Parenting Practices at Play in the Educational Experiences of Adolescent Students: as Perceived Through the Eyes of Teachers

By

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A research paper to be submitted in conformity with the requirements for the Degree of Master of Teaching
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Abstract

The approaches parents take in raising their children, and the aspirations and values they choose to transmit, are all highly influential in shaping the child’s personality and life goals. The various impacts that parenting styles have on children is a topic widely researched, however, it is not very often that the impacts are discussed in regards to a child’s educational experience, specifically in a classroom setting. When thinking about the influence of parenting in a school setting, teachers then enter the picture as they interact with students for a large portion of the day. This qualitative study aims to investigate how various parenting practices play a role in the experiences, achievements, and outlooks of intermediate and senior students in a school setting, as observed through the eyes of teachers. Data is collected through face-to-face interviews with two school teachers. The findings uncover a series of themes regarding patterns that are observable for classroom teachers. These patterns suggest a correlation between the parenting practices students are exposed to at home and the ways they approach their school experiences. Although there is more to be discovered and researched regarding this topic, the findings of this paper provide a glimpse of how teachers are able to view the influence and implications of certain parenting practices. Additionally, the findings illustrate a series of factors that impact a teacher’s understanding of parental roles, thus providing a better understanding of the teacher’s role as a bridge between home and school.
Acknowledgements

When reflecting upon the journey I have been on in the past two years, a number of important individuals come to mind. Firstly, I like to thank my professor Patrick Finnessy for his directions and helping me get started with my research. I would also like to thank my research supervisor David Montemurro for all his support, guidance, and motivational comments. My family has been a huge part of my educational journey and I could not have done this without them. Thank you to my parents for always being supportive of my decisions in life, and for showing me that with some determination and positivity anything is possible. Last but not least, I like to thank my partner and best friend John Silva. I couldn’t have asked for a more perfect person to help me through this journey. Thank you for consistently pushing me to do my best and always being there to share with me my happy, sad, and stressful moments. Shekh Ma Shieraki Anni.
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Chapter I
Introduction

Introduction to the Research Study

It is often said that teachers take on the role of the parent while children are at school, thus making educators arguably the most influential individuals in a child’s learning experience. Although this understanding holds a great deal of value, the important role of parents must not be overlooked as it can be very crucial in children’s educational life. A great teacher can provide the safest environment for his or her students with endless opportunities for them to demonstrate their interests and knowledge through a variety of tasks. However, family dynamics at home can additionally play a great role in determining a child’s approach to learning. It is evident that the two worlds of home and school are important players in the educational world of a student.

Discussing this issue, John Hattie (2013), a professor and director of the Melbourne Education Research Institute, believes that parents often “don’t understand the language of learning and what is involved in learning today” (P.13). He further writes, “parents should be educated in the language of schooling, so that the home and school can share in the expectations, and the child does not have to live in two worlds” (P.13). It would be greatly beneficial for teachers if the communication that they had with parents were to be regular, and reciprocated, allowing the home and school environments to become as one. As Hattie has suggested, this would provide the students with a seamless schooling experience, allowing them to transfer skills they acquire back and forth between the two environments. However, the reality is that a series of factors play a role in how this communication is established and maintained. The student body of a
class can bring a diverse range of knowledge that is particular to each individual’s culture, language, and past experiences. Thus teachers are presented with a set of pre-formed understandings and perspectives brought into the class by their students, which then becomes highly influential in the ways each individual approaches education. Therefore, one form and nature of communication that works for one family, may not for another.

For teachers to help students have a more comfortable transition between home and school, they need to better understand the home dynamics each student is a part of, and this is where communication with parents plays a crucial role. As Hattie (2013) discusses, parents may be unaware of the approaches to learning that schools takes, thus the unfamiliarity can create a gap. Although this gap can interfere with creating a smooth transition between home and school, it is neither the fault of the parents nor the teachers. If school systems were to make a bigger effort in understanding the various ideas of schooling that cultures have, they would be able to better accommodate for all learners. Teachers can help in reducing the gap by learning about the interests, needs, expectations, and values different families bring with them. Similarly, the parents will also benefit from being provided information regarding the province’s educational guidelines, curriculum, and common practices. The exchange of information between the two parties will allow for a smoother transition from the home life to the classroom.

As it will later be examined in Chapter Two, parenting styles can shape a child’s views on school and education far before they enter any classroom environment. Once students have entered a teacher’s classroom, they have already obtained a certain set of skills and views fostered by the parenting practices they have been exposed to at home.
Although it is extremely difficult, and perhaps impossible to identify what characteristics and actions in a student are results of particular parenting practices, the influence of parenting can manifest in more distinct manners in high school students. This is mainly because adolescents are at a stage of their lives where they can demonstrate what they are interested in and have ideas for the future goals they want to set for themselves. At times, adolescents can even express that they are choosing a certain career path because of family tradition, expectations, or influence. These decisions and actions suggest influence from home life, more specifically parenting practices.

Therefore, I find it crucial to better understand the long term influences of parenting styles in order to accommodate teaching approaches and practices in ways that best allows students to flourish and reach their full potentials. As a high school teacher, my efforts of fostering life skills such as responsibility and self regulation in my students may not always be successful if a student has spent their entire life having their decisions made for them by his or her parent(s). As discussed previously, understanding the home life will help the teacher better see why a student may or may not make certain decision. It would be helpful for teachers to be mindful of the upbringings of their students. This will provide a better understanding of what skills, values, and tools students have been exposed to prior to entering the teacher’s classroom. A simple example of this would be a kindergarten student who is given the opportunity to dress him or herself in the morning for school is learning to become self-regulated. This skill can now be transferred into other daily actions of the student, such as recognizing when he or she needs help in completing a task, and asks for assistance. If from an early age, a student is not taught to be self-regulated, they may struggle with punctuality, meeting assignment deadlines, and
recognizing their commonly made errors in higher grades. However, this may not be true in all cases, but it is still important for teachers to understand how the home life has prepared the students for school. One may argue that even more important than this, is parents recognizing the implications of their practices on their children’s approach to education. Although that is also a very important discussion, from the educator’s point of view, the focus will be on teachers understanding parenting practices, particularly in the cultural setting that they are presented in. This will again, reinforce the need for effective communication between the teacher and the parent(s).

One of the most important factors in conducting this study is understanding context. It is not enough for teachers to learn about the parenting practices their students are exposed to at home. Effective understanding lies in learning about the context in which the parenting practices takes place. Each culture and family has their own set of knowledge, experiences, and views regarding education, which can all contribute to students’ actions and decisions at school. Teachers should be aware of this complex aspect of parenting practices in order to make more informed observations that will help them understand where each student’s influences come from.

**Purpose of the Study**

This study was conducted to help understand how teachers identify and respond to perceived parenting practices as observed in their classrooms. Although in my research I have gained a great deal of knowledge regarding various parenting practices, my interest lies within how these practices are seen through the lens of a classroom teacher. It may be true that certain facts about the home environment and parenting practices are more
easily observable than others, but there is always more to learn about what one perceives to be true about a student’s home life. For instance, it is easier for a teacher to learn that a student has only one parent, than to learn about how many hours the parents spend weekly aiding the student with History homework. Although having one parent may be the more predominant piece of information about that student’s parenting exposure, it does not necessarily mean that that will play the most significant role in all of the actions and decisions made by the student in school. Therefore, with this study I aim to discover how teachers can work to make more informed and personalized observations regarding each student’s experience with parenting practices. This will perhaps prevent generalizations to be made, and the knowledge gained regarding the home lives of students will be a resourceful tool for teachers to help better reach all students.

This study had the potential to become more successful if it included the perspectives of parents as well as the students. This research would have benefitted from interviews with students and/or home observations of parent and student interactions. However, due to ethical board restrictions for this particular study, I was not able to interview parents or students. Instead, I have focused on educators and what they observe on a daily basis in their classrooms and school community. It is important to note that as a qualitative study, this work does not produce concrete results such as the success rate of students exposed to a certain parenting style. But rather, this study illustrates the variety of ways that teachers are able to observe the influence of parenting practices on students’ choices and actions in the classroom and school environment.

The two interviews have provided this study with valuable information regarding the ways classroom teachers observe parenting and its possible impacts on students’
experience at school. This case study helps to better uncover the relationship between parents and educators, and what changes must be made in order for students to reach their full potentials. The main site of my study is a growing Public School Board in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). In addition, I took into consideration the various household structures available, such as single parents and same sex parents. I decided that narrowing the focus on one particular family structure would not be beneficial, as the study investigates how teachers perceive parenting practices. This study is interested in the practices that take place in relation to the student, not necessarily the role of family structures in creating the practices. I made sure this focus was clear by asking my participants to contextualize their answers in regards to all household structures that they have seen come through their classrooms.

Through conducting this study, I have come across generalizations that are made regarding certain parenting styles and practices. For example, being “strict” can help a student achieve high marks. However, what one parent may perceive as strict, another may not. Furthermore, many factors contribute to a student achieving good marks, therefore, one must not generalize teachers’ notions of particular parenting practices as resulting in certain prescribed outcomes. My research has provided an important outlook on different internal and external factors that influence parenting choices. Therefore, throughout this research I have brought to surfaces certain realities in parenting, giving my audience more than one point of view on this topic. I have also explored some outside factors that attribute to parenting practices and how learning about such factors can give teachers a more informed understanding of how to go about using this information to help their students.
Research Questions

The bridge that connects the home life to the learning that happens in school is a very important one. Students’ educational experiences can be made more successful if parents and teachers engage in on-going and constructive communication to be able to transfer the same set of expectations and learning tools between the home and the classroom. However, parents and teachers will approach learning differently based on experience, cultural norms, and the tools available to them. Thus, the research questions are aimed to discover the various ways that teachers are able to observe parenting practice through their students, and how they then respond to these observations. The questions ask the two participants to share their observations and solicit how they identify patterns that are visible to them as classroom teachers.

This research project answers the following question: what relationships can teachers identify between parenting practices and students’ educational experiences at school?

Educational experience in this study refers to three areas of student behaviour: i) students’ participation in class, ii) involvement in co-curricular activities such as sport teams and clubs, and iii) students’ self-regulating skills such as punctuality, meeting deadlines, and seeking extra help when needed. Two sub-questions that further clarify the focus are:

i) What practices are employed by teachers to allow them to gain information about the parenting practices their students are exposed to at home?
ii) How does gaining knowledge of the parenting practices that a set of students are 
exposed to, inform and guide the teacher’s approach to teaching those particular 
students?

This study takes the qualitative inquiry approach of a case study. In the form of a 
collective case study, I have explored my one topic through multiple examples. As 
Creswell (2013) explains, a collective case study can purposefully illustrate various 
viewpoints on the same topic to support the research questions (p. 99). After the 
completion of my data collection, I have performed a holistic analysis of the entire case, 
as well as an embedded analysis of the individual cases. Thus the findings are 
summarized at the end through a lens that illustrates more than one possibility in the 
correlation of parenting and educational experience.

**Background of the Researcher**

My interest in the various parenting styles started when I myself was a young 
adolescent. I have long worked with younger children, whether it was babysitting, being a 
lunch and bus monitor for kindergarteners when I was in grade eight, or working at 
daycares during my undergrad. As I began to work with older school agers, I realized that 
the parenting practices a child was exposed to at home at an early age played a very big 
role in the ways they grow up to approach their educational experience at school. Parents 
work to pass on their values and aspiration to their children via different practices and 
means, and the way education is discussed and valued in a household impacts the shaping 
of a student’s views on school.
Popular belief often states that when parents are involved in a child’s educational path, through even small actions such as checking homework, monitoring grades, and contacting teachers, the student will do well academically. Although this holds to be true in many cases, my interest lies in how teachers can play a role once they understand the parenting their students are receiving at home. The value that parents put on education is very important, but the child’s determination and passion to continue education is just as influential. Because students spend a great number of hours at school, I find it helpful for teachers to recognize how parenting practices translate or manifest in the students daily actions in the classroom and the school community.

My parents have always demonstrated that education not only opens paths in life, but it also allows an individual to expand their knowledge of the world. Beyond their emphasis on the importance of education, my parents remained uninvolved in my educational experience. They did not make attempts to monitor my homework, help me study, or push me to perform exceptionally well in school, and yet I have always managed to achieve great grades and go on to pursue higher education. The key to my academic success has been personal perseverance, self-regulation, and a passion to become more knowledgeable. My parents did not have to check my homework for completion every night, but they taught me that hard work pays off at the end, thus giving me the tools needed to motivate myself and stay on track. Their parenting decision is the main reason why I am so interested in this topic. My personal experience illustrates that there are a large number of factors that contribute in helping the student be shaped by the parenting practices they are exposed to. Learning about even a small number of these factors, teachers would be able to make more informed observations and better their
understandings of the implications parenting has on student experience in a school setting.

**Overview**

In Chapter One, I have identified my research topic, the rationale, and driving motivations for my study. I have also explained my specific research question followed by sub-questions. Following this, Chapter Two contains a review of the literature available on the topic, and what is lacking in this field of study. Chapter Three provides the methodology and procedures used in this study as well as information about my participants and the data collection tools and approaches. Chapters Four presents the findings and the analysis in regards to the research already available on this topic. And finally, Chapter Five explores the implications of this study on my personal understanding as a teacher and also how the findings can aid future decisions for educators.
Chapter II
Literature Review

Introduction

A great deal of research has been conducted regarding the various impacts of parenting on students’ performance in the school, both academically and non-academically. Studies measure success by assessing a variety of factors such as independence, self-reliance, school Grade Point Average, emotional security, classroom engagement, educational expectations, and involvement in co-curricular activities. In her research, Kramer (2012) focuses on how various factors such as parental involvement, parental education, and parental help with homework, all contribute to the Grade Point Average of high school students. In contrast to this, the work of Brown and Iyengar (2008) focuses on how parental actions impact student behaviour. They look at self-esteem, involvement in leadership roles, and student attachment to their parents in regards to decision making. Research such as these ones illustrate the various lenses available for one to use when examining the influence of parenting practices. Parenting practices influence students academically, emotionally, psychologically, and socially. Additionally, research suggests that a student’s educational outlook and progress remains consistent throughout the school years in relation to the parenting style they are exposed to at home. Thus, suggesting that an understanding of the influence of parenting practices is important in fostering student success.

Despite the abundance of research done in this field, very little of it is in regards to the teacher’s perspective in understanding the role of parenting practices. In addition, the majority of work done in this field of study is quantitative. Quantitative data collection can be helpful if one was to look at certain patterns, for instance the way
different parenting practices influence Math marks in high school students. For such a topic, large numbers of surveys are needed, along with graphs to illustrate a pattern. However, if we are to examine how teachers perceive the transition of parenting practices from the home to the classroom, then interviewing will be an effective method of data collection. Since the teacher’s perspective is embedded within the context of their geographical area, age of the students, subject content the teacher teaches, and the educational system they teach in, their answers cannot be concluded into definite findings. Thus a qualitative research approach is most suitable for the focus of this paper, as it will more freely present the variety of perspectives and observations present.

This chapter focuses on how previously conducted research presents the effects that parental styles have on students’ educational experiences within the classroom. The reason for this is that first we must understand how already established findings describe the patterns between certain parenting practices and student behaviour. The influence of parenting styles and practices is a topic not widely explored in teachers’ college or at professional development days. Therefore, as teachers, it is helpful to learn about this topic before setting to make observations that will inform our teaching practice in the classroom.

Before exploring the topic of parenting, I recognize that there are broad and multiple ways that the home environment influences students. Thus, parenting practices alone do not contribute to shaping a student. Factors such as socioeconomic status, culture, and the educational background of the parents all play influential roles. The first part of this chapter explores important internal factors that influence parenting practices. Although there are a great deal of factors both inside and outside the family that impact a
parenting style or practice to dominate, the focus of this study will be on a select few to better understand their influence on students’ educational experiences. I recognize that one cannot truly perceive what event influences a parent to make certain decisions, but I will explore factors that can be more visible than others. For example, the socioeconomic status of a parent versus a less available piece of information such as how old the individual was when he or she became a parent. The remainder of the chapter will focus on defining the main parenting styles and practices that most researchers categorize their findings into. Thus, setting a foundation for what the paper will go on to explore. Without understanding the nature of parenting styles, teachers cannot go on to perceive the influence of parenting in their students. The chapter will then end by taking a look at what the research available states regarding the multiple parenting styles and their influences.

**Conceptual and Theoretical Frameworks**

Social constructivism is the driving framework for this study as it best suits the qualitative approach to the topic. The framework recognizes that individual experiences provide different viewpoints on the same topic and that interactions with others, in this case students with their parents, teachers with students, and teachers with parents, can influence and shape our decisions and experiences. This framework seeks to look for the variety and complexity of the views available rather than narrowing the meaning (Creswell, 2013, p. 24). This study’s aim is to discover the ways that teachers are able to observe and perceive the impact parenting practices have on students’ experiences in the school setting, as opposed to searching to prove that a certain practice creates the optimal results. Furthermore, it is important to recognize that the main parenting styles that
researchers make reference to are not concrete in their characteristics and that individual perspective changes the way these styles are viewed and practiced. For instance a teacher may be happy that a parent encourages his or her child to participate in extra-curricular activities, as it helps to build confidence. However, another teacher who puts more emphasis on homework may not approve of parents who enrol their children in many extra-curricular activities. Thus, where one teacher may see a certain action as ‘good parenting,’ another may see it as harmful to the child’s overall learning. Subjectivity is the main characteristic of social constructivism, which is why it is best to use such a framework for a topic that is so crucially influenced by personal factors. The subjectivity of the framework leads this research to uncover various patterns that are observable to teachers regarding parenting practices and students’ experience in school. A concluding answer will not be achieved by this study, but rather a look into the possibilities of how educators view the influence of parenting in their daily teachings.

A Postmodern perspective is also an influential framework for this study. As Creswell (2013) describes, the framework of postmodernism believes that the claims being made are set within multiple perspectives of class, race, and gender (p. 27). As a researcher, I recognize that whatever my findings may be, they are very much so bound within a series of external influences such as ethnic background, socioeconomic status, and even the education of the parents. Thus, I have not searched for an answer or evidence to support an argument, but only to illustrate the wide range of parenting practices and the role of the teacher in better understanding them and using them to inform their teaching strategies. Postmodern perspective has an aim to deconstruct the realities that may lead to false understandings (Creswell, 2013, p. 27). For instance, a
misconception held by some individuals regarding parenting is that if parents do not enforce strict rules regarding homework and studying, the student will not achieve good marks. However, this may not always be the case, some students are able to develop strong self-regulation skills and do not need parents to monitor their homework habits. In addition, a single parent who works long hours may not be home to enforce rules regarding school work, thus they find other means to monitor their child’s work and to help him or her set goals regarding their education. Therefore, this framework is crucial for helping my research situate its findings in a more appropriate and relatable manner.

Socioeconomic Backgrounds

This section discusses the role that socioeconomic status play in how parents approach their parenting decisions. As discussed previously, this study follows a narrow lens in terms of only focusing on one geographical area. However, the SES of parents is a crucial factor that impacts a child’s life, regardless of race and culture, therefore it will be a contributing factor in any area. Thus, it is necessary to explore this element in relation to parenting styles and practices. In their work on parenting practices, Redford, Johnson, and Honnold (2009) explore the implications of parents’ SES on a child’s educational achievements. With reference to the work of Lareau (2003), Redford et al. (2009) argue that regardless of race, upper and middle class parents practice what Lareau (2003) refers to as “concerted cultivation,” whereas parents of working and lower class practice the “accomplishment of natural growth” (p. 27). They define concerted cultivation as focusing on children’s structured activities, development of language, and parents’ active participation in schooling (Redford et al., 2009, p. 27). These parents tend to reason and negotiate with their children and involve themselves in extra-curricular activities with the
children. In contrast to this, parents of lower SES provide little opportunity for
negotiations of rules, not because they do not see it as important, but because the children
are seen as the parents’ responsibility to be taken care of (Redford et al., 2009, p. 28).
Lareau (2003) supports her arguments by stating that concerted cultivation fosters a
child’s educational success with two positive outcomes:

1. Middle class parents tend to be better at adapting to changes, thus they can effectively
pass along appropriate, and current cultural skills to their children.

2. Children of middle class families have a higher sense of confidence. This is due to the
fact that in most cases their parents are not intimidated in confronting professionals in the
education system.

Whether these claims are entirely true or not, it is still evident that middle and upper class
students feel more accommodated for in a school setting. Because my research focuses on
the perspective of teachers, this piece of information is very important in helping
educators become aware of the environment they create for students. Schools need to
work in becoming more accommodating for families of all SES backgrounds, by
providing opportunities, guidance, and documents that are easily accessible to all parents.

In their work on the role of socioeconomic status in education, Gonzalez and
Jackson (2013) explore the challenges that SES presents in bridging the relationship
between the parents and the school. They argue that schools often have an embedded
middle class standard, with the language that comes with it, and this can create
segregation for families with different SES (p. 319). Therefore, schools should be aware
of the community in which they are, and recognize that serving a homogeneous standard
will not create a bridge for all the parents. The attempts of the school to get the parents involved will result in different outcomes based on the families. For instance, in their data collection, Gonzalez and Jackson (2013) found that efforts to increase parental volunteering in schools resulted in improved reading achievements for a school with high SES families but not for schools with families of low SES (p. 330). This can be traced back to a series of driving forces, such as parents of low SES working longer hours and being unable to attend school events. In addition, Gonzalez and Jackson (2013) discover that efforts to provide more parental support are associated with higher reading achievements in a school with students from low SES families (p. 330). Although their research was content focused, I still believe that no matter what academic area the school is aiming to improve, involving parents will always be beneficial, as they can be an additional resource for teachers in helping reach each student’s needs and interests.

Lastly, Spera (2005) argues that SES impacts parenting practices regardless of race and awareness of parenting styles. For instance, parents from low SES backgrounds will tend to work longer hours and even have multiple jobs, thus making it harder to spend time monitoring a child’s homework routine, and attending parent-teacher conferences (p. 139). Therefore, parenting practices are performed differently by internal factors such as the SES of a family. Getting to know the factors that contribute to how parents are able to carry out certain practices, will allow the teacher to step away from making generalized assumptions that can harm his or her approach to teaching certain students.
Parental Education

Parents often have certain values and aspirations that they wish to pass on to their children, and one of those is the opinion they have regarding education. The educational experience of parents can really shape the way their children view school and education. In her research regarding the impact of parenting on high school students, Kramer (2012) uses the parents’ education as an index of socioeconomic status (p. 89). She takes into consideration the education of both mother and father to view if the education they received is below what their high school student is achieving currently (so the parents do not have a high school diploma), or if it is more than (parents have post-secondary education). Upon her data analysis, one major discovery presented to Kramer (2012) was that female adolescents have higher academic achievements than male adolescents, regardless of the parents’ educational background (p. 90). Kramer’s work has its own intentions and approach to this topic and is embedded within a certain area, and age group, however, I still believe that presents another factor that teachers must take into consideration when making observations. Gender can at times play a significant part in how students presents the influence of the parenting practices they are exposed to at home.

Brown and Iyengar (2008) believe that parents’ education has three significant impacts on the child’s educational progress. They believe that parents’ education can allow for the transmission of cognitive competencies to the child, increase their opportunities in life, and effectively transmit parental beliefs and attitudes in regards to the value of education (p. 24). Furthermore, their study illustrates that education shapes parents’ achievement beliefs, which in turn influences the child’s achievements through a
set of established home behaviours (p. 24). Although this cycle may not be true of all cases where parents have higher education, it still plays an important role in a child’s views on school. Brown and Iyengar (2008) go on to conclude that parents with higher educational degrees tend to become more involved in their children’s academic pathways, thus placing more importance on the values of education as opposed to the values parents with very little education have regarding the issue (p. 25). In my research I aim to discover how teachers, upon learning about the educational background of the parents are able to identify its influence in the choices a student make in his or her educational progress and experience. In her article on the topic of parenting and positive academic performance, Ngozi (2013) emphasises the important relationship between the home environment and the classroom environment. She notes that facilitating academic success means transferring a similar set of skills and knowledge from one learning environment to the other (p. 76). Parental education plays an important role in this transfer of skills and values. For instance, parents who have post-secondary education recognize certain skills needed to succeed in university and college, such as time management. Therefore, such parents are more likely to transfer these skills to their children at home, which will in turn benefit the children once they are in a classroom. Ngozi (2013) further explains that communication is a key player in the relationship between the home and school environment. Parents not only need to communicate effectively among themselves in regards to the educational values they desire to transfer to their children, but parents also need to communicate their values, beliefs and expectations clearly to their children (p. 76). In addition to this, communication between the parents, student, and teacher is essential for an altogether valuable academic experience.
Parenting Styles and Parenting Practices

This section discusses the types of parenting styles and practices that researchers identify and make reference to. Many of the studies conducted regarding this topic, categorize parenting styles into four main ones: i) Authoritative, ii) Authoritarian, iii) Permissive, and iv) Rejecting/Neglecting. These four categorises are the result of the works of Baumrind (1991), and Martin (1983), as cited by Woolfolk, Winnie, and Perry (2012). Within these four parenting styles, interactions between parents and children are characterized based on levels of warmth and control (Woolfolk et al., 2012, p. 69).

Authoritative parents tend to monitor their children closely, with a clear set of expectations for behaviour. Despite being firm, they are not unreasonable and are willing to negotiate in disciplinary matters, providing a balance between warmth and control (Woolfolk et al., 2012, p. 69). On the contrary, Authoritarian parents set firm limits and expect children to follow them, and can often provide little explanation or negotiation. In this parenting style, the warmth presents itself to a lesser degree than control (Woolfolk et al., 2012, p. 69). Permissive parents tend to have few rules and consequences, and make themselves available as resources for their children to use. In this parenting style, one would find a great deal of warmth with little control (Woolfolk et al., 2012, p. 69). And finally, Rejecting/Neglecting parents are uninvolved and are more focused on their own personal needs than the needs of their children, thus indicating that both warmth and control are diminished (Woolfolk et al., 2012, p. 69).

In many studies, the terms parenting styles and parenting practices are used interchangeably, as they both refer to actions and approaches the parents take in the upbringing of their children. However, in his work, Spera (2005) explores the distinct
differences between parenting styles and parenting practices. Parenting practices are identified as specific actions and behaviours that parents use to socialize their children, such as attending the child’s soccer game (p.127). Spera (2005) examines parenting practices in relation to parental involvement, parental monitoring, and parental goals, values, and aspirations (p.127). Thus, this includes the various ways parents interact and get involved in their children’s life on a daily basis. With respect to school achievement, that may include monitoring homework, setting academic goals, attending parent-teacher conferences and volunteering for leadership roles at the school. Researchers have found a positive relationship between higher parental involvement and the child’s successful achievement in school. However, as Spera (2005) explores, parental involvement tends to decline in adolescents. According to the research available, the main reason for this decline comes from the parents’ recognition of the adolescent’s increased need to express his or her autonomy (p.129). In addition, Spera (2005) draws attention to the fact that parental involvement in adolescent will not decline for all; for instance, parents of children who need higher disciplinary reinforcement or are struggling academically will not decrease their involvement in adolescents (p.130). Parenting practices are simpler to identify because they are specific actions, however, it is difficult to place them according to the four main parenting styles discussed by researchers. As Spera (2005) has discussed, a parent may choose to decrease the level of involvement in the teenage years to give the student more autonomy, and if this reason is not made clear to others, one may see the parent’s lack of involvement as neglectful, thus labelling the parent as neglectful. Therefore, it is important to recognize the difficulty of categorizing parenting styles, as they are influenced by a range of other factors.
A more general and less rigid way of grouping parenting styles would be to describe them as emotional climates in which parents raise their children. Based on the works of Sears and Maccoby (1950s), Spera (2005) explores the two main climates, described as love-oriented versus object-oriented. A love-oriented parenting style consists of the persistence or the withdrawal of warmth, praise, and emotional affection, in response to the child’s behaviour (p.132). An object-oriented parenting style includes the use or withdrawal of tangible objects such as toys to respond to the child’s behaviour (p.132). These two parenting climates can produce very different results. Children exposed to a love-oriented parenting style are more likely to better understand the parents’ reasoning and values and illustrate more evidence of taking on the values and aspirations of their parents (p.132). On the other hand, children exposed to the object-oriented style tend to spend their cognitive and physical energy trying to avoid object withdrawal (e.g. having their toy taken away) (p.133). This can result in the child having trouble internalizing their parents’ values as well as reasoning behind their actions, thus less likely for these children to reflect the values of their parents (p.133).

It is important to understand that emotional climates are not dependent on the four categories of parenting styles. For instance, we may determine that a child is likely being exposed to a neglectful parenting style at home, but the parents can be using a love-oriented approach when they parent, however little that may be. Therefore, such research again illustrates the difficulty in assigning parenting styles to a family. It is much easier to identify and discuss their specific practices as well as the climates in which they approach their parenting.
According to researchers such as Ellis (2007), who bases her work on the research of Maccoby and Martin (1983), the two main elements of parenting are parental responsiveness and parental demandingness. These two elements along with the emotional climates are the foundations that influence specific parenting practices. As Ellis (2007) explores in her work, responsiveness is about the amount of warmth, acceptance and involvement coming from the parents, whereas parental demandingness is the amount of control, supervision, and maturity demands exerted by the parents (p.17). Reaching a fine balance between responsiveness and demandingness is what produces the desired positive relationship between the child and the parent. This relationship means that the child understands what is expected of him or her in terms of behaviours inside and outside the house, but they are also given permission, acceptance, and support to display their individuality. Not only is a fine balance between these elements important, the degree which each is emphasized is also depended on the individual child. Based on the child’s responses to rules, permission, and support, parents should determine whether more responsiveness or demandingness will be effective, or if they are using too much of the object-oriented approach and not enough of the love-oriented. Ultimately, it is difficult to make accurate assumptions and suggestions with an outsider perspective, as each child’s needs and interests are different.

In their work regarding students’ multiple worlds, Phelan, Davidson, and Cao (1991) discuss factors that influence students to navigate the boundaries of family, peer, and school cultures. They acknowledge that factors such as socioeconomic status, parents’ educational background, and cultural expectations and beliefs all play important roles in how students present themselves in different situations (p. 225). In their study,
Phelan et al. (1991) found that these factors can contribute to how students transitions from one setting into the next, for example from home to the classroom. Their data illustrates that students who express that their friends and family hold the same values and beliefs, have a smooth transitions from one social setting to the next (p. 229). Ryan, one of the students in their study expressed that his parents are involved in his school community, communicate with teachers regularly, and allow Ryan to have his friends come over to the house often. For Ryan, his parents, teachers, and friends all know each other and have positive relationships, therefore he feels comfortable presenting his beliefs, values, and interests equally the same in each social setting (p. 230). Unlike Ryan, Trinh has learned to present herself differently to her family and friends. Her parents are not involved in her school community and do not allow her to invite friends over. A big part of why Trinh experiences two very different worlds at home and at school is because of her cultural background. Her Vietnamese parents have great confidence in the educational system, thus finding it unnecessary to insert themselves in the school community (p. 236). Furthermore, her parents view the household as not a place where friends ‘hang out,’ thus Trinh must arrange to meet up with her friends elsewhere (p. 237). Because her parents remain separate from her school and friends settings, Trinh recognizes that her daily transitions between family, peer, and school requires her to deliberately present different aspects of herself and hide others depending on the situation.

Although the data that Phelan et al. (1991) have collected presents an interesting and important aspect of adolescent life, they note that there is no conclusion regarding a correct or most effective way of helping your child transition from home to school. For
the parents of Ryan who have stable jobs that allow them ample free time, being involved in the school community is important because they too have gone through the same education system and are familiar with it. However, for Trinh’s parents, monitoring her school work at home is seen as more important than conversing with her teachers on a regular basis. This may be because her parents are unfamiliar with the school system that her daughter is a part of, but they are capable of setting academic rules and guidelines at home. Both Ryan and Trinh’s parents hold high values regarding education but they take different approaches to presents this value to their children. Therefore, Phelan et al. (1991) conclude that their work is helpful in allowing teachers to better understand that various ways parents hold and demonstrate values and beliefs and how they manifest in their students in the classroom setting.

It is important to recognize the multiple dimensions to parenting styles, such as specific practices and climates. However, for the purpose of this study, I will be focusing on parenting practices as it is more accessible for teachers to identify a common practice in a household as opposed to whether the student is exposed to a love-oriented climate or not.

*Authoritative Parenting*

The works of Spera (2005) and Phelan et al. (1991) emphasize the ambiguity of assigning a parenting styles in situations that do not follow the book definition of the four categories. However, the literature available in the field of parenting styles and their impacts on a child’s educational experience, argues that authoritative parenting produces the best results, particularly in a North American household. In conducting this research
in a specific North American setting, I have not attempted to prove or disprove that authoritative parenting fosters the most successful long term results. However, I have attempted to explore the visibility of the four different parenting styles to teachers based on the observations they are able to make.

A great amount of research done in this field, argues that authoritative parenting has shown to have the best impact on children’s academic performance. The results show higher grades, greater control over life, and strong emotional understanding (Kordi, 2010, p. 217). On the flip side, neglectful and authoritarian parenting has been linked with negative effects such as lower grades, lower self-esteem, and lack of casual attributions (Kordi, 2010, p. 219). In his research, Kordi (2010) has found that adolescents from authoritative families adapted achievement strategies which are characterized by low levels of failure expectations, task-irrelevant behavior and self-enhancing attributes. Unlike this, adolescents from neglectful families demonstrated high levels of task-irrelevant behaviour and a lack of self-enhancing attributions (p. 219).

Kordi (2010) concludes that authoritative parenting positively impacts the psychological maturity of a child, which will in turn influence how the child performs in school. He goes on to specify psychological maturity as being measured by the degree of self-reliance, work orientation (e.g. goal setting), and a child’s self-identity (e.g. self-esteem, and life goals). Kordi (2010) notes that the understanding of the benefits of parenting styles vary across cultures. For instance, he examines that in a North American setting, Chinese parents are sometimes described as “controlling” and “Authoritarian” (p. 219). Thus suggesting that lots of control is associated with an authoritarian parenting
styles, which as previously discussed, researchers identify as low in warmth and lacking negotiation.

While the authoritarian parenting style has shown to result in poor school achievements for Euro-American students, it appears to help Chinese students perform successfully in school. (Kordi, 2010, P.219). Therefore, I find Kordi’s work to be helpful for creating a foundation for my work, as culture does play an important role in how teachers are able to perceive the parenting practices that their students are exposed to at home. It should be noted that because this paper focuses on a specific multi-cultural area of the GTA, I will expect to see a variety of observable relationships between parenting styles and student behaviour, as culture does play a very big role in influencing these relationships.

Based on her findings, Kopko (2007) believes the authoritative parenting style to be optimal in a North American context. Her research concludes that this style provides a balance between affection and an appropriate amount of parental control in managing as well as fostering successful behaviour in adolescents (p. 3). Children raised in such a climate have opportunities to become self-reliant adolescents with a healthy sense of autonomy within a set of parental limits and guidelines.

In their work on effects of parenting styles, Brown and Iyengar (2008) distinguish the difference between behavioural control and psychological control in parenting, specifically in relation to the authoritative style. Behavioural control fosters development by providing the right amount of supervision, whereas psychological control inhibits development by an excess amount of control (p. 17). They go on to
explain that authoritative parenting provides a fair balance between the two by controlling in a way that promotes an independent, and well socialized behaviour. In contrast to this, authoritarian control and the lack of control in permissive parenting can deprive a child of opportunities to engage in proper and healthy interactions with other people (Brown & Iyengar, 2008, p. 18). After conducting their research on a diverse sample of high school students, Brown and Iyengar (2008) found that both authoritarian and permissive parenting styles were negatively associated with school achievements, and authoritative parenting resulted in positive educational outcomes (p. 18).

Furthermore, their findings reveal that adolescents with authoritative parents score highest on measures of psychological competence and lowest on behavioural dysfunction, and the reverse is evident for those with neglectful parents (Brown & Iyengar, 2008, p. 18). In addition, their work reveals that adolescents with authoritarian parents adapt well to the standards of adults but have less developed self-conceptions than their peers (Brown & Iyengar, 2008, p. 19). In contrast, adolescents from indulgent homes display a strong sense of self-confidence but report higher uses of substance abuse and are less engaged in school (Brown & Iyengar, 2008, p. 19). Brown and Iyengar (2008) conclude that there are three important components that lead to authoritative parenting producing a healthy psychological development and academic success. These three are parental warmth, behavioural supervision, and granting psychological autonomy (Brown & Iyengar, 2008, p. 19).

Although such research is a valuable tool in understanding the role of parenting, I find the literature on parental styles interesting and problematic at the same time. If these three components are needed for ensuring student success, then it is not the “authoritative
parenting style” that should be seen as the most desired one. But rather, it should be emphasised that finding a healthy balance between providing warmth, supervision, and autonomy will allow a student to flourish and have a more comfortable transition between the home and school environment. In addition, the findings of the work of Brown and Iyengar (2008) are a result of survey responses collected from adolescents themselves. Therefore, the experience, knowledge, and personal intentions and driving factors of the parents are not taken into consideration. Despite the limited viewpoints of the research of Brown and Iyengar (2008), it provides my study with the students’ perspectives to complement my findings which are from teachers’ viewpoints.

All of the factors discussed in this chapter: SES, educational background and gender are implicated in, and yet are distinct from, the possible influence of parenting styles. These intertwining influences make it all the more complicated and yet necessary to explore how teachers go about identifying the possible influences of parenting styles on student experience. It raises the possibility that teachers may be activating a perception that it is parenting, whereas SES or gender are more significant in shaping student engagement. In the same light, teachers may be acting out interpretations of student behaviours as a result of gender or educational background, when it may in fact be a manifestation of the influence of parenting styles. All of these various branches of influence found within the literature speak to the value of this study, which seeks to explicitly draw out how teachers identify and act upon perceived influences of parenting styles. The literature review has grounded this study in an appropriate context by examining various factors and examples. This study will go on to illustrate how, according to the data collected, teachers are able to observe relationships and patterns
between parenting practices and how their students behave in their classroom. This is intended to take a look at all that was covered in the literature review, but through the eyes of a teacher.
Chapter III
Methodology

This research study investigates the various ways teachers are able to not only perceive the influence of parental practices, but to also use the information in guiding their teaching approaches. As a qualitative study, it attempts to explore a range of perspectives that are shaped by a series of factors. This study has been conducted by first reviewing the literature available in the field, and second, interviewing teachers to collect current data. The findings are then analyzed to illustrate significant themes and implications of the study. The following chapter will outline the research processes involved as well as the limitations faced in the process of completing this study.

Instruments of Data Collection

Data for this study has been collected through face-to-face interviews with two intermediate and senior teachers. The interviews have provided this study with an inside look into the ways that teachers perceive the impacts of parenting within the classroom. Each interview was conducted in a private and quiet meeting location. The interviews lasted between 45 minutes to an hour, with a set of follow up questions via email. Each interview was tape-recorded with the participant’s consent, allowing me to analyse the data better later. The interview questions were framed as a conversation with my participants, allowing me to create a more comfortable and friendly atmosphere.

Both teacher participants had been my associate teachers during my practicum experiences and had a very professional relationship with me. This means that they did not answer my questions in a manner in which they believed would benefit me, but
rather, they honestly provided me with information regarding my topic. When interviewing my teacher participants, I did not make any attempts to conceal my study topic in any way, because I was asking for what they witnessed happening in their classrooms on a daily basis. If my participants happened to be parents I would make efforts to conceal the true agenda of my research as a parent may feel self conscious discussing their own parenting practices and its implications. From a teacher’s perspective, one of my intentions for this research is to help educators better understand how the actions and decisions of their students might be a result of the parenting practices they are exposed to at home. Therefore, sharing my intentions with my participants allowed me to receive their true and honest observations based on their teaching experiences. Most importantly, I have made assurance that both my participants were aware that their answers are confidential and that they are free to ask any questions for any clarifications or to better become familiar with my topic of study.

Participants

I met both my participants during my time as a student teacher in the two years that I have been at OISE. My first participant is a male grade eight teacher in a moderately sized public elementary school. My second participant is a female high school teacher in a public secondary school. During my time as a student teacher, I had chances to discuss my research topic with these two teachers who showed great interest and enthusiasm in sharing their insight with me. Their various involvements in their school communities has allowed them to be more in contact with parents and become aware of various family environments that their students have. In addition, both participants show great interest in learning more about the topic of my study and thus
they agreed that their participation in my study would be highly beneficial. Once the interview dates were set, I met my participants in locations most convenient to them and in return for their time and valuable contributions, I thanked them for their participation by buying them lunch.

**Ethical Review Procedures**

To ensure and maintain the privacy of my participants, I have kept all my correspondence during the meetings private. As stated previously, I provided each participant with a letter of consent, but also made sure to review it with them and clarify any questions they had regarding the procedure. I have made sure they know that they have the right to withdraw at any time. The participants have each been given pseudonyms to assure further anonymity. No other person besides myself will know the original names of my participants as well as the schools they are from. I have made sure to take all the necessary steps to be as ethical a researcher as possible. In addition to the steps taken, I made sure to ask my participant their expectations regarding their participation in the study. For example, whether they wish to read the finished product, or to have access to their interview transcripts. By taking into consideration the needs and wants of my participants, I have made the experience more comfortable and beneficial for them.

**Limitations**

A significant limitation to my study is the small number of participants interviewed for my data collection. The short two year period of time designated to complete my study has not allowed me to explore the topic deeply, thus leaving me with
the option of narrowing my focus to only a very specific area and two participants. The reliability of my research is constrained since I did not interview any students or focus groups, or performed any other form of data collection such as using surveys or questionnaires. Additionally, it was very difficult to identify patterns between unseen influences (i.e. parental practices and student experiences). Individual perceptions are subjective, thus making it harder for the findings of this study to have narrowed down themes. Despite the very narrow lens that I explored this topic with, it is still able to provide insightful information for beginning teachers who are still looking for tools to help them understand the home life of their students more in detail.
Chapter IV
Findings

Introduction

This section covers background information about my two participants, their roles in this study, and the main themes that have emerged out of the data collected. The data for this study was collected through conducting interviews with an intermediate teacher and a high school teacher, both in the same public school board in GTA. To maintain their anonymity, the participants will be referred to by pseudonyms in this study.

James has been an intermediate teacher for 10 years, with math and physical education as his teachable subjects. He has been living in the community that he teaches in for many years, therefore he is very familiar with the cultures and families of his students. As a basketball coach, James is also very involved in extra-curricular activities in the school. Not only does he run both the girls’ and boys’ basketball teams, he also supervises the chess, volleyball and badminton teams. James is always in contact with other teachers at the school regarding his homeroom students as well as the students he coaches. He is very proactive in learning how his students balance sports and academics and also how they are succeeding or facing challenges in another teacher’s class. James’ regular communication with both parents and his colleagues allows him to make more accurate observations regarding how various parenting practices can influence the actions of a student at school.

Victoria has been an English and Spanish teacher for 28 years at the high school level. Similar to James, Victoria also lives in the community that she teaches in. Because of the high number of students with IEPs present at the school, Victoria is in contact with parents, searching to find ways to better the students’ lives in her class by building a
team with the parents. Her constant and regular communication with parents provides her with a better understanding of the various parenting styles and practices her students are exposed to at home. These practices give her a very important means to help observe the ways parenting practices might help or hinder a student’s educational experience at school.

Based on the information I collected from my two participants, I organized my findings into four categories with subsequent sub-categories. The categories are based on sources of influence that impact relationships between parents and teachers.

1. Teaching practices to observe parenting practices
   • Communicating with parents
   • Using knowledge of a family to teach a student

2. Situational barriers. These are barriers that limit parental connection to schools.
   • School system as barrier
   • Cultural barriers
   • SES barriers
   • Parents as barriers

3. Teacher perspectives on the presence and influence of parenting practices.
   • Understanding parenting styles and practices
   • Observable relationships between parenting practices and students’ actions in school

4. Relationships that influence teacher perspectives
   • Parent-teacher relationships
   • Parent-student relationships

Imbedded within these categories are the foundational topics discussed in the literature view, such as the four parenting styles and how observable their impacts and influences are to teachers. The theoretical framework of social constructivism presents itself clearly in my findings as my participants illustrate the variety of patterns present in parent-teacher and parent-student relationships. The findings also demonstrate that these
relationships are shaped and influenced by outside factors and personal experiences, thus making each example unique.

**Teaching Practices**

This theme includes specific actions and strategies used by my two participants, who first get to know the families of their students, and then use that information to develop teaching strategies for better reaching all the learners in the class. In order to understand how these two teachers come to observe barriers, relationships, and possible impacts of parenting practices, it is helpful to first discuss how they gather their information about the home life of their students.

At the beginning of the school year, James likes to get to know both his students and the parents. He sends out a survey home for parents to fill out about what they think their child’s needs, interests, and challenges are in school. The survey also asks what language(s) the parents speak, what time is best to contact them, and who might be able to help the child with school work at home. He also asks his students to fill out a similar survey in class so he can compare the two and observe if parents have a similar understanding of what their child is like when he or she is away at school. In addition to this, James likes to start the academic year with a unit called “all about me,” where students get the opportunity to share information about themselves as well as their home life.

Like James, Victoria also asks her students to fill out a survey for her, but her questions are different as her students are older. Her survey lets her know if her students have part time jobs, what parent or guardian they wish the teacher to contact, and also what their interests and needs are at school. More importantly, Victoria gets to know her
students and their home life during teaching moments. As she describes, “you can be talking about something related to a theme of a text, like Romeo and Juliet for example, where relationships with parents is a big theme. This can get the class talking about home life, if they also relate to the characters or not.” Victoria notes that it is easier to have such class discussions in an English class where there are always lots of characters to talk about or relate to in any form of written work they are learning about. In addition, Victoria engages in a lot of what she refers to as “redirecting behaviour.” For example when her a student is often late to class, she may ask “Do your parents know that you come late all the time?” or “Did you miss your bus or your ride?” This way Victoria can better understand how the student views the involvement of his or her parents. Although this can be regarded as only a surface impression of the parenting practices the student is exposed to at home, it is nonetheless a good beginner step for understanding the relationship the student has with his or her parent(s). It is important to note that neither Victoria or any other teacher can use this practice as means to learn about the home as student answers can be subjective. However, as a teacher, Victoria’s method of “redirecting behaviour” is good practice in demonstrating to the student that you are invested in learning about their lives in order to help them succeed in school. Along with all these strategies employed by the two teachers, parent-teacher nights at the beginning of the year or semester is also a great opportunity for James and Victoria to learn about the home environments of their students.

Using what they know about the parents of their students, Victoria and James approach certain matters differently for each student. For instance when James observes that certain parents are not home enough, due to factors such as work hours, or that they
might not be able to afford to enrol their kids in sport teams outside the school, he works harder to make himself available to these students during school time. For instance he makes sure these students are aware that James is around before and after school, as well as during lunch times so they can seek his help. He also encourages them to find an extra-curricular interest and pursue it, such as trying out for sport teams or joining the chess team. James also emphasis that sometimes communication with parents is needed to let them know how their child is like at school, because often times the student shows a different side of them outside of the home and parents are not aware of that. James has witnessed parents expressing their desire for their children to only focus on the academics and not be involved with extra curricular clubs and sport teams. However, he also observes that some of these kids are very interested and very good at a certain sport or a form of art, thus communicating that with parents is important.

James: A lot of these kids are not allowed to do things at school because their parents won’t let them. Because there’s no time to do extra curricular, so then they get sad, they come to school sad because their friends are all participating in extra curricular, but their job is just to focus on math and they go home and do their homework. As a teacher I think it’s important that we talk to these parents face to face, and let them know what their child is like at school, and know that their child is very artistic or athletic, because parents don’t see that at school, especially if they’re not interacting with their children and asking them how their day was.
The approach that James takes is to make sure parents are aware of how their children perform in all areas in school, so parents at home can better help the students meet their needs in order to be successful.

Like James, Victoria finds it important for the home life and the school life to meet the same needs and interests of the students in order to foster positive educational experiences. She emphasises the importance of contacting parents as early as possible to get a better insight into the home life. If you develop an understanding of the home environment early, you might have an easier time understating why a parent does not respond back or why a student is always late to class. A key tool for Victoria is communication with her colleagues. She notes that other teachers who have had a student of hers or their siblings in the past can help her learn more about the parents and their approach to parenting. As other teachers may have previously communicated with a parent they can let Victoria know if for example a parent prefers phone calls instead of emails, or if a parent works nights so she should not call early in the morning. These tips may be small but they play an important role in helping effective communication to happen between the teacher and the parent.

This theme is important in providing evidence for the purpose of my study, as the existing literature regarding this topic has proven to be lacking teacher perspectives and approaches. Therefore my participants’ specific practices and approaches to identify possible parental influence is important input for learning more about how teachers base their perspective upon.
Situational Barriers

This theme explores the circumstances that can hinder a teacher’s ability in finding out more about the home environment of their students and to maintain regular and effective communication with parents. As explored in the literature review, there are factors such as family SES that influence parenting decisions. The data collected for this study illustrates that these factors can also play a role in presenting a barrier to the ways that parents are connected to the school community, and more specifically the teacher. It is important to explore this theme because it has the potential to help educators understand how their actions contribute in the creation and/or perpetuating the barrier.

Both James and Victoria have expressed that there are factors outside the control of the teachers’ that limit or prohibit effective communication with parents. These barriers make it challenging for teachers, such as James and Victoria, to learn more about their students’ home environments and the various roles parents play in their children’s educational life. The two teachers identify the school board’s classroom size regulations as problematic when attempting to make phone calls home regarding either positive or negative actions. Victoria believes that effective communication starts with teachers making themselves available to talk, and this can be demonstrate by reaching out to parents regarding their child’s positive accomplishments. Positive phone call, emails, and face to face meetings allow for a relationship to be established between the teacher and the parent so if the student ever does face challenges in the class, it will be easy for the teacher to reach out and inform the parent and ask for their guidance at home. Although this is an ideal route for building positive parent-teacher relationships, both James and Victoria face difficulty finding time to make positive phone calls out every week for 90
students. As Victoria expresses, “rarely do we reach out to a parent to say ‘you’ve got an amazing kid’ because at the end of the day with the volume of the kids we chose to contact those that need our attention the most.” A full time high school teacher in a GTA board teaches three sections a semester, each section having 30 students. In addition there are quite a few teachers who also teach night school in order to support their families. Thus, the large classroom sizes makes it hard for teachers to effectively reach out to parents regularly.

As James does live and teach in a culturally diverse community he is aware of the barriers that culture can present when communicating with parents. For one, language barriers at times make communication impossible. James expresses that due to the large immigrant population at his school, often times he relies on the student to translate for the parent. However, this can be tricky because the student may choose to translate differently if he or she is not in the favour of what the teacher is saying. In addition, the large number of ELL population also means that the students themselves may not fully understand what the teacher wants to communicate therefore they are unable to translate effectively. This leads to James always being in search of neutral school board translators who can help him communicate with parents.

The cultural barrier that both James and Victoria find themselves struggling with is the parents’ unfamiliarity with the school system. Even when language may not be a barrier, many of the parents have not gone to school in Canada, therefore they are unfamiliar with the curriculum and school system of Ontario. Homework habits are an important part of James’ grade 7 and 8 students’ daily routines. He always checks that the students record in their agendas what they must complete at home, which is also an
effective way for parents to monitor their children’s work and topics being taught in class. However, James notices that many of the parents discard or do not put emphasis on homework for subjects such as English, History, and Geography, because they did not study the same content. James has discovered this. As he has observed, “a lot of these parents don’t know how to help their child because they didn’t study the same curriculum and don’t know the answers to the questions.” James’ perceived impact of parenting practices influences his teaching practice in regards to homework. James’ presumption is that helping children with homework is a positive parenting practice. However, he has noticed that because many parents are unfamiliar with the curriculum, students may have a harder time when they ask their parents for help with homework at home. Therefore, he understands that he cannot assign homework that may require the student to ask for help from parents. For instance, instead of encouraging his students to have their writing edited by a family member, he sets aside in class time for peer editing. In addition James and Victoria express that they perceive that some parents may not get back to their emails or phone calls because there is a possibility that they are not familiar with the school system and can feel uncomfortable discussing content related matters.

Unfamiliarity with school curriculum is not the only reasons why parents may feel reluctant to communicate with parents. Often times the social economic status of a family can alter how parents choose to communicate with teachers. This may not be a barrier related to culture or school related regulations such as classroom size. However, social economic status can be a barrier for both parents and teachers attempting to communicate with one another. James and Victoria have observed that families with a lower social economic status or separated parents tend to work longer hours, therefore making it
harder to reach them. Further emphasizing this, James states, “[these] parents are tired when they get home so they’re more focused on themselves so it’s hard for them to return phone calls and emails.” In addition to this, James has observed that sometimes such parents may feel embarrassed that they do not know much about what their child is studying in school, thus they may avoid frequent communication with teachers.

As explored in the literature review, the works of Redford et al. (2009) illustrate that parents of middle and upper class are more likely to have the time, money, and knowledge to be able to play a more involved role in the school life of their children. This means that they are able to participate in frequent conferences with teachers and volunteer opportunities at school such as being a part of parent council. As the authors discover, this involvement in school activities gives parents confidence and “a sense of entitlement” when it comes to approaching educators regarding their children’s educational experience, be it academic or extra curricular life. Additionally, the works of Gonzalez and Jackson (2013) suggest that schools are not doing enough in bridging the gap between parent-teacher communication for lower SES families. They argue that schools often cater to the majority which happens to be middle class. This means that the school standards and language used around instruction and assessment is presented in a manner that middle and upper class families are familiar and comfortable with. James notes that inviting parents to help co-create a culminating activity may not be welcoming to those who are unfamiliar with the curriculum and specific terminology, therefore segregating a group of parents. This can cause a barrier in developing positive parent-teacher relationships. As Gonzalez and Jackson suggest, to be accommodating for parents, schools need to better recognize their community to be able to provide
opportunities for parents with various SES to feel included and heard. As James has observed, the parents’ unfamiliarity with what their child is studying in school can make them uncomfortable discussing it with the teacher. There needs to be a way for the school to reach these parents and provide them information, which will make them more comfortable in communicating with teachers. James also notes that parents of lower SES work longer hours, thus struggling to find time for helping their child with his or her homework, as well as participating in school activities appropriate for parents. It helps for teachers to be aware of the variety of family dynamics their students have, so they can appropriately approach any educational challenges the students may be facing.

Unlike James, Victoria cannot speak regarding lower SES as a factor because she teaches in an area where her students come from families of very high SES. She does however express how much more comfortable the parents are when it comes to approaching teachers and administration. Victoria further explains that the parents have no problem putting aside a couple of hours during the day to attend a meeting with the teacher and an administrator, addressing their questions and/or concerns regarding a test, assignment, or a mark their son or daughter has received. Although in their experiences, James and Victoria speak about parents of different SES, their answers complement one another in illustrating that the literature reviewed for this study is in fact reflective of the real world. The SES of a family does influence their ability or inability to be involved in their children’s school community. Additionally, as demonstrated by both the literature and my findings, schools play an important role through the comfortable environment they provide for parents.
In order for teachers to develop a better understanding of the parenting practices their students are exposed to at home, on-going communication needs to take place. However, as both James and Victoria have experienced, in certain cases the parents themselves are the reason why communication is minimal or non existent. There are times that a student may be struggling with the content of the course, being disruptive in class, or presenting any form of concern for the teacher to contact home. However, as James and Victoria describe, there are parents that never get back to the teachers or may express that they are not in an agreement with the teacher regarding the matter being discussed. For example, during parent-teacher interviews James had mentioned to a parent that his son was doing well in gym class and they should try out for the basketball team. However, this parent viewed sports as a bad use of time, therefore being concerned that as a teacher, James might put extra emphasis on extra-curricular rather than the academics. In this example, this particular parent will only sometimes respond to James’ emails and phone calls if it is relating to the student’s progress or challenges in his core academic subjects. As James has experienced, such parents can make regular communication difficult as they are not interested in discussing every aspect of their child’s experience at school.

In Victoria’s case, she explains her habit of sending newsletters regarding assignments coming up in her classes, thus making sure the parents are aware of what their children are to be working on at home and in class. Immediately after the due date of an assignment Victoria emails the parent of a student who did not hand in her assignment despite conferencing with Victoria in which she showed her progress. After two weeks of emailing home and making a phone call and asking the student for her
assignment, the parent finally replied and said that their child needs more time to work on the assignment. As most teachers would express, providing a student with more time is not a problem. However, the fact that the parent took so long to respond and did not reach out to Victoria earlier to express that there might be a family, personal, or other reason that may prevent the student from completing a task, is problematic. As both James and Victoria have experienced, always reaching out to parents and keeping them informed will not lead to a successful relationship because there will be parents who refuse or may feel uncomfortable letting the teacher in on what is happening at home. Both teachers do recognize that personal choices should be respected and that what they may consider effective and on-going communication, a parent may view as unnecessary. Thus, with that in mind James and Victoria always reach out to parents first at the beginning of a year or a semester, and they give the parents the freedom to choose how often and in what methods they prefer to keep in touch.

The patterns identified in this theme are relevant in a teacher’s understanding of how their perceptions of parenting practices and their influences are shaped. Factors such as the school’s lack of attempt in be inclusive of all parents is something that neither the teacher nor the parents has been a part of. But teachers should become aware of the existence of such factors in order to make more informed observations and work towards making a chance.

**Teacher Perspectives**

This theme explores the ways in which the observed patterns and perspectives of my participants align with the literature or present completely new views.
I explained to James and Victoria that many researchers discuss parenting styles in four main categories: authoritative authoritarian, permissive, and rejecting/neglecting. Upon describing the characteristics of each parenting style, the two teachers were able to recall the ways that their observations of parenting practices either align or denounce aspects of these four styles. They then discussed any patterns that are observable to them as teachers when thinking of the impacts and influences that parenting practices have on students’ experiences in school.

James has observed that many of his students’ parents take the authoritative approach which he views as having both positive and negative consequences. In James’ experience, these parents are always on board when it comes to communication and are always monitoring their children’s work at home and making themselves available to help the students when they need the extra help. However, James has observed that this style of parenting at the crucial age of thirteen and fourteen may not be always beneficial because the students are starting to become more independent but the parents do not foster the skills needed for that to happen. The students with authoritative parents are always seeking to achieve the marks their parents approve of, and they engage in school teams and clubs that their parents deem acceptable. Although these parents are always there to help and guide their children, as well as always communicating with teachers, James observes that these students tend not to be risk-takers and depend on their parents to make decisions for them. The following quote is of James discussing his observations regarding how authoritative parenting influences the decision making of his students.

James: they’re [the students] always wanting to make sure their parents approve of it before they’re happy with it. I find that sometimes with that
approach, kids tend to be less independent, because then they’re always worried about what their parents will think. At the school I’m at right now, it’s difficult because a lot of these students set goals but their goals are based on their parents’ goals.

James has noticed that the goals for many parents of his students is for their son or daughter to achieve high marks, and when that does not happen both the student and the parent feel as if they have failed. The student is discouraged as they have not fulfilled the goal their parent has set and the parents themselves feel as if they have not done enough to help their child, such as hire a tutor for them. It is important to note that James has observed this result of researcher may classify as authoritative parenting, only in his Grades 7 and 8 students in the particular geographical area of the GTA that he teaches in. The same may not be said for other schools or high school students.

Based on the categories research provides, James has seen a range of the four parenting styles but the authoritative parents are what he most commonly sees come through his school. The work of Kordi (2010) as explored in chapter two, supports that authoritative parenting is beneficial for psychological maturity which includes self-esteem and appropriate goal setting. It is interesting to see that James has observed this correlation, however with a different insider point of view. Although he recognizes that authoritative parenting has made their students goal oriented in terms of their academic accomplishments, he notes that the goals are a reflection of the parents rather than the individual student. It is also important to note that Kordi (2010) emphasizes the importance of culture in how authoritative parenting plays out. As he explores, Chinese students benefit from the structure of authoritative parenting and it allows them to
perform well in school, whereas North American students prefer more personal decision making on their part, thus may not respond well to parents making choices for them. James has observed that culture does play a big factor in his Chinese students and their approaches to education, therefore confirming Kordi’s predictions of how authoritative parenting can vary between Chinese and North American students.

Although Victoria has also seen all four parenting styles in the parents of her students over her years of teaching, she notes that authoritarian and permissive are the two parenting styles that are prevalent in her school community. Victoria also notes that it is harder to get to know the parenting styles of the parents of her Grade 11s and 12s as the students are becoming more independent and less communication is made with the parents. She feels that it is easier to understand the parenting styles and practices of her Grade 9 and 10 students because parents are more involved in their child’s educational life as the students are still adjusting to the change from elementary school to high school. Victoria sees the most of the permissive parenting practices as she mainly teaches grade 12 courses. She observes that the parents of her students have very few rules in regards to homework completion and punctuality. Victoria has observed that the parents of her students tend to drive them to school when they sleep in rather then enforce the importance of waking up on time for school. This is also an indication that Victoria’s students come from families of high SES; the parents have the time and means to drive their children to school during the day. Although Victoria expresses that it is always good to know your students have family members able to aid them, she’s noticed that helping students, particularly at the senior level, is not beneficial as they struggle to learn self-regulation skills and take ownership of their actions. Upon communicating to parents
regarding matters such as punctuality and responsibility, Victoria has noticed that most of the parents view themselves as resources for their children and make themselves available to help, but not to necessarily enforce skills that students will benefit from. The work of Brown and Iyengar (2008) show that permissive parenting practices are negatively associated with school achievements. Negative outcomes could be anything from students missing too many classes or failing to complete assignments and tasks in a timely manner. Victoria believes that although permissive parenting has negative implication, it does not determine whether a student can achieve high marks or not. However, she finds that the students are not gaining skills that will allow them to succeed in post secondary schooling and future careers. She explains that despite the permissive parenting, her students are still able to do well in school only because of the lenient structure of the system. If the student were in a more strict university setting, the teacher would not be so accommodating which can then result in poor academic achievements will little opportunity to re-do assignments and tests. Therefore, she argues that permissive parenting has negative consequences more so in the long run rather than the student’s present school life.

James and Victoria have seen a range of practices that can resemble the four parenting practices amongst the students they have taught, but they both agree that they do not prefer one over the other. They express that family circumstances and student interests and personalities shape parenting practices. Although they do see some actions of the parents as not fostering positive and successful school habits for the students, they agree that the results of parenting they observe in a classroom may not be visible to parents at home. As James states, “as their teacher, it is important for us to accept and
respect each family’s parenting approaches and to do our part to ensure that each and every one of our students receive a quality education.”

*Relationships that Influence Teacher Perspectives*

This theme discusses the relationships that James and Victoria find important and crucial in their understandings of patterns amongst at home practices and in school experiences. The relationship that the teacher has with the parents is important in how they come to learn about the home environment and its possible influences on the student. Similarly, the relationship that the student has with his or her parent(s) is also a factor in how the teacher learns about the home environment.

For teachers to gain insight into the parenting practices their students are exposed to, regular communication and positive parent-teacher relations are very important. In addition, it is also helpful for teachers to have an understanding of relationship parents have with the students outside the school. Victoria refers to the parent-teacher relationship as a “team.” She believes that the teacher and the parent are a team of adults with insight and experience that will help the student succeed. She makes her intentions very clear when communicating with parents. Victoria expresses that she is there to help and could also use the help of the parents. Students spend half their time at school and the other half at home, and neither the parents or the teachers are aware of what goes on when the student is not with them, unless regular communication is made. She states, “when you’re a team and the student starts to improve on things you make suggestions for, then communication keeps getting better with the parents after that.”

As important as this relationship may be, Victoria also knows that at the crucial age of 17 and 18, getting to know the relationship between the student and the parent is
just as important. Often times, students prefer the teacher to contact one parent over the other, or to email instead of call. Therefore Victoria always tries to take into consideration the student’s comfort level when reaching out to their parents. She also notes that teenagers may not want to express their desire for the teacher to make positive phone calls home as they may appear “uncool.” She concludes, “they pretend that they don’t want you to contact their parents, but a part of them sometimes doesn’t mind it.” For James, the method of communicating is just as important as how often it is being made. It is very common for elementary school teachers to send home notes in students’ agendas for the parents to read. However, James feels this may not always be effective as some parents do not check agendas, the student may forget to the parent, or in the case of James’ students, some parents cannot read English. Because many of the parents at James’ school drop their children off and pick them up after school, he feels that welcoming them to stop by his class is the first step to creating effective parent-teacher relationships. When parents stop by at the beginning or end of the school day, James is able to talk to them face to face about how their child is succeeding and what they may need help with. In addition, James can show them the works of the students as they are available in the classroom.

This theme aligns in many ways with the work of Phelan et al. (1991), who examine that when a student’s home, school, and peer relationships all share the same set of values and educational focus, the student is able to perform successfully. My findings also illustrate that when James and Victoria are able to communicate more effectively and regularly with parents, they are able to understand what a parent desire for their child and the parent can understand what the teacher’s teaching approaches are. This exchange
of information leads to a higher chance that the student can transfer the same set of skills between home and school as the parents and teacher are working together to meet the needs and interests of the student. As previously discussed, factors such as cultural knowledge and values do play a role in this relationship. However, the more the teacher learns about the home life, the more informed observations they are able to make about how their student is approaching educational and how they can help him or her reach their goals.

**Conclusion**

The experiences of James and Victoria has provided this study with an insight into how teachers are able to use the information available and presented to them to make observational regarding parenting practices. These observations then influence the ways teachers perceive the results of certain practices, which in turn impact how the teacher approaches his or her own teaching practices. Although between James and Victoria, we are able to learn about a variety of observations and teacher perceptions into this topic, there are still a great range of other practices and other influences present. James and Victoria’s observations are specific to their school community and their teaching practices are tailored towards the needs of their students only, thus my findings are situated through a small lens.

However, the findings shed light on the great range of parenting practices present and how important it is for teachers to be aware of the home environments of their students in order to build better parent-teacher relationships, which in turn will help the student be successful. The data collected from the interviews neither prove nor disregard the findings found in previous research on this topic. But rather, the information collected
for this study illustrates that they are various factors that can alter the outcome of a
certain parenting practices, thus demonstrating the importance of not generalizing. For
example, one student may need the constant aid from parents in order to stay focused on
task and manage time accordingly, whereas another student does not need this help as he
or she is an effective at time management. Thus it would be harmful for a teacher to
assume that strict parental control is needed for all students in order for them to complete
assignments on time.

The research available in this field is a good foundation for understanding how
teaches are influenced in their perceptions of parenting practices in relation to the way it
influences their students. It is necessary for educators to be open-minded and to approach
each student’s home environment as unique to them.
Chapter V
Discussion

Introduction

In this chapter I take a second look at the research questions in comparison with the findings to better understand the implications of this study. The four main themes derived from the findings are examined in detail below to analyze how they help answer the main and sub-questions of this study. The chapter then ends with a discussion of the limitations and possible opportunities for further research in this field.

Research question: what relationships can teachers identify between parenting practices and students educational experience at school?

Sub-questions: what practices are employed by teachers to allow them to gain information about the parenting practices their students are exposed to at home?

How does gaining knowledge of the parenting practices that a set of students are exposed to, inform and guide the teacher’s approach to teaching those particular students?

Although my findings have shown that teachers are able to observe various patterns, they also illustrate that these patterns are very much so dependent on the culture, social economic status, and educational experiences of the families the students comes from. The data collected from the interviews have illustrated to be very practical, thus providing valuable insights for the sub-questions of this study. The experiences and teaching strategies of my participates illustrate real life examples of how teachers can
better reach all learners in a class by establishing positive parent-teacher relationships and using it to help teach students more effectively.

**Teaching Practices**

This theme provides answers for my main and sub-questions, but more so with a very practical lens. The teaching experiences that my participants shared with me allow me to better understand how they went about gathering information to help them make observations of the ways parenting practices may manifest in their classrooms. In addition, their practices provide this study with beneficial guidance and advice for new teachers. I intend for this study to uncover some facts and realities about teacher perceptions of parenting practices, which in turn has hopefully been even a small bit of help for new teachers trying to learn about different views on this topic. My participants also describe the positive results that were brought on by their practices and teaching strategies in getting to know the home lives of their students. I am very appreciative of their willingness to admit that their practices are not always effective. This further illustrates the complex world of parent-teacher relationships and that even an experienced teacher will continue to learn about parenting practices for as long as they are teaching.

**Situational Barriers**

The barriers that James and Victoria face illustrate that observable patterns between parenting and student experiences are dictated by a set of circumstances that can put limits on how much the teachers learn about the parents. These barriers can be brought on by the parents themselves, such as choosing not to communicate, or by rules structural factors, such as required classroom sizes. Whatever the barrier may be, it is demonstrated to be unique to the teacher and the parents of his or her students, as well as
the environment in which they are in. The theme of barriers that came out of the data proved to be important in better understating parent-teacher relationships, but it did not entirely answer the main or sub research questions of this study. But rather, it provided me with a reason why my research question needs a more extended study to learn more regarding this topic.

Additionally, the study also raises the question about what is knowable, despite the fact that teachers will continue to act on partial knowledge. That is, teachers draw inferences about the influence of parenting practices on student experience in schooling. To ignore these influences would be to turn our backs on potentially very significant factor influencing student behaviour and achievement. At the same time, the results of this study display that the ability for teachers to reliably identify and assess the influence of parenting practices is always impacted by a range of barriers that can limit this capacity.

**Teacher Perspectives**

This theme is one that really provides solid answers for my main research question. It presents the patterns my participants are able to observe from their perspective, which is shaped by the area they teach in, and the values and experiences their students bring with them to class. As the researcher, I had to provide my participants with additional information, in order for them to relate their observations to already found results. I provided them with the names of the four parenting styles that many researchers categorize practices into, along with some of the characteristics and long time results of these styles. Using their years of experience in interacting with parents, the two teachers
were able to align their observations with what research claims about the influence of various parenting styles.

Prior to collecting data, the literature review provided me with a basic understating of the correlations parenting practices and student experience can have. However, the data collected has given me concrete examples of how these correlations can differ to the teacher and the parents. In addition, in their answers, my participants have illustrated that although you are able to generalize a set of practices into possible examples of perceived parenting styles, as dictated by literature, such as permissive or authoritarian, there is almost never a clear example of how these four parenting styles may manifest and be visibly evident to the teachers. Therefore, what the data shows is that one parent’s presumed authoritarian approach may look different than another parent’s authoritarian approach. This is perfectly acceptable as my theoretical framework of social constructivism aims to explore the complexity and variety of views to one idea or concept. Knowing that this was how I was approaching my study, I do actually find it reassuring to see that my participants were able to identify that the patterns they observed were specific to their student(s). This means that these two teachers did not intend to make generalized assumptions regarding how parents influence the educational experience of their children. Thus, not only have my participants answered my research question by sharing their range of observations, their answers also indicate the need for further study in better understanding a relationship as complex and unique as one that is between the parent, child, and teacher. Despite its need for further in depth research, this study is able to illustrate how important it can be when teachers are aware of how their perspectives are influenced and how to go about making more informed observations.
Relationships that Influence Teacher Perspectives

This theme reveals the important skill that teachers need in order to identify patterns between parenting practices and student experience. This skill is effectively understanding and navigating relationships and social structures. Understanding the relationship between parents and students, as well as building positive relationships with both the students and the parents can aid the teacher in making more positive inferences regarding how they can use their observations to teach students.

Without establishing and understanding these relationships, a teacher cannot make very informed observations regarding how the possible parenting practices the student is exposed to can impact his or her learning, social interactions, and achievements in school. My participants prove that it is not easy work to build positive relationships with families, as it requires the cooperation of parents and teachers and regular communication between the two. However, they express that once you establish successful relationships with parents, they become a new source of support and guidance to help you better reach the needs and interests of the students. This theme answers my first sub-question by illustrating the most important skill that allows teachers to know the students’ home life a little better in order to help accommodate or modify in anyway that would be beneficial for them in a classroom setting.

Implications and/or Recommendations

This section describes how we can use the findings of this study to help teachers move forward in establishing positive relationships with parents. These recommendations are for teachers as well as the institution of education itself in helping limit the barriers that prevent us from exploring this topic more effectively.
Increased Training

It is has been proven to educators that when parents and teachers work together and maintain effective communication, they are able to help each other make the student’s educational experience a successful and positive one. However, the existing research confirms with the data collected for this study to indicate that certain factors can make it difficult for teachers to make connections with the parents and use them as a resource to help students at school. Although not every teacher will be able to make a perfect team with the parents of every single student they have, they can still attempt to respond in a manner that is according to what the family needs.

As my participants discuss, parenting styles cannot be generalized as they appear in a variety of forms depending on the cultural influences, experiences, and prior knowledge of the family. Therefore, I believe schools would benefit by providing teachers with professional development opportunities that informs them on various parenting practices and beliefs that different cultures bring with them. A more general approach would be to also provide teachers with resources and tools that aid them in establishing positive communications with parents and how to respond to the questions, comments and concerns that parents may raise. Teachers should not be alone when trying to navigate an effective relationship with parents and to learn more about their needs and interests for their children’s education. With more support and guidance, teachers can better understand various parenting practice and become more comfortable in using that information to help meet the needs of all learners in a classroom.
Flexible

This is a quality that teachers should work on when getting to know the families of their students and the parents’ approaches to parenting. As teachers we all hold certain beliefs and values regarding parenting practices. These values and beliefs are shaped and influenced by the families we grew up in, our culture, our experiences and understandings of education. Therefore, it is crucial that we understand our students have their own values and beliefs regarding education. For us to limit our biased opinions and ideas, we must make ourselves available to learn about the factors that influence each student’s understanding and view of education. This will allow us to more effectively approach each parenting style that we observe manifesting in our classrooms.

Additionally, one needs to also become flexible in regards to what is thought to be observed and what still remains unknown. As discussed in the previous chapter, a range of barriers and factors contribute to how much a teacher can actually learn about the parenting practices of a family. Therefore being flexible to the wide combination of possible parenting practices and their influence on students can be helpful gaining more knowledge in this topic.

Increased opportunity for inclusion

As discussed in previous chapters, there needs to be more opportunities for parents of all cultures and socioeconomic status backgrounds to become involved in the school community. Schools need to move away from presenting information and events to cater to the majority, but rather alternatives should be provided to help those new or unfamiliar with the school system share their thoughts and opinions. When parents feel welcomed and accepted as part of the school community, they become more comfortable
in informing the teacher about their home life, which can in turn create a positive relationship from which the students will thrive. The more approachable the school language, staff, and opportunities are, the more parents will be willing to work as a team with teachers.

**Further Study**

As outlined in chapter three, the biggest limitations of this study are time and access. If I had more time to complete this study, I would interview more teachers in addition to parents and students to get a range of perspectives. However, the two year time limit put on this research has allowed me to collect data from a small selection of sources. In addition to time, the restraints put on participant selection have prevented me from interviewing parents and students. For the study to be more applicable as well as practical, it needs the viewpoints of parents and student who are approaching the end of their school education. Limited access also meant that I was able to only interview teachers available in my area. Having the chance to expand this study by interviewing teachers in surrounding towns and within the city of Toronto itself would provide multiple perspectives. This can be helpful to see how big of a role geography plays in a study such as this one. By collecting data from teachers of various boards in and around Toronto, we would be able to develop a more accurate understanding of the influences of parenting practices. I believe further research and data collection will help expand this study into one that can be used as a foundational reference for teachers, particularly those new to the profession.
Conclusion

Conducting this study has allowed me to become more informed regarding my position as a teacher in the relationships I make with the parents of my students. It has given me an inside look into how I can aim to establish positive relationships in my school community which will then help me find strategies and approaches to reach all the learners in my classroom. Having the opportunity to explore this topic in a qualitative research study has been helpful in expanding my skills and practices as a researcher. Although much more remains to be discovered about this topic, I am pleased with the answers my data has provided, as it is valuable and practical information my colleagues and I can use to better our practice.
References


Appendices

Appendix A: Letter of Consent for Interview

Dear: _______________________

I am a graduate student at OISE, University of Toronto, and am currently enrolled as a Master of Teaching Candidate. For the purpose of exploring an educational topic to fulfill my Master research project requirement, I am looking at the impacts of various parenting styles and practices on the educational experience of adolescent students. As previously discussed, your knowledge, expertise, and experience in the field of teaching will provide me with informative insights into this topic.

In order for me to conduct this research, I request your permission for the following:

To conduct a face to face interview that will take between 45 minutes to an hour. The interview will take place at a quiet meeting place such as an empty room or office in the school, or any other place like such most convenient to you.

I will write a report on this study to be submitted as my research paper to my supervisor. Transcripts of the recording made of the interview will be available to you to read, if you wish to do so.

Confidentiality: the information provided to me via our interview will be used for my research project, as well as in informal presentations to my classmates and/or at a
research conference. I will not use your name or any other information that may identify you, such as the name of your school, colleagues, or students. The information will remain confidential.

Right to withdraw: you may decide to withdraw from the study at any time. There are no known risks to you for assisting me in this study, and I will share with you a copy of my notes to ensure accuracy.

Please sign the attached forms, if you agree to the interview. Keep one copy for yourself and return one signed copy to me.

Your assistance is much appreciated
Yours Sincerely,
Kiana Ghaznavi
647-213-5416
kiana.ghaznavi@mail.utoronto.ca
Research Supervisor: David Montemurro

I acknowledge that the topic of this interview has been explained to me, and that any further questions that I have asked have been answered clearly. I also understand that I can withdraw at any time without any form of penalty.

I have read the letter provided to me by Kiana Ghaznavi and agree to participate in this study in the manner and for the purpose described.

Signature__________________________________

Name (Printed)________________________________

Date________________________________________
Appendix B
Interview questions

Statement of Intent:

During the course of this interview, I will be asking you questions regarding the impact of various parenting styles and practices on student experience at school. I am looking to discover if teachers are able to observe any patterns on how students perform at school based on the practices they are exposed to at home. Do you have any questions before we begin?

Research Questions:

1. What relationships can teachers identify between parenting practices and students’ educational experience at school?
   Educational experience in this context refers to the students’ participation in class, involvement in co-curricular activities such as sport teams and clubs, students’ self-regulating skills such as punctuality, meeting deadlines, and seeking extra help when needed.

2. What practices are employed by teachers to allow them to gain information about the parenting practices their students are exposed to at home?

3. How does gaining knowledge of the parenting practices that a set of students are exposed to, inform and guide the teacher’s approach to teaching those particular students?

Interview Questions:

1. Based on your experience of teaching high school, in what ways have you been prevented and enabled to learn more about your students’ home life?

2. What are some ways you go about gathering information about a student’s parent(s) and their level of involvement in their child’s life?

3. How is communication made between you and the parents of your students?

4. What are some factors that can limit and/or enable an increase of communication between you and the parents?

5. In your experience, what patterns have you observed regarding parenting practices at home and the actions of your students in the classroom? (note that ‘actions’ can be anything from participation, punctuality, interaction with classmates and teacher, initiative to seek extra help, or even helping classmates).

In my research regarding parenting styles, I discovered that some researchers classify parenting styles into the following four categories:
Authoritative parents: monitor their children closely, with high expectations for behaviour. However, they are firm without being unreasonable, and willing to negotiate in disciplinary matters.

Authoritarian parents: set firm limits and expect children to follow orders, often without explanation or negotiation. In this parenting style, there is very little interaction between the parents and children.

Permissive parents: tend to have few rules and consequences, and make themselves available as resources for their children to use.

Rejecting/Neglecting parents: are uninvolved and are more focused on their own personal needs than the needs of their children.

6. Based on the given findings, do you see any of these parenting styles lining up with the patterns you’ve observed?

7. Using specific examples, what are some ways you incorporate and utilize the information you obtain regarding your students’ parents into your daily teaching practices?

8. When thinking of the relationships between parenting styles and students educational experiences, what insights and/or advice would you offer to beginning teachers?

9. Any further comments, questions, or concerns?