my participation in this project at any time without prejudice.

I consent to my own participation in the study: *Commuting to middle school in the family car: Student and parent perceptions of what occurs and how it influences schooling*.

Name: (print): _____

Signature: _____

Title/Position: _____

Courses you teach to 8th graders: _____

Are you an 8th grade homeroom teacher?

_____yes

_____no

Date: _____

If you have any questions about your rights in this project, you can contact University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, Committee on Human Studies (CHS), Spalding Hall 253, 2540 Maile Way, Honolulu, Hawai'i 96822. Phone: (808) 956-5007. E-mail: uhirb@hawaii.edu

APPENDIX D

INTERVIEWS

PARENT INTERVIEWS ROUND 1

Demographics:

1. In what area of the island of Oahu do you live?
2. How many years have you been commuting to Ascension from the place listed above?
3. How long is the drive to school on an average day? (No severe traffic jams or accidents on the freeways, etc.) Please give approximate time and miles.
4. How long is the drive home from school on an average day? (No severe traffic jams or accidents on the freeways, etc.)
5. Why did you choose to enroll in a private school even if it meant commuting?
6. What is your occupation?

Research Question 1

What is the commuting experience like?

- **How does it vary for different families?**
 - **How do families experience commuting from the perceptions of the parents and of the children?**
1. What time do you wake up in the morning to get ready to come to school?
 - What time do you leave home for school?
 - Why do you leave at this hour?
 - What do you do before leaving home?
 2. If I could experience your morning routine as you get ready for school, what would I see?
 3. What can you tell me about the ride into town?
 - What kinds of things do you pack in the car to make commuting work?
 4. What time do you normally reach the school campus?
 5. At the end of the school day:
 - What time do you start the commute home?
 - What do you do before leaving for home?
 - At what time do you normally reach home?
 - How long is the drive home, on average?
 - How is the car equipped for the commute home?
 6. If I could experience your after school routine, what would it be like?
 - Tell me about your child's extra-curricular activities after school and how this affects the commute.
 7. What are some differences in the commute if mom drives or dad?
 8. What are some differences in the commute if one parent is in the car or two?

Research Question 2a

Considering personal characteristics and shared developmental characteristics, in what ways do adolescents shape these commutes?

1. What are your child's responsibilities to get himself ready for the daily school commute?
 - What are your expectations of your children as far as getting ready for school?
2. How does your family pass the time during the car ride?
 - Provide some examples of the kinds of interactions/activities/conversations that take place between you and your children.
3. Is the commute stressful for you?
 - What instigates the stress?
 - What happens when you feel stressed in the car?
4. Is the commute an enjoyable or positive experience for you? In what way?
5. What kind of technology do you have available during the commute? Describe each and how it is used. (e.g. cell phone, radio, games, mini-computer/dictionary/thesaurus, iPod or other portable listening device, TV., etc.)
6. Is the school commute a negative experience for you?
 - In what way?
7. What kinds of coping strategies have you learned from other parents concerning how to use your car commute time and time before/after the commute?
8. How has commuting affected your adolescent's
 - health
 - participation in extra-curricular activities
 - recreation
 - chores
 - family time

Research Question 2b:

In what ways are you involved in shaping the commuting experience for their child?

1. Are there ways you provide assistance to help your child accomplish school tasks? For example: acquire supplies, shop, network w/other parents etc.
 - How do you help to continue your child's learning during the commute?
 - How do you arrange for your child to have study time or time to complete school related work
 - en route
 - outside of the home?
2. Do other adults (e.g. grandparents) help you in some way to cope with time on the road?
3. What practices/behaviors do you model, suggest, or teach that would help your child commute successfully?
4. What do you think are the most useful strategies you use to help your child cope with time on the road?
5. What do you do to make the commute work well for you and your family?
 - Academically

- socially
- emotionally
- physically

Research Question 3:

In what ways does the commute impact home life experiences and school life experiences?

1. On average, how much time does your child spend on school work (of any kind) per school day?
2. Do you think there are times during the day that could be better used by you and your child to accomplish school tasks? For example?
3. What family needs have been impacted by the commute?
4. What adolescent needs have been impacted by the commute?
 - physical
 - social
 - academic
 - emotional
5. What are the pros of having your child attend a school that requires a long commute?
 - What are the cons of having your child attend a school that requires a long commute?
6. What are your expectations and values towards education?
7. How do you communicate those expectations and values to your children?
8. What do you think are your child's expectations and values towards education? How do you know?
9. How do your expectations and values influence your child's use of time before, during, and after the commute?

Research Question 4:

What support do parents or students perceive they need from school or teachers?

1. What is currently being done by the school to accommodate student commuters?
2. What else do you think the school could do?
3. Do you think there are things teachers could do to support your commuting child?
4. How can the school better support your adolescent's needs that stem from commuting?
 - physical
 - social
 - academic
 - emotional
5. Is there something I didn't ask that you'd like to say, or something you want to say to sum up your experience of commuting?
6. If needed, may I return for a follow-up interview?

PARENT INTERVIEWS ROUND 2

These follow up questions were based upon information that emerged during the first round interviews with parents.

1. Since we last spoke, have there been any changes in your commuting routine? (Added extra-curricular activities, coming home later, different drivers, etc?)
2. Why not have your child bus to school?
 - Cost of bus transportation?
 - Cost of gas per week for your car?
 - Cost of take out/eating out per week?
3. Would your child commute to school if you didn't work in town? Why or why not?
4. Use one verb (-ing word) to describe the commuting experience and explain why you chose it.
OR
5. Use one adjective to describe the commuting experience and explain why you chose it.
6. How are you involved in your child's education?
 - Volunteer at school? E.g.
 - E-mail teachers, admin? E.g.
 - Attend school activities? E.g.
 - Attend parent conferences?
 - Other ways?
7. Why do you make the time to be involved? What are the benefits? What must you do to become involved (driving more? Re-scheduling your day, etc.)
 - What determines you getting involved?
 - How do your children feel about your involvement? Do you agree w/ them?
 - How does being involved help you to help your child be successful in school?
 - How much importance do you place on being involved and why?
 - How well is your child doing in school?
8. Do you do academic activities in the car?
 - How about when they were little?
 - Why do/did you do academic activities in the car (even when they were little?)
 - Why do you help w/ academics at home?
9. How did you develop your values of education?
 - How was it passed down to you by parents?)
 - How did your own upbringing influence your decision to commute?
10. Why do you commute?
 - Why are you willing to commute?
11. How did your own education experiences (going to school when you were young) influence the decision to commute?
 - What events led to the decision to commute?
 - What was your child's input in the decision?

- Are you happy/satisfied with the decision? Why/why not?
 - Is your child happy/satisfied w/ the decision? Why/why not?
 - What was going on in your child's education that prompted a change that included a commute?
12. What was it like when you first began to commute? Describe your experiences.
- What has changed since then?
 - What was it like for your child when you first began to commute? Describe your/his experiences.
 - What has changed since then?
 - How have you learned to handle the commute?
 - How has your child learned to handle the commute?
 - As you look back on when you first started to commute, are there any events/experiences that stand out for you?
 - For your child?
 - Would you have done things differently?
 - What if anything, did you know about commuting before you started?
13. What positive changes have occurred in your life since you began commuting?
14. What negative changes have occurred in your life since you began commuting?
15. What are the most important lessons you've learned from the whole commuting experience?
- About yourself?
 - What strengths have you discovered about yourself from being on the road?
 - About your family? (Children?)
 - About the drive?
 - About school?
 - What weaknesses/concerns?
16. What do you do on the weekends/holidays to help you prepare for the commute on the week days?
17. What are the steps you take to prepare for the next day's commute? What helps you to manage the commute?
18. What advice would you give to someone who is commuting for the first time?
19. In what way is the car like a "second home?"
- Physical similarities?
 - In atmosphere
20. Why do you want your children to be involved in extra-curricular activities?
- What are the gains?
 - In what ways do the gains offset the cons of road time and coming home late?
21. How often do you have family meals?
- What kinds of conversation/activities occur during these meals?
22. What's the difference between a good day and a bad day?
23. What's the difference between a good car ride and a bad car ride?
24. How do your co-workers help you manage commuting? (Networking for ideas, etc.)
25. What are the ways your child socializes after school?
- How does he socialize? (Computer venues?)
 - How much time is spent in socializing?

- How much time is spent on homework?
26. How do you promote car safety?
- What rules do you have in the car?
27. On homeownership: Have you ever thought about moving closer to town?
28. Is saving time an issue? Why/why not?
- What do you do to save time?
 - Is saving time an issue or driving force?
 - Why is it important to save time?
29. Based on someone's comment: other parents, families just don't realize or know what commuters go through.
- What do you think this means?
 - Do you feel the same way?
 - What do you think the "others" don't know?
30. Because of our conversations, have you made any discoveries about commuting?

Thank you!

STUDENT INTERVIEWS ROUND 1

Demographics:

1. In what area of the island of Oahu do you live?
2. Since what grade have you been commuting to Ascension from the place listed above?
3. Do you ride to school with your parents and siblings (if any and who) in your family car?
4. Do you ride home with your parents and siblings (if any and who) in the family car?
5. How long is the drive to school on an average day? (No severe traffic jams or accidents on the freeways, etc.) Please give approximate time and miles.
6. How long is the drive home from school on an average day? (No severe traffic jams or accidents on the freeways, etc.)

Research Question 1

What is the commuting experience like?

- **How does it vary for different families?**
 - **How do families experience commuting from the perceptions of the parents and of the children?**
1. What time do you wake up in the morning to come to school?
 - What time do you leave home for school?
 - Why do you leave at this hour?
 - What do you do before leaving for school?
 2. If I could experience your morning routine as you get ready for school, what would I see?
 3. What can you tell me about the ride into town?
 - What kinds of things is the car equipped with to make commuting work?
 - What supplies do you think the car needs to make commuting work?
 - If you could imagine a car best equipped for a commute, what would it look like?
 4. What time do you normally arrive on campus?
 - What do you do after arriving?
 5. At the end of the school day, how do you go home?
 - What time do you leave campus?
 - What do you do before leaving for home?
 - At what time do you normally reach home?
 - How long is the drive home, on average?
 - How is the car equipped for the commute home?
 6. If I could experience your after school routine, what would it be like?
 - Tell me about your extra-curricular activities after school.
 7. What are some differences in the commute if mom drives or dad?
 8. What are some differences in the commute if one parent is in the car or two?

Research Question 2

Considering personal characteristics and shared developmental characteristics, in what ways do adolescents shape these commutes?

1. What are your responsibilities to get yourself ready for the daily school commute?
 - How are your responsibilities different from your siblings?
 - What are your parents' expectations of you as far as getting ready for school? (Dressing, packed for school and after school activities, eating breakfast, any morning chores, etc.)
2. Provide some examples of the kinds of interactions/activities/conversations that take place between you and your parents.
3. Provide some examples of the kinds of interactions/activities/conversations that take place between you and your siblings.
4. Do you continue to learn in the car during the commute?
5. Is the commute ever stressful for you?
 - What instigates the stress?
 - What happens when you feel stressed in the car?
6. What kind of technology do you have available during the commute? Describe each and how it is used. (e.g. cell phone, radio, games, mini-computer/dictionary/thesaurus, iPod or other portable listening device, TV., etc.)
7. Is the school commute a positive or enjoyable experience for you?
 - In what way? Give examples.
8. Is the school commute a negative experience for you?
 - In what way? Give examples.
9. If you need help coping with the commute, what do you do?
 - Who do you ask?
10. What do you do to make the commute work well for you and your family?
 - academically
 - socially
 - emotionally
 - physically
11. How has commuting affected your
 - health (rest, eating habits)
 - participation in extra-curricular activities
 - recreation
 - chores
 - interaction with family
 - interaction with peers

Research Question 3:

In what ways are parents involved in shaping the commuting experience for their child?

1. In what ways do your parents help you to continue your learning during the commute?
 - In what ways do they help at home?
 - What are the most useful strategies?
2. How do your parents arrange for you to have study time or time to complete school related tasks:
 - en route?
 - at home?
3. Do other adults help you in some way with your school work, projects, etc. at home or at school?

Research Question 4:

In what ways does the commute impact home life experiences and school life experiences?

1. What time do you arrive on campus?
 - Describe how you spend the time before 7:45 when the bell rings.
2. Throughout the day, do you tackle any homework?
3. How do you feel during the school day?
4. On average, how much time do you spend on homework (of any kind) per school day?
5. What do you think is your most significant strategy to use commute time in a positive or beneficial way?
 - academically
 - socially
 - physically
 - emotionally
6. What are your academic goals and what do you do to reach them?
7. What do you value about your private school education? Why do you feel this way?
8. If you had the choice of commuting to school or attending a close district school, what would you choose and why?
9. What/Who do you think helps you most in succeeding in school? Why?
 - How do you help yourself to succeed in school?
10. What time do you usually go to bed?
 - About how many hours of sleep do you get each night?
 - How much sleep would you like to get?
 - How alert/sleepy do you feel during the day?
 - Do you think the amount of sleep you get affects the way you learn in school?
11. What chores do you do at home on school days?
 - How long do they take?
12. How often do you eat with the family on school days?

- For what meal(s)?
 - Where do your breakfast and dinner meals take place?
 - What do you normally eat for your breakfast, lunch, and dinner?
13. If I could experience your home routine after school, until bedtime, what would it be like?

Research Question 5:

What support do parents or students perceive they need from school or teachers?

1. How does the school set up help you as a commuter?
2. What things could the school could do to support you when you lose time for academics because of your commute to and from school?
3. What things could teachers do to support you as a commuter?
4. What is currently being done by the school to accommodate student commuters?
5. What is currently being done by teachers to accommodate student commuters?
6. Is there something I didn't ask that you'd like to say, or something you want to say to sum up your experience of commuting?
7. If needed, may I come back for a follow-up interview?

Thank you!

STUDENT INTERVIEWS ROUND 2

These follow up questions were based upon information that emerged during the first round interviews with students.

1. Since we last spoke, have there been any changes in your commuting routine? (Added extracurricular activities, coming home later, different drivers, etc?)
2. Use one verb to describe the commuting experience and explain why you chose it.
OR
3. Use one adjective to describe the commuting experience and explain why you chose it.
4. What was it like when you first began to commute? Describe your experiences.
 - What has changed since then?
 - How have you learned to handle the commute?
 - What if anything, did you know about commuting before you started?
 - What positive changes have occurred in your life since you began commuting?
 - What negative changes have occurred in your life since you began commuting?
5. How are your parents involved in school? (volunteer, come to activities, conferences, email, etc.)
 - How do you feel about your parents' involvement?
 - How does your parents' being involved help you to help to be successful in school?
 - How well are you doing in school? Give examples of why.
6. What events led to the decision to commute?
 - How were you involved in the decision making?
 - Were you satisfied/happy about the way things turned out?
 - What was going on in your education before that prompted a change that included a commute?
7. What are the most important lessons you've learned about yourself from the whole commuting experience?
 - About your family? (parents?)
 - About the drive?
 - About school?
 - What strengths have you discovered about yourself from being on the road?
 - What weaknesses?
8. What advice would you give to someone who is commuting for the first time?
9. What are the most important lessons you learned through experiencing the commuting?
10. How is the car a "second home"?
 - Physical similarities?
 - Atmosphere?
11. What are the steps you take to prepare for the next day's commute?
12. What do you do on the weekends to prepare for the week's commute?

13. How often do you have family meals?
 - What happens during family meals?
14. What's the difference between a good day and a bad day?
15. What's the difference between a good car ride and a bad car ride?
16. Why do you want to be involved in extra-curricular activities? (Pros? Cons?)
17. How do you socialize after school?
 - What means do you use?
 - How much time is spent socializing?
 - Do you multitask while socializing? If so, in what way?
 - Why do you socialize? (identity formation, support, etc)
18. What helps you to manage the commute?
 - Who helps you manage your commute and how?
19. Did you ever want to move closer to town?
20. How is car safety promoted?
21. Is saving time an issue? Why/why not?
 - What do you do to save time?
 - Is saving time an issue or driving force?
 - Why is it important to save time?
22. Based on someone's comment: other parents, families just don't realize or know what commuters go through.
 - What do you think this means?
 - Do you feel the same way?
 - What do you think the "others" don't know?
23. Because of our conversations, have you made any discoveries about commuting?
24. E: Mail
25. Phone No.
26. Cell:
27. Work:
28. Home:

TEACHER/COUNSELOR INTERVIEWS

The teachers participating in the interviews are primarily core subject area teachers, P.E. teachers, and/or homeroom teachers of the participating commuting students in 8th grade. Specialists in non-core subject areas and counselors may also be included. The interviews may be conducted via e-mail and/or in person.

***Success in school academically:* A successful academic performance will be defined as a minimum passing grade point average of C (2.0 or 73%). This grade was chosen because at Ascension, academic deficiency letters are sent home at mid-quarter to all students averaging a C- and below. Other indications of academic success include the 8th grade student's ability to attend to academic demands, for example: complete homework and be appropriately supplied for school. Furthermore, these students are perceived as alert, attentive, and participate in class.**

1. Please share your observations of commuting students in general in the following areas:
 - academic achievement (struggling – successful, incomplete work – complete work, unprepared for class – prepared for class, etc.)
 - behavior in class (for example: engaged – little to no participation, alert – sleepy, lack of energy – animated, hungry – has sufficient food throughout the day, disorganized – organized)
 - Do you perceive a difference between students who have lengthy commutes and non-commuting students?
 - General observations of the ten participants
2. ***Success in school emotionally and socially is defined as students who have developed positive peer and adult relationships. These students are involved and engaged in positive and healthy ways in most aspects of school life.***
 - Social adjustment (relationships between peers) –in general
 - Social relationships between adults (teachers?)
 - General observations of the ten participants
2. What kinds of things do students say about an impact from their commute? Give examples.
3. Have you observed ways that your students compensate/cope with commuting? Please provide some examples.
 - What is being taught in Advisory?
4. In what ways do you accommodate commuting students' curriculum needs? Give examples.
5. How are the needs for commuting students addressed during class time, homeroom time, or free time? Give examples.
6. What is the school currently doing to accommodate the needs of commuting students?
7. What else could the school do?

8. What advice do you give to the parents of commuting students?
9. What parent concerns stemming from commuting are you aware of?
10. Is there anything else you'd like to say about commuting and commuting students that has not yet been touched upon?
11. If needed, may I return for a follow-up interview?

Thank you!

APPENDIX E

MEMBER CHECKING LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS

September 27, 2010

Greetings:

After spending an entire summer transcribing the audio files, the interviews are now ready for your review. Because I used transcription software that is voice activated, there may be some errors in the text due to the computer not being able to precisely pick up the audio voices and accurately convert the sounds into text. Once the interview was transcribed, I reviewed it a second time to make any corrections that I could to improve correctness. However, there may still be a few errors. As I continue to listen to the files and work with them, these kinds of errors will be addressed. When you read the transcriptions, please note they are verbatim – as close to the actual way your responses were recorded.

I would appreciate your input in the following ways – and only if you wish to do so. Otherwise I will use the text as is.

- Adding information (details, better explanations) to elaborate or clarify what was said.
- Completely deleting information that you wish to no longer include in the interview. Just strike a single line through the lines you want to eliminate.
- Changing information that was originally given.

If possible, please make all changes in **red pen** and circle the **line numbers** where such changes were made. This will help me to locate the corrections faster. If there are changes, return the manuscript to me by:

_____ (date inserted) _____

If there are no changes, you may keep the manuscript as your reference copy. For those returning the manuscript to be corrected, I can give you a copy of the edited version upon request. Please note: If I don't hear from you by the date above, I will assume that all is well, and proceed to conduct my analysis.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to ask. You can reach me at:
fw@Ascensionschool_6-8.org or 999-2407

Sincerely grateful,

Fran Wong

APPENDIX F
BLOG QUESTIONS

November 16, 2009 Monday
First Blog day:

Hi gang:

Prefer you **write in short paragraphs**. Remember, this is a private site and **should not be shared** w/ any one!

Here are some things you can write about today -- and feel free to address anything else you want! You don't have to stick to the "script." But if you are stuck, these questions might help....

1. How are you feeling? Out of class/ in class
2. What did you do on the weekend? (school work wise and play wise, etc.)
3. How were classes today? How did you participate?
4. What did you eat for breakfast/lunch/dinner?
5. Blog about anything else you wish to say about your day!
6. What happened on the ride to school?
7. Describe your day.

November 17, 2009 Tuesday
Second Blog day:

Hi gang!

- Don't forget that the last blog of the day is any time after school. You can do it while in study hall, on the ride home if your phone has internet hook up, or when you get home (before, while, or after doing homework!)
- If you forgot to leave a message last night, could you include this morning something about what happened to you after you left school yesterday, when you got home, until bedtime?

You guys are doing great!

- Same questions as yesterday...plus here's a new one:
- *Many of you mentioned being tired and bored in your classes. Could you explain what makes a class "boring" and how this affects your learning when you are tired?*
- *More about what you do during free time at school, and what you do after school, and on the ride home.*

November 18, 2009 Wednesday

Third Blog day:

Hi gang!

Write me about what happened last night! You guys are forgetting about the evening log in!

And.... about today and....

Write more! As much as you can!

November 19, 2009 Thursday

Fourth Blog day:

Hi gang!

Keep the messages coming! Write more with details!

How are you feeling? Thinking? How's the day been? Eating? Car rides?

Classes and how you are doing? The night before? Homework? Bedtime?

WRITE, WRITE, WRITE tons and in paragraphs!

Thanks much

November 20, 2009 Friday

Fifth Blog day:

Hey all:

Last day! You can do it! Give me your best, best blogs today! Lots of god writing about all that has been happening. Don't forget all your check ins.

APPENDIX G

NETIQUETTE

These online activities will be monitored and are part of a research study on the experience of commuting. The website will be checked nightly to monitor and review messages. Inappropriate postings will be removed. The following steps are intended to assure your safety and confidentiality.

1. Use polite and appropriate language at all times when sending messages or responding to the postings of others.
2. Messages should be related to the topic of commuting. Unrelated private information should not be posted or discussed.
3. This site is private and the URL should not be shared with others who are not participating in the study.
4. Information on the site is private and should not be shared in any way.
5. The site is to be used appropriately: no bullying or harassment.
6. Create a password and screen name that do not give away who you are. Keep them private. I will record your password/screen name for data collection purposes. Other than that, others should not be able to identify you. Do not give others your password.
7. No posting of personal photos.
8. Do not post inappropriate material or links on the site.
9. Your parents must give you permission in order to participate in this part of the data collection.
10. At the conclusion of the study, the site will be closed and no longer accessible.

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Endnote: School reports cited in this study under pseudonym are not included in this list of references to preserve confidentiality.

