

“WE SERVE YOU, RIGHT?”
A CASE STUDY ADAPTING COORIENTATION TO
CUSTOMER SERVICE RESEARCH

JoAnna Williamson

A dissertation submitted to the faculty of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the School of Journalism and Mass Communication.

Chapel Hill
2010

Approved by:

Lois Boynton

Teresa Edwards

Anne Johnston

Heidi Hennink-Kaminski

Patricia Parker

ABSTRACT

JoAnna Williamson

“We serve you, right?”

A case study adapting coorientation to customer service research
(Under the direction Dr. Lois Boynton, Ph.D.)

An abundance of academic research has focused on identifying, explicating, operationalizing, and analyzing variables used to understand the dynamics of customer service. Despite this scholarly attention, applied researchers and the popular press have long reported consumers' dissatisfaction with the service received during their customer transactions. This lingering incongruity between service as conceptualized by scholars, provided by practitioners, and experienced by consumers suggests the necessity of fresh approaches to addressing the complexities of service. The need is urgent given the continued growth of the service sector of the U.S. economy, the changing demographics of service providers and recipients, and new technologies in the quickly evolving modern service paradigm.

My dissertation demonstrates that a new approach to understanding contemporary service is to view it through a coorientation theoretical framework. Coorientation refers to an interdependent system of interaction allowing for the measurement of perceptions and cross perceptions of two entities that are mutually oriented toward each other and toward some shared issue. Public relations scholars have built on psychology, social psychology, and communication research in using coorientation variables to gain a holistic understanding of relationships. This understanding serves as the foundation for the development, implementation, and measurement of the impact of relationship-building communication strategies.

A case study approach was employed to use coorientation variables to diagnose service relationships in their natural settings. This information was then used to recommend enhancements to

the interactions between the service providers and service recipients. A non-commercial context was selected to learn from the positive manner in which service recipients in exploratory research perceived service provided for non-monetary gain. Specifically, service relationships were assessed in educational environments given the recognition of education as a vital service industry, the emphasis on American educational reform, and the documented importance of the parent-school relationship.

The view of service recipients as publics is consistent with the increasing focus of public relations scholars on the relationship-building aspects of this discipline. As such, merging the study of relationships with publics from a public relations perspective with the study of service from other consumer-driven disciplines adds to the depth of knowledge in each area.

To Liz, Joseph, Joe, and my entire band of angels.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am inspired by and grateful for the unwavering patience and coaching of my advisor, Dr. Lois Boynton. I am deeply appreciative of my dissertation committee members, Teresa Edwards, Dr. Heidi Hennink-Kaminski, Dr. Anne Johnston, and Dr. Patricia Parker. Each of you has been a role model to me in a unique and personal manner.

I would also like to thank the organizations that allowed me to research their programs and experience their dedication. My thanks as well to the Roy H. Park family for their generous support of my doctoral education.

Finally, my heartfelt gratitude to Ralph K. Frasier and the other heroes and “she-roes” whose courage has made my journey possible. I am honored to have walked in your footsteps.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES.....	viii
LIST OF FIGURES.....	ix
LIST OF APPENDICES.....	xi
Chapter	
I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
A Disservice to Customer Service.....	2
Customer Service and Related Constructs.....	5
Summary.....	9
II. LITERATURE REVIEW.....	10
Evolution of Service Scholarship from the Marketing Discipline.....	10
Toward a New Coorientation Model of Customer Service Meaning.....	15
A Coorientation Exploration of Service Meaning.....	28
A Coorientational Approach to Closing the Gaps.....	30
Adapting Coorientation Research to the Study of Contemporary Customer Service.....	34
The Dissertation Study: Applying Coorientation as a Theoretical Framework in an Actual Service Setting.....	37
III. METHOD.....	40
Case Selection.....	42
Data Collection.....	44
Data Analysis and Presentation.....	55

IV.	RESULTS.....	58
	Case Study Contexts.....	58
	Findings: The Weekend Academy for African American Boys.....	61
	Analysis: The Weekend Academy for African American Boys.....	92
	Findings: Redeemer Christian Day School.....	99
	Analysis: Redeemer Christian Day School.....	119
V.	DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION.....	134
	Parental Involvement in General.....	136
	Visible Parental Involvement.....	139
	Behind-the-Scenes Parental Involvement: Active.....	146
	Behind-the-Scenes Parental Involvement: Passive.....	150
	Uninvolved.....	154
	Summary of Coorientational analyses of Issues Associated with the Dimensions of Parental Involvement.....	157
	Conclusion and Implications.....	157
	APPENDICES.....	162
	REFERENCES.....	185

LIST OF TABLES

Table

2.1 Pilot study dimensions of “parental involvement,” based on perceptions and cross-perceptions of Weekend Academy educators (A) and parents (B).....	37
3.1 Sources of data collection for dissertation case studies.....	45
3.2 Case study documents reviewed.....	48
4.1 Examples of data supporting identification of typology/dimensions of parental involvement: Weekend Academy for African American Boys.....	95
4.2 Examples of within-case data support for typology of parental involvement: Redeemer Christian Day School.....	122
4.3 Between-case typology of parental involvement: Weekend Academy for African American Boys and Redeemer Christian Day School.....	128
4.4 Environmental and social factors emerging from Weekend Academy for African American Boys and Redeemer Christian Day School case studies.....	129
4.5 Summary of analyses of issues related to dimensions of parental involvement.....	131
5.1. Summary of coorientational analyses of issues related to parental involvement in general.....	139
5.2. Summary of coorientational analyses of issues related to visible parental involvement.....	145
5.3. Summary of coorientational analyses of issues related to behind-the-scenes parental involvement: active.....	149
5.4. Summary of coorientational analyses of issues related to behind the scenes parental involvement: passive.....	153
5.5. Summary of coorientational analyses of issues related to uninvolved parents.....	156

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure

2.1 Schematic illustration of the minimal A-B-X system.....	18
2.2 Research stream leading to dissertation study.....	38
5.1. Issue: Parental involvement is likely to take multiple forms. False conflict.....	137
5.2. Issue: Parental involvement is very likely to be essential to a student's education. False consensus.....	138
5.3. Issue: Most parents are not likely to be visibly involved in parent organizations. True consensus.....	140
5.4. Issue: Parents are more likely to be visible in academic programs that are best tailored to their children's needs. False consensus.....	141
5.5. Issue: Parents are more likely to be visibly involved in events in which their children are involved. False conflict.....	142
5.6. Issue: Parents should initiate communication with educators. False conflict.....	143
5.7. Issue: Parents who are visibly involved are likely to be better educated than parents who are not visibly involved and are likely to have children who are more academically successful. Dissensus.....	144
5.8. Issue: Actively involved parents who are not visibly involved in their children's education are likely to be proactively involved in some way behind the scenes. False conflict.....	147
5.9. Issue: Actively involved parents are likely to be responsive to both behavior and non-behavior related communication from the school. False consensus.	148
5.10. Issue: Actively involved parents are likely to create a supportive home environment That includes ensuring school projects are completed and limiting possible distractions such as technology and mass media. False conflict.....	149
5.11. Issue: Parents who are not visibly or actively involved in their child's education are generally likely to be satisfied with the schools and educational programs they choose for their children. False consensus.....	151
5.12. Issue: Parents who are not visibly or actively involved in their children's educations may still be likely to set academic expectations for their children. False conflict.....	152

5.13. Issue: Parents who are not visibly or actively involved in their children's educations may not fully understand the importance of more visible or active involvement. False conflict.....	153
5.14. Issue: Educators are likely to treat students of uninvolved parents in the same manner as students of involved parents. True conflict.....	155
5.15. Issue: Parents who are uninvolved in their children's educations are likely to be uncomfortable with the academic environment. True consensus.....	156
5.16. Summary of research stream leading to dissertation study.....	159

LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix

A. Gaps Model of service quality.....	162
B. The coorientation measurement model.....	163
C. Coorientation model of organization-public relationships.....	164
D. Coorientation model of customer service relationships.....	165
E. Institutional Review Board approval form.....	166
F. Redeemer Christian Day School Council Board focus group facilitator guide.....	168
G. Sample in-depth interview guide.....	169
H. Sample recruitment message – Weekend Academy for African American Boys.....	170
I. Weekend Academy for African American Boys counselor-parent research match-up.....	172
J. Sample in-depth interview consent form.....	173
K. Sample coorientation interview guide.....	176
L. Focus group consent form.....	177
M. Summary of coorientational analyses related to dimensions of parental involvement.....	181

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Customer service is most simply defined as interactions between service providers and service recipients (Kendall, 2006). For the past two decades, an abundance of research among marketing academicians has focused on constructing empirical models to identify, explicate, operationalize, and analyze variables used to explain the provision of services and customer service (e.g., Babakus & Boller, 1992; Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1985, 1988; Zeithaml, Parasuraman, & Malhotra, 2002). Despite this scholarly attention, applied researchers and the popular press have long reported customers' dissatisfaction with the service received during their experiences with service providers (e.g., Koepp, 1987; McConnell, 2007).

Recently reported data gathered by J.D. Power and Associates, the preeminent firm in consumer satisfaction measurement, confirms that aggregate customer rankings for service measures involving people and processes are on the decline, even for those organizations that have consistently positioned themselves as service leaders in their industries (McGregor, 2008). This lingering incongruity between service as conceptualized by scholars, implemented by practitioners, and experienced by consumers suggests the need for fresh approaches to addressing the complexities of customer service.

The purpose of this research is to use a coorientation theoretical framework to analyze the customer service conundrum. Coorientation refers to an interdependent system of interaction that allows for the measurement of perceptions and cross perceptions of two entities that are mutually oriented toward each other and toward some shared issue (e.g., McLeod & Chaffee, 1973; Newcomb, 1953). Public relations scholars have built on the findings of researchers in psychology, social psychology, and mass communication in demonstrating that coorientation variables can be used to

gain a holistic understanding of the state of a relationship. This understanding serves as the foundation for the development, implementation, and measurement of the impact of relationship-building communication strategies (e.g., Grunig & Hunt, 1984; Grunig & Stamm, 1973; Ledingham, Bruning, Thomlison, & Lesko, 1997; Seltzer, 2006).

This dissertation is the culmination of research that suggests that a new approach to understanding contemporary customer service may be to view it through the theoretical lens of a public relations coorientation framework (Williamson, 2009a; Williamson, 2009b). Specifically, this dissertation uses a coorientation model to diagnose a customer service relationship in its natural setting, and to use this diagnostic information to recommend enhancements to the interactions between service providers and service recipients. The research setting is an educational environment in which educators are service providers and parents are service recipients. The following section provides further evidence of the problems associated with today's customer service, and establishes the need for scholars and practitioners to take a fresh look at the long-studied field of customer service.

A Disservice to Customer Service

“The Department of Transportation issued a fine against Continental Airlines and ExpressJet Airlines for stranding passengers in Rochester, Minn., for nearly six hours last August. It is the DOT’s first-ever fine for an airport stranding. . . . ‘I hope that this sends a signal to the rest of the airline industry that we expect airlines to respect the rights of air travelers,’ said Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood. . . . ‘This is a clear wake-up call for the industry,’ said George Hobica, creator of Airfarewatchdog.com (“DOT fines,” 2009).”

Domestic airline carriers provide an industry-specific saga of the experiences of customers who lament that their needs are not being met by service providers. In November 2009, the U.S. Department of Transportation levied fines against airlines that jointly operated a flight whose passengers were left in a cramped regional airplane until the airport where they landed opened its terminal the following morning (“DOT fines,” 2009).

This incident was reminiscent of a similar 2007 situation when passengers were forced to stay on the tarmac in the plane of yet another airline during a 10-hour ice storm. The carrier then

cancelled 1,000 flights during the next week, contrary to repeated daily promises as to when it would resume full service. This crisis was attributed to a lack of communication within the company and between the company and the public. The resulting damage to the organization's reputation, an investigation by its regulatory organization, and the filing of a passenger lawsuit resulted in the company's search for a public relations agency to assist with its crisis management processes (Bush, 2008; "What's new," 2008).

Similarly, within a 30-day period in the spring of 2008, at least five U.S. airlines canceled hundreds of same-day flights in order to belatedly comply with government-mandated safety inspections. One airline alone reported at least 140,000 passengers delayed and stranded. Within that same timeframe, three other domestic airlines abruptly went out of business for economic reasons. Confirmed, and in some instances, stranded, ticketholders were left to receive this information through the media, word-of-mouth, and company kiosks and websites directing them to their credit card companies for refunds ("American Airlines," 2008; "ATA Airlines," 2008; Barr, 2008; McAvoy, 2008; Michaels & Maxon, 2008; "United," 2008).

The plague of customer service breakdowns across industries continues despite quantifiable evidence of the impact of customer service on leveraging service provider returns such as market share, customer loyalty, and bottom-line profitability (Zeithaml, 2000). Accordingly, addressing lackluster customer service is crucial due to the increasingly pervasive role of service in shaping, maintaining, and expanding the economic and cultural underpinnings of American society (Rust, 2006).

For example, the economic recession currently plaguing the U.S. economy arguably has as its roots a customer service breakdown in vital service industries such as financial services and healthcare. The visible beginning of this economic downturn is widely attributed to the practice of lenders making mortgage loans to consumers with sub-prime, or less than prime, credit records. By some accounts, borrowers/service recipients did not understand how high their monthly mortgage payments would soar after their initial interest rate increased as a condition of the lending contract

they entered into with more knowledgeable lenders/service providers. The resulting onslaught of mortgage foreclosures has now been shown to have had an extremely negative effect on the U.S. and world economies (Cramer, 2007; “How we got into the subprime lending mess,” 2007; “Origins of the subprime lending crisis,” 2007). More recently, consumer groups have lauded federal regulations enacted to protect cash-strapped customers from credit card providers’ unfair and deceptive trade practices in a culture of “growing American dependence on credit to pay basic living expenses” (Prater, p. 1, 2009; Sullivan, 2009).

Additionally, the current national debate over healthcare insurance has heightened awareness of anecdotal stories of insurance carriers’ interactions with patients and healthcare practitioners regarding the coverage that constitutes the insurers’ service offering. Media coverage of issues such as denial of insurance benefits for infants deemed overweight or underweight triggered public outcries regarding the pre-existing condition clause that has long been noted as an example of insufficient servicing of insured customer needs (see, e.g., “Fat baby,” 2009; Shaw, 2009; “Toddler denied,” 2009). The current presidential administration has targeted improvement of the nation’s health care system as a major step in restoring the country’s economic health (e.g., Brooks, 2009).

Service crises are also having dire effects on non-commercial segments of the economy. For example, educators in the kindergarten-12th grade secondary educational system face challenges ranging from massive budget-driven school closings and layoffs to efforts to reform controversial benchmarks used to measure the service they provide to students and their families (e.g., “Detroit to close 44 schools,” 2010; “Obama: Overhaul ‘No child left behind’,” 2010).

The increasing role of service technology adds to the complexity of the customer service paradigm. A 2009 USA Today report describes how social media tools such as Twitter are being increasingly used to communicate with customers (e.g., Swartz, 2009). A 2008 TIME newsmagazine cover story heralded the proliferation of mediated service technology, such as self-serve retail kiosks, as one of the “ten ideas that are changing the world.” Ironically, the story was subtitled “the end of customer service” (Kiviat, 2008, p. 42).

Contemporary service research includes conceptualizations of how consumers evaluate the quality of their Internet and electronic commerce service experiences. In their analyses of scholarly research regarding e-commerce service quality and the state of service research overall, service scholars have called for a better understanding of the consumer experiences and behaviors involved with emerging service phenomena such as new technologies in the quickly evolving modern service paradigm (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Malhotra, 2005; Zeithaml et al., 2002), the continued dominance of the service sector in international commerce (Rust, 2006), and the changing demographics of American service recipients (Zeithaml et al.). Seasoned service scholars Parasuraman and Zinkhan (2002) posited that theories from “allied disciplines” (p. 292) could be useful to marketing scholars in furthering the development of continued theory-based and normative service research.

Coinciding with this call from service scholars for alliances with other disciplines are the efforts being made to expand awareness of research and theory emerging from the field of public relations. Studying customer service from a public relations perspective could be consistent with a modern view of the practice of public relations as a strategic management function focused on aligning organizations with their publics, and with the work of public relations scholars in advancing theories and methods to study relationships between organizations and their publics (e.g., Botan & Taylor, 2006; Broom, Casey, & Ritchey, 1997; Ferguson, 1984; Hon & Grunig, 1999). Merging the study of relationships with publics from a public relations perspective with the study of service from other consumer-driven disciplines could add to the depth of knowledge in each of these areas.

A first step is to explicate key terms associated with customer service and related research. The following section provides these foundations.

Customer Service and Related Constructs

As a preliminary step to the study of service, Kendall (2006) espouses an understanding of the nuances of service-related terms to aid in identifying “...what we are trying to influence or improve” (p. 4). Providing customer service is an inherent component of a U.S. service economy that

has grown exponentially since the mid-20th century (Rust, 2006), when the American industrialized economy gave way to a dramatic post-World War II increase in the service sector (Gronroos, 1984; Holstein, 2006). Most narrowly, the *service sector* refers to a category of the economy based on trade and information as opposed to, for example, agriculture and manufacturing (e.g., Kellerman, 1985). Its expansion beginning in the late 1940s may have been due to pent-up demand for services such as lending and entertainment during the prior 20 years of the Great Depression and the war, combined with a release of labor from war-related manufacturing jobs (e.g., Williamson, 1991).

On a broader and more practical level, the service economy is made up of not only industries such as banking and healthcare, in which the product is intangible, but also the manufacturers of tangible goods such as household appliances, which offer related services such as repair as part of the total product package (Levitt, 1972). A TIME newsmagazine cover story more than 20 years ago (“Cover stories,” 1987), described the spectrum of the service professions that accounted for most of the 76 million workers in the U.S. labor pool as including not only business professionals, but also health care providers, educators, bartenders, janitors, professional athletes, and the President of the United States. By the start of the 21st century, the service sector accounted for approximately 54% of the country’s gross domestic product and was expected to provide more than three-fourths of a projected 10-year increase in new jobs (Bang & Moon, 2002).

Among the oldest recorded definitions of the term *service* are the 12th century views of “rendering habitual obedience” to a master, as in slavery, or more reverent references to paying homage to God or some other sovereign body (Service, 2007). At the other extreme are the admonitions of Levitt (1972) that service, as part of his discourse regarding efficiency as a measure of service provided to customers “...has to disassociate itself from the...historical connotations of...obedience, subordination, and subjugation” (p. 43).

Nestled somewhere between the subservient view and the production line approach (Levitt, 1972, 1976) appears to be a conceptualization of service that combines the human interaction of *customer service* with a service organization’s need for an acceptable return on its investment in that

customer. A customer is defined broadly by marketing scholars as an actual or potential receiver of products and services within an exchange relationship (Armstrong & Kotler, 2007).

In contrast, *services* are intangible end products delivered to customers, analogous to their tangible counterparts of physical goods. In terms of the measurement of these two outputs, Zeithaml et al. (2002) clarify the difference by explaining that the quality of goods is determined by how closely they conform to specifications defined by the manufacturer. Viewing services in this same manner would support Levitt's (1976) argument that the operationalization of the variables involved in providing services should be in the form of productivity measurements, such as the efficiency of electrocardiograms run by lower-paid technicians reliably substituting higher-paid physicians armed with less-effective stethoscopes. However, this line of reasoning does not acknowledge the other characteristics commonly identified by Zeithaml et al. as differentiating services from goods. For example, services are heterogeneous in that their delivery is usually facilitated by human capital with inevitably wide variations in performance. Services are therefore inseparable from the non-robotic human interaction that takes place between the provider and the customer.

Service quality is defined by Bitner and Hubbert (1994) as "the consumer's overall impression of the relative inferiority/superiority of the organization and its services" (p. 77). Parasuraman and Zeithaml (2002) note that much progress has been made in conceptualizing and operationalizing service quality from a customer-centric orientation since a 20-year continuing research stream was launched by Parasuraman et al.'s (1985, 1988) study of customer assessments of service quality in multiple service industries. Their work has been consistently refined since their initial pilot study, but is still based on the premise that service quality is the gap or the degree and direction of discrepancy between customers' service perceptions and expectations, as measured by a survey instrument known as SERVQUAL (Parasuraman et al.).

Despite skepticism regarding methodological issues such as the appropriateness of operationalizing the service quality construct as the difference between two other constructs (Babakus & Boller, 1992; Brown, Churchill, & Peter, 1993), the gap conceptualization and SERVQUAL have

been independently applied in other services industries and remain the most-enduring measurements of customers' perceptions of the quality of services offered by service industry providers. For example, Hernon and Altman (1996) relied largely on the SERVQUAL instrument to create a service quality information system within the library industry, belying the historical thinking of library customers as "readers, users, patrons, and borrowers..." who "do not know what they want" (p. 6).

Oliver (1993) points out that service quality is one part of a service equation that should be viewed in its totality to assess the degree of fulfillment or service *satisfaction*. Elliott (1995) extends this discussion of service satisfaction into the larger realm of *customer satisfaction*. Oliver agrees with the proposition that customer satisfaction levels are the outcomes of a customer-prescribed level of service quality.

In summary, customer service is not simply the provision of services to customers. Zeithaml et al. (1990) explain that "competitors commonly offer the same services and different service" (p. 11). Customer service is not in itself customer satisfaction, but rather, based on most research, one of the variables factored in to an experience leading to satisfaction. This definition is supported by the J.D. Power finding that while their research "shows strength in product satisfaction, the results for service measures – things like employee expertise or processes such as returning merchandise – are a different story. [Companies are] cutting back on staff, they're cutting back on services." (McGregor, 2008, p. 1).

In an attempt to sort out these deceptively non-transposable definitions of service-related terms, Kendall (2006) labels service quality as a "cognitive judgment," customer satisfaction as "an attitude" including but not limited to service quality evaluations, and finally, describes customer service as "transactions aimed at meeting the needs and expectations of the customer, as defined by the customer. It is the service encounter or series of encounters" (p. 4). A synthesis of these terminologies can also be gleaned from Bitner, Faranda, Hubbert, and Zeithaml's (1997) characterization that "service experiences are the outcomes of interactions between organizations, related systems/processes, service employees and customers" (p. 193). The most notable finding of

their service industry “outcomes” assessment is their depiction of the customer not just as one who predicts the quality of the service experience or assesses the performance, but one who in some instances is a participant and receiver of service which is delivered to them.

Summary

This chapter has introduced the proposition that the public relations theoretical framework of coorientation is a means of meeting the urgent need to identify alternative approaches to the scholarly study of customer service and service-related constructs. The next chapter reviews the seminal service literature, as well as the critiques of this research that led to an exploratory study to seek a better understanding of contemporary service phenomena. The theoretical findings of the exploratory study will be discussed in the context of public relations scholarship regarding relationships between organizations and publics. The chapter will conclude with a summary of a pilot study that conceptualizes a new model of customer service relationships based on the theoretical framework of coorientation. Finally, remaining chapters will present the case study methodology, results, and implications of the research conducted for this dissertation to apply the coorientation model to customer service settings.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review will first summarize the research stream that has dominated the scholarly study of service for the past two decades. Next, concerns will be presented about whether this body of research remains robust enough to accommodate the complexities of contemporary customer service. Then, the findings will be presented from an exploratory study conducted as a first step in gaining a deeper meaning of modern service phenomena. This will include a discussion of the theoretical framework that emerged from the study, and its potential to expand both public relations theory and the scholarly study of customer service.

Evolution of Service Scholarship from the Marketing Discipline

The most widely cited research stream within the scholarly study of service was launched by Parasuraman et al.'s (1985, 1988) seminal work to assess how customers evaluated the quality of services in multiple service industries. Their work has been consistently refined since their initial study, but is still based on the expectation disconfirmation theory (Oliver, 1977) that service quality is the degree and direction of discrepancy, or gap, between customers' expectations regarding the service they will receive and their perceptions of the service as delivered (Parasuraman et al.).

This gap analysis was originally driven by 10 dimensions representing the core evaluative criteria that customer focus group participants used to assess service quality. The first three dimensions were defined as (1) tangibles - appearance of physical facilities, equipment, personnel, and communication materials, (2) reliability - ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately, and (3) responsiveness - willingness to help customers and provide prompt service. Quantitative scaling resulted in the remaining seven dimensions being collapsed into two broader

dimensions known as (4) assurance – knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to inspire trust and confidence, and (5) empathy – caring, individualized attention the firm provides its customers. Reliability was found to be the customers’ most critical dimension, although all five of the core criteria were deemed to be important (Parasuraman et al., 1985, 1988).

Zeithaml et al. (1990) noted that the dimensions, “when considered collectively, imply an important message from customers to service providers: [A]ppear neat and organized, be responsive, be reassuring, be empathetic, and most of all, be reliable – do what you say you are going to do” (p. 27). Customers’ measurement of these five dimensions was achieved by a two-section instrument known as SERVQUAL, consisting of 22 customer expectation statements regarding a service, combined with a separate parsimonious set of 22 matching statements measuring the same customers’ assessments of a specific firm within the service category (Parasuraman et al., 1988).

The delivery of quality service was thus defined as closing any gaps between customers’ service expectations and perceptions. To accomplish this, a Gaps Model of service quality was developed (Zeithaml et al., 1990), as shown in Appendix A. Based on interviews with executives of service-providing organizations, the model identified four requisite organizational gaps that needed to be closed before the customer expectations-perceptions gap, known as Gap 5 in the Gaps Model, could be narrowed. These organizational gaps were:

- Gap 1: Not knowing what customers expect - the difference between customer expectations of service and organizational management’s understanding of these expectations;
- Gap 2: Not selecting the right service designs and standards - the discrepancy between management perceptions of what customers expect and the internal service quality specifications the organization develops to meet these expectations;
- Gap 3: Not delivering to service standards - the discrepancy between service quality specifications that do exist and service as it is delivered to customers by service delivery personnel, and

- Gap 4: Not matching service performance to service promises - the communication gap. This gap represents the discrepancy between the service delivered and the service explicitly represented through marketing communication, as well as through implicit cues such as price, that customers interpret as indicating certain types or levels of service (Zeithaml et al., 1990).

Despite extensive use of the Gaps Model and SERVQUAL (Parasuraman et al., 1985, 1988; Zeithaml et al., 1990), researchers have also criticized the limitations of these models. Discussion of these critiques follows in the next subsection.

Gaps Model and SERVQUAL Critiques

Criticisms leveled against the SERVQUAL model involve the modeling itself and the fluid meaning of service. A summary of each of these concerns follows.

Criticisms – service modeling. Scholarly criticisms of SERVQUAL and the Gaps Model have resulted in their refinement and the development of competing quantitative models by other scholars. For example, the use of the expectations construct has been scrutinized, revamped, and rebuked. In the most-prominent work in this regard, Boulding, Kalra, Staelin, and Zeithaml (1993) found not one, but two categories of expectations. The first type were labeled as *will* expectations, based on expectations that customers were said to form about what *will* happen in their next service encounter with the service provider. The second type of expectations formed by consumers was described as normative *should* expectations, indicating what *should* occur in their next encounter.

Another criticism of the SERVQUAL scale and the Gaps Model is the methodological appropriateness of operationalizing service quality as the difference between two other constructs --- expectations and perceptions (Babakus & Boller, 1992; Brown, Churchill, & Peter, 1993). An example of an alternative approach is Cronin and Taylor's (1992) SERVPERF instrument. Cronin and Taylor concluded that an approach measuring attitudinal performance-based factors was a more empirically efficient and effective way to operationalize service quality than an expectations-performance gap measurement.

Criticisms - service meaning. Postpositivist scholars question whether any positivistic service model adequately captures service meaning. Schembri and Sandberg (2002) argued that existing service models are constraining in that they represent static cognitive descriptions of what are constantly changing, contextual-based experiences between service providers and service recipients. In their critique of the preeminent positivistic approaches to traditional service research, they contend that attempting to comprehend service through predetermined dimensions represents researchers' uninformed third party views of a customer's unique perspective. They instead proposed an interpretive approach as a better means of expanding service knowledge by allowing for a genuine first-person understanding of consumers' experiences. This approach would, in the words of postpositivist consumer researchers Thompson, Locander, and Pollio (1989), put "the consumer experience back into consumer research" (p. 133).

As an example of an interpretive approach to studying service, Schembri and Sandberg (2002) applauded the increased use of phenomenology by marketing and consumer behavior scholars who visualize consumers as active participants in making sense of a marketplace, unrestrained by a distinct set of pre-defined attributes. Phenomenology has long been established as a central component of interpretive studies (Wojnar & Swanson, 2007). It allows for the experiences of research participants regarding a specific life domain to be listened to, discovered, understood, and interpreted in order to capture the essence or central meaning of the experience (Creswell, 2007). Recent uses of this philosophy-grounded methodology to inform the commercial marketplace have included the examination of consumer shopping trips (Szmigin & Foxall, 2000); an exploration of the motivations of Internet shoppers (Trocchia & Janda, 2000); an analysis of the discourse between an advertising agency and a client (Svensson, 2007), and the contextualization of entrepreneurship (Cope, 2005). In a service context, Hansemark and Albinsson (2004) phenomenologically explored how the employees of a service-providing organization experienced the concept of customer satisfaction. Evardsson (1992) used phenomenology to learn about service breakdowns from the perspectives of airline passengers and employees who had lived through such critical incidents. Suh and Janda (2006)

looked at the concept of relationship marketing as a phenomenologically grounded process of establishing trust and commitment between a service provider and a service recipient, with particular interest in the role of Korean culture in developing this trust relationship.

A further factor in favor of an interpretive approach to service research is the complexity of providing service. As opposed to the nature of tangible goods transactions involving a rote exchange of money for merchandise, intangible service-based transactions rely on language, emotions, relationships, objects, and symbols to consummate the perceived value exchange. Such was the premise of Swan and Bowers (1998) in their explanation of how systematic scientific approaches to service measurements overlook the existence of a process of interactions that collectively constitute a service experience. They described the positivist approach of developing statistical multi-dimensional models to test predetermined theories as reducing customers to “attribute accountants” who are put into “solitary confinement” (p. 59) to assign scored responses to static service questions.

Swan and Bowers (1998) describe services as symbols and service encounters as interactions. Thus, they recommend symbolic interactionism as a source of theoretical ideas stemming from discovered premises or “sensitizing concepts” (p. 62) emerging through analyses of lived service provider–service recipient exchanges. Symbolic interactionists such as Mead (1934) and Blumer (1969) posited that humans’ actions toward things are based on the meanings they ascribe to those things, that this meaning arises out of social interactions, and that these meanings are constantly assessed by humans through interpretive processes that the person uses in dealing with the things they encounter (Patton, 2002). The origins of this perspective within the study of customer behavior can be traced to the related marketing concept of symbolic consumption, in which researchers such as Belk, Bahn, and Mayer (1982) studied phenomena like the role of a product as a source of social stimulus (Flint, 2006).

The scholars who developed the Gaps Model have since noted its empirical limitations in explaining the contemporary interactions between humans and service technology (Parasuraman et al., 2005; Zeithaml et al., 2002). They acknowledged the findings of qualitative studies suggesting

that the complexities of technology-driven service interactions involve a “meaning laden” (p. 216) process that may vary across different segments of customers. Similarly, quantitative service scholars Parasuraman and Zinkhan (2002), in their analysis of scholarly research regarding e-commerce service quality and the state of service research overall, noted an underrepresentation of qualitative studies needed to help understand the consumer experiences and behaviors involved with emerging service phenomena.

With these critiques in mind, a study was conducted to explore the real-world dynamics of contemporary customer service. The following section begins with an explanation of an exploratory study that suggested the feasibility of coorientation applied to a customer-service environment, followed by an explication of the term and a review of coorientation studies from various social science fields.

Toward a New Coorientation Model of Customer Service Meaning

Qualitative exploratory research was conducted as a first step toward gaining broad insights into consumers’ perceptions of their service experiences (Williamson, 2009a). This exploratory study used data collected from in-depth interviews with members of the demographic group known as Baby Boomers, those Americans born between 1946 and 1964 and now ranging in age from the mid-40s to the early 60s. Their consumer insights were particularly useful for several reasons, including the massive size and disproportionately strong spending power of this sociological cohort, and the more active societal lifestyle and consumption patterns of Boomers versus their counterparts from previous generations (Armstrong & Kotler, 2007). Additionally, Baby Boomers’ robust wealth of service experiences range from the mom-and-pop store interpersonal encounters they witnessed during their childhood formative years to their adaptation to the technological aspects of modern customer service (Fox, 2001, 2005; Williamson, 2009a).

The 16 Baby Boomers interviewed for this exploratory study represented a convenience sample across income, gender, geography, and race. Actual age was also a selection criterion, given

evidence of significant differences within the 20-year age spectrum of leading-edge Boomers, trailing Boomers, and those in the middle of the age range (Armstrong & Kotler, 2007).

The findings of the Baby Boomer exploratory service study suggested a need to reconcile service recipients' attitudes with their perceptions of service providers' attitudes toward each other and toward the service being provided. This reconciliation process can be depicted as a model of coorientation (Williamson, 2009a). Coorientation will be explained in the next subsection, followed by the coorientation model's applicability to the findings of the Baby Boomer exploratory service study.

Coorientation Theoretical Framework

This subsection provides an overview of the theoretical concept known as coorientation, beginning with its roots in psychology, social psychology, and sociology, and its subsequent usage in mass communication and public relations research. A review of the seminal works in extant literature is followed by a description of a model of customer service coorientation that resulted from the Baby Boomer study (Williamson, 2009a) referenced above. This literature review will conclude with a conceptualization of how the coorientation service model complements and supplements traditional service research.

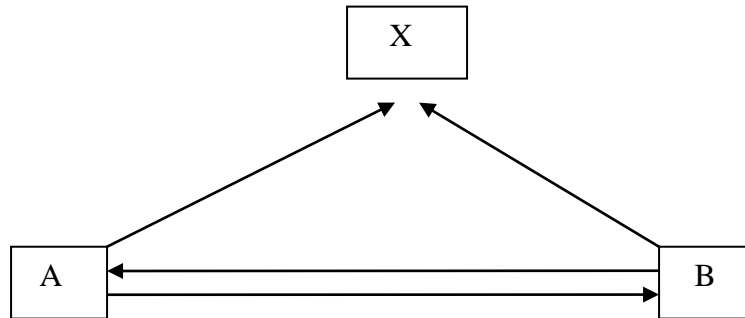
The concept that has become coorientation began as a psychological study of the balancing of attitudes between and among individuals. Psychologist Heider (1946) hypothesized a configuration consisting of the positive or negative attitudes held by two people, p and o, toward each other, or toward x, a non-person "thing" (p. 107) such as an idea, a situation, an issue or an event. The functional connection between these three entities was described as a relation unit, such as a situational unit of "[person] p is in situation x," a familiarity unit described as "[person] p is familiar with [person] o," or an ownership unit depicted as "[person] p owns [thing] x." This systemic connection between the two individuals is by nature a symmetrical one, since one person's presence in the same unit as the other person logically meant that both people belonged to the same unit. However, the psychological nature of the dynamics in the relational unit could be symmetrical or

non-symmetrical, in that each person's attitude toward each other or toward x or did not necessarily imply a similar corresponding attitude by the other person. Heider envisioned a balanced state as existing when all of the attitudinal dynamics within the unit were either all positive or all negative. Conversely, dynamic differences implied a state of imbalance, causing a tension that could only be relieved by restructuring the unit through an action or a cognitive attitudinal realignment.

In addition to assessing relationships between individuals, the balance theory can also be extended to include additional entities within the relational unit (Heider, 1946). For example, more than one object could be part of a unit, or more than two people could be involved in a unit. A semblance of additional entities within the unit could exist in situations in which, for example, one person had either a positive valence or intrinsic attraction, or a negative valence or aversion, toward the other person, in addition to a separate assumption of the nature of the other person's reciprocal valence. In this manner, Heider included in the relational unit not only an individual's own orientations, but also that person's perception of the other individual's orientations.

Soon after Heider's (1946) studies were underway, social psychologist Newcomb (1953), in studying the role of communication in social behavior, proposed an interdependent system of interaction in which two individuals have their own individual and simultaneous orientations or attitudes toward an object of communication, as well as simultaneous orientation, referred to as attraction, toward each other. A simple model of this simultaneous orientation, which Newcomb referred to as co-orientation, was depicted as four interdependent relationships in an A-B-X system, as shown by the arrows in Figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1. Schematic illustration of the minimal A-B-X system. A and B are individuals, X is the object of communication. (Newcomb, 1953).



As a result, human social interaction can thus be studied as a series of acts in which person A and person B use communication as a symbolic means of transmitting information to each other about object or thing X (Newcomb, 1953). Examining the nature of the possible relationships between the two persons regarding X was accomplished by determining first, the state of the system at the time of a given instance of communication and second, what, if any, change occurred in the system as a result of the communicative act. Such determinations were made by assessing the extent and degree to which the two persons could be regarded as cognitively and emotionally alike or different in their mutual attractions toward each other, and in their mutual attitudes toward object or thing X. These similarities or dissimilarities could be determined objectively or as interpreted phenomena by various means such as measurement, inquiry, or observation. A state in which the two persons were deemed to be laterally similar in their attitudes toward each other and their orientation to the issue, object, or thing was said to be a balanced or symmetrical relationship. Such would be the case, for example, if two people who were friends with other also held similar attitudes regarding a political issue.

The importance of the orientation of the two persons toward each other was based on an assumption that this attraction rarely takes place in an environmental vacuum. As such, the two persons become dependent or oriented toward each other as sources of information about an object or issue in the environment. As an example, Newcomb (1953) noted that even two lovers who seem to be attuned to only each other are likely dependent on common external interests to maintain their mutual attraction toward each other.

Similarly, the two individuals' separate orientations toward the object or issue rarely exist in a social vacuum, which leads to a reliance on each other as sources of social confirmation or disconfirmation that help create their individual social realities. Newcomb (1953) attributed these dependencies to forces impinging on the A-B-X system that create a human necessity to become oriented toward environmental objects and attracted to others oriented toward the same objects. For example, children can find out on their own if a stove is hot, Newcomb explained, but they benefit more from learning this from others who are influential, or oriented, to them.

Newcomb (1953) posited that communication is the most common and the best means of working toward what he characterized as a strain toward symmetry, with symmetry being the desired state of equilibrium or balance in the system. Communication can help increase symmetry through facilitating the alignment of the two persons' cognitive and emotional orientations toward the mutual object or issue of interest and their attractions toward each other. Additionally, symmetry within the A-B-X system is not required for co-orientation, since the latter exists merely because a change in any part of the four relationships portrayed in Figure 2.1 may result in changes in one or several of the others. However, communicative acts that resulted in increased symmetry were likely to be rewarded in some way within the A-B-X system, and this symmetry could also result in secondary rewards.

Newcomb (1953) noted laboratory and field research that supported his propositions through demonstrating, for example, that the stronger the intensity or valence of an individual's attitude toward an issue, the more that person communicated with others, indicative of a strain toward symmetry. Individuals who were similarly situated on a continuum of attitudes regarding a specific topic were also found to form relationships more quickly. Similar results were reported in studies in which the two person's mere perceptions of symmetry, even to the point of "cognitive distortion toward symmetry" (p. 397), were used as either dependent or independent variables in assessing strains toward symmetry in the A-B-X system.

Forced associations between person A and person B, or situations in which symmetry might be threatening in the sense of invoking fear or guilt, could be among the environmental and social

forces that might work against symmetry (Newcomb, 1953). Communication does not always result in increased symmetry, and increased symmetry may occur without communication. As an illustration of the latter, Newcomb noted Heider's (1946) explanation of cognitive reorganization as a way to, in some instances, cognitively divorce an act, X, from the actor, A or B. For example, two friends who discover that they have joined different political parties may choose not to discuss these differences, but instead cognitively attribute them to dissimilar family upbringings.

Coorientation was subsequently studied in sociology, beginning in the 1960s when Scheff (1967) explored the role of consensus. Scheff lauded Newcomb's work as supporting a departure from the view that a concept involving social interaction could be studied based merely on whether individuals in a group agreed on an issue. Scheff espoused co-orientation as being in the tradition of social interactionists Dewey (1958) and Mead (1934), who rejected the theorization of communication as aggregated individual processes rather than as an intertwined collective process.

Dewey (1958) envisioned forms of role-playing and "mind-reading" (Scheff, 1967, p. 35) as metaphors for interactive social processes in which individuals attempted to experience the subjective states of others involved in the same communicative acts. Schelling (1963) described this as a cyclical process that continued to evolve as 1) the two parties worked toward mutual recognition of a shared expectation that each party individually recognized, 2) the two parties individually recognized that the other party recognized it, and 3) the two parties mutually recognized that each party recognized that the other party recognized it. This theoretically infinite series of collective representations does not imply that each party is in favor of or opposed to what is represented, but rather that they are actors within a system of co-orientation designed to create what Garfinkel (1964) would call "background understandings" (p. 237) regarding each other and regarding X.

In addition to the study of coorientation in psychology and sociology, the concept attracted the attention of mass communication researchers (e.g., Chaffee & McLeod, 1968; McQuail & Windahl, 1993). In a study regarding the role of mass media in the formation of political opinions, changes observed in the results of an initial survey and a later survey were hypothesized to have been

due to between-test communication among panel members that contaminated their later attitudes and opinions (Chaffee & McLeod). This sensitization was posited to be most evident among persons living together who were forewarned of additional tests immediately following the completion of the first test. The assumption was that closely related individuals whose interest in the topic was piqued by pretesting and the knowledge of an after-test would be likely to talk to each other between tests as a way of learning more about the topic. Coorientation was adopted to measure this phenomenon, particularly to demonstrate methodological cautions that differences in the panel participants' opinions over the course of longitudinal testing may be due in large part to the coorientational interactions of person A and person B regarding object X. Chaffee and McLeod expanded Newcomb's (1953) hypotheses by conceptualizing interactional variables they deemed to be important to their analysis, which were lacking in the single-person models that dominated communication research at the time.

Later research moved beyond focusing solely on intrapersonal concepts such as motives, attitudes, and personality, to study interpersonal relationships within a social system as an approach to understanding human behavior (McLeod & Chaffee, 1973). McLeod and Chaffee conceptualized a coorientation model as a synthesis of psychology-based measures of perceptions of others' attitudes, the sociology-grounded consensus and symbolic interactionist views, and the Newcomb (1953) A-B-X framework.

In the model developed by McLeod and Chaffee (1973) to measure relationships and effects of coorientation (Appendix B), person A knows what she thinks about an object and has a perception of what person B thinks about the same object. Person B has this same set of private cognitions. To the extent that persons A and B each perceive separately that their perceptions of X are similar, each of them will experience perceived agreement or congruency. While these are by definition private cognitive constructs and not by definition coorientational concepts, they can only exist in the coorientational context of the relationship between cross-cognitions of individuals or groups of individuals.

The coorientational concepts -- accuracy, agreement, and understanding -- appear in the shared spaces between each person's private cognitions. To the extent that person A's perception of person B's evaluation of an object resembles group B's true perceptions, there is accuracy. The extent to which both persons' evaluations are the same is represented by agreement. Regardless of whether this agreement is reached, A and B can still achieve some level of understanding of what the situation is, even if they differ in how they evaluate this similarly perceived situation (McLeod & Chaffee, 1973).

Interpretation and manipulation of the coorientation variables over time could allow for the study of person A's and person B's simultaneous attractions toward each other, as well as their individual and mutual orientations toward object or issue X (McLeod & Chaffee, 1973). Natural groupings of communicators such as families, peers, and work groups could thus be studied as constructed coorientation systems. Factors such as salience or importance, relevance or connectedness, pertinence or relativity, and valence or strength of attraction could be studied as possible explanations for changes or lack of movement noted in the coorientation system.

In addition to mass communication scholarship, coorientation has also been a concept of interest for public relations scholars and practitioners. The following subsection details how coorientational concepts have evolved into public relations scholarship as a foundation for relationship-building between organizations and their publics.

Public Relations Conceptualizations of Coorientation

Because of the relationship aspect of public relations, researchers in this discipline became interested in the concept. Grunig and Stamm (1973) were among the early public relations scholars who recognized the opportunities presented by the McLeod and Chaffee (1973) coorientation variables. Public relations practitioners' common practice was to attempt to reify or make concrete an organization's cognitive state, as expressed through its goals, policies, and stances on issues. The practitioners then typically constructed corresponding messages to change or adapt to the collective cognitive states of individuals in a social collectivity such as a clientele, a mass audience, or a public,

with a public defined as a group of individuals who share or act on a common interest with respect to a specific organization (Dewey, 1927). Instead, organizations could strive toward achieving some optimal state of the coorientation indices of understanding, accuracy, agreement, and congruency between the organization's cognitive state and those of their publics (Grunig & Stamm, 1973). In this way, the coorientational approach was applied to contexts such as those involving relationships between social service agencies and the socially disadvantaged communities they served, and youth and adults at universities who perceived themselves as experiencing generational clashes in opinions and attitudes regarding social issues.

This reliance of public relations practitioners and scholars on the coorientation model has focused primarily on the areas of relationships between journalists and public relations practitioners, the concepts of consensus and symmetry, and organizational-public relationships. Each of these areas is summarized next.

First, the relationships between journalists and public relations practitioners has been one of the most widely studied areas of relationships within a coorientational context. These relationships have been said to be at the same time dependent but adversarial. Despite the more encompassing view of public relations as a strategic management function, journalists most commonly deal with public relations practitioners in their media relations role, and therefore often view public relations as being synonymous with a one-way publicity approach to communication. Public relations professionals provide news subsidies which journalists view as important in the newsgathering function. However, journalists are often suspicious of the perceived power these subsidies give the public relations profession, versus journalists' perceptions of their own roles as watchdogs of information that goes to the public (Shaw & White 2004; Shin & Cameron, 2003).

Early studies about the public relations practitioner-journalist relationship did not employ the coorientation term specifically, but dealt with how individual reporters and practitioners perceived one another. The seminal work in this regard was Aronoff's (1975) research comparing the perceptions that journalists and public relations professionals held toward each other. Although the

term coorientation was not specifically mentioned in this study, it has since been referred to as measuring the coorientation variable of agreement. Aronoff's survey showed that journalists differed substantially and negatively in their views of the public relations profession versus the public relations practitioners' views of themselves. Aronoff concluded that considerable relationship-building work would be needed given public relations professionals' concerns about how they were perceived by the journalists who were ultimately the gatekeepers of public information.

Additionally, the relationship between journalists and public relations practitioners has been studied regarding expectations about ethical behaviors (Jeffers, 1977). Although not conducted or analyzed in a coorientation context, Jeffers concluded that interaction, which has since been shown to be important in striving toward coorientational symmetry, was important in that journalists ranked public relations professionals with whom they were personally familiar as being more ethical than those they did not know personally.

The coorientation measurement emerged with Kopenhaver's (1985) replication of Aronoff's (1975) study. However, Kopenhaver asked her respondents to answer twice, once for their own attitudes and a second time to predict how members of the other group would respond – thus setting up a coorientational measurement. Kopenhaver concluded that the journalism editors were more inaccurate than public relations practitioners in their perceptions of the actual disagreements between themselves and the practitioners.

Steagall and Sanders (1986) concluded in a similar study that the training that public relations practitioners received included how to second-guess journalists. They recommended that journalists' training should include better education on the role of public relations professionals, perhaps taught by someone who had worked in both fields, so that journalists could also become more "coorientational" (p. 393).

Another area of study regarding coorientation in public relations has dealt with consensus, that is, actual and perceived agreement and the need to view these concepts independently (Broom, 1977; see also Scheff, 1967). In addition to ascertaining agreement, it is also important to determine

when organizations and their publics may behave as though they are in agreement on an issue when in fact they are not, or act as though they disagree on an issue when they actually agree (Broom, 1977). Using the coorientation model to measure both agreement and perceived agreement would result in the following situations which would require different public relations strategies:

- Monolithic consensus or true consensus – the parties agree and accurately perceive agreement.
- Dissensus – the parties disagree and accurately perceive disagreement.
- False consensus – the parties disagree but inaccurately perceive that they agree.
- Pluralistic ignorance or false conflict – the parties agree but inaccurately perceive that they disagree.

Broom (1977) concluded that the implications for public relations practitioners who were aware of these different states of consensus could include 1) the ability to accurately describe and evaluate the state of the relationship, 2) the ability to correct erroneous perceptions based on communication strategies designed to accomplish this objective, 3) the ability to identify and correct communication and behaviors that are inappropriate based on the actual instead of the perceived circumstances, and 4) the ability to identify areas of true conflict and strategies for negotiation and conflict resolution. This evaluative approach has been espoused by public relations scholars as a means of triggering problem resolution and negotiation strategies between organizations and their publics (Christen, 2005; Dozier & Ehling, 1992; Shin & Cameron, 2005). For example, a more recent study of relationships with journalists examined the possible impact of on-line public relations news subsidies such as e-mail press releases and video streams (Shin & Cameron, 2005). States of false conflict were found to transcend from the traditional to the on-line environment, although both journalists and public relations practitioners were optimistic that their on-line interactions could improve their relationships in the future. In a separate study, ethical issues were revisited based on

cultural issues resulting in perceptions and misperceptions among Korean journalists and public relations professionals (Kang, 2008).

The third area of coorientation in public relations deals with the concept of symmetry, as illustrated by Grunig and Hunt's (1984) four public relations models. In one-way models such as press agency and public information, public relations are used to generate publicity and disseminate information. In a two-way asymmetric model, an organization uses research to determine a public's views on an issue. This information is used to develop communication intended to persuade the public to adapt their opinions and behaviors to the organization's views.

In a two-way symmetrical model, research is used not just to identify a public's views on an issue, but also to identify areas of collaboration and negotiation. This approach has been noted as being a normative, dialogical, ethical approach to public relations (Grunig, 2001). The coorientation model was espoused as a way to measure agreement, accuracy, and understanding between an organization and its publics in this regard. All three of these coorientation variables were said to be desirous in a two-way symmetrical model in which the goal of a public relations practitioner was not to change the orientation or attitude of a public, but rather to positively affect the joint attitudes or orientations of organizations and publics around an issue in their common environments (e.g., Grunig & Hunt, 1984; Kelly, Thompson, & Waters, 2006; Pearson, 1989; Thomlison, 2000). Grunig (2001) also noted research demonstrating that public relations strategies had been shown to be most effective in affecting accuracy, less effective in influencing understanding, and least effective in altering agreement, especially for long-held attitudes about important issues.

A fourth area of coorientation in public relations revolves around organizational-public relationships. Broom (1977) questioned the effectiveness of traditional public relations audits, which measure the views of a public in an effort to change those views, in addressing issues of mutual concern to an organization and its publics. He espoused a coorientational measurement approach as being more desirable, based on the assumption that perceptions are important to attitudes and behaviors. The identification of perceptions and problems associated with misperceptions are key to

the work of public relations professionals in aligning organizations and their publics not just along issues, but in terms of relationships.

In addition to measuring communication outputs, scholars and practitioners also believe it is significant to assess outcomes (Ledingham et al., 1997), which is part of the view of public relations as relationship management. Since public relations is a management function concerned with identifying, managing, and measuring relationships between organizations and key publics (Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 1994), a coordination measurement model (McLeod & Chaffee, 1973) could be informative in assisting in the identification, planning, implementation, and evaluation of program management steps for public relations practitioners. A coordinational model of organization-public relationships developed by Cutlip et al. is shown in Appendix C. The use of coordination variables in developing relationship strategies has since been extensively studied by public relations researchers as an alternative to, for example, opinion surveys and audits (Ledingham & Bruning, 2007). The study affirmed earlier research that in “a public relations effort designed to make one side – usually the public – closer to the other side,” a coordinational approach “takes into account a more complete diagnosis of the relationship” (Broom & Dozier, 1990, p. 37). Grunig and Hunt (1984) had similarly envisioned the difference between an orientational approach and a coordinational approach to the setting of public relations objectives. As they stated, “public relations may help an organization affect a public, or it could change the relationship between an organization and that public” (p. 127).

Seltzer (2006) also questioned the unit of analysis that should be used to determine the effectiveness of public relations programs. He noted that previous measurements such as the number of press releases or news clips generated would no longer be effective. Instead, he conceptualized that the use of measurements of the organizational-public relationship dimensions of mutuality of control, commitment, trust, and satisfaction that had been developed by Hon and Grunig (1999) be integrated with the coordination model (Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 1994). Seltzer proposed that the impact of public relations programming would be the quality of the ensuing coordinational

organizational-public relationship. The relationship itself would become the X in the coorientation measurement model.

Contemporary uses of the coorientation concept have allowed for the analysis of relationships in a wide array of contexts. For example, the coorientation concept was used to study relationship dimensions between lawyers and public relations practitioners. The attorneys were found to be more willing to collaborate and rely on public relations professionals for their advice than the practitioners perceived. The study concluded that this was a key finding as it related to the importance of the two groups of professionals working together as part of an organization's crisis management strategies (Reber, Cropp, & Cameron, 2001). In advocating for public relations scholarship to use the symmetrical approach sought in communication programming, Waters (2009) found that although fundraisers and donors viewed their relationship positively, donors were more concerned regarding the nonprofit sector in general than were the fundraisers. Conversely, the coorientational identification of areas of misperceived disagreement showed opportunities for collaboration between providers of hospice care to terminally ill patients and physicians who make hospice referrals (Kelly, Thompson, & Waters, 2006). On a broader level, the coorientation relationship model was used as a public relations "social technology" tool (p. 1) in an attempt to ease international tensions by uncovering the heterogeneity of communication problems, including dissensus, false conflict, and consensus, between two eastern Europe nations (Vercic, Vercic, & Laco, 2005). The following section introduces the proposed application of coorientation to the study of customer service relationships.

A Coorientation Exploration of Service Meaning

The Baby Boomer exploratory service study (Williamson, 2009a) suggested an extension of the coorientation model that could expand both public relations theory and contemporary service research. The proposed coorientation model of customer service relationships (Appendix D) illustrates that service objectives could be conceptualized in a manner similar to how public relations scholars Grunig and Hunt (1984) envisioned the difference between an orientational approach and a

coorientational approach to the setting of public relations objectives. As they stated, “public relations may help an organization affect a public, or it could change the relationship between an organization and that public” (p. 127).

The exploratory service findings also suggested the viability of viewing customers as publics. Hon and Grunig (1999), in their assessment of relationships between organizations and publics, made a distinction between communal relationships and exchange relationships. Communal relationships were said to best characterize the nature of organizations’ relationships with publics. The meaning of publics was limited to those stakeholders with whom organizations have a reciprocal relationship due to the organizations’ and publics’ concern for each other, even without receiving comparable benefits in return. Conversely, exchange relationships were characterized as being akin to marketing relationships between organizations and customers, reflecting a willingness of one party to give benefits to the other only in anticipation of receiving comparable benefits in return.

However, Hon and Grunig (1999) noted that the delineation between communal and exchange relationships can become blurred in the long term. This is consistent with the findings of the Baby Boomer study. The participants’ descriptions of service provided in a non-commercial context could be said to resemble what Hon and Grunig described as communal relationships. However, the Baby Boomers did not infer that this type of relationship could not be achieved between organizations and customers in a commercial environment (Williamson, 2009a). Rather, commercial providers delivering service that the respondents described as pleasing to them appeared to demonstrate the same type of service spirit as those in communal relationships, thus seemingly mitigating the importance of whether the end recipients were categorized as customers or publics.

The proposed customer service model of customer service relationships is not intended to represent a departure from the findings of prior service studies. Instead, it presents a framework to address the service gaps that practical and anecdotal evidence suggest still exist in contemporary service settings. The next section of this literature review will conceptualize how a fresh perspective such as the coorientation model can complement and supplement traditional service research such as

the Gaps Model (Zeithaml et al., 1990). Following this discussion, findings will be presented of a pilot study that takes a first step in applying the proposed coorientation service model to an actual service setting and leads to the dissertation research questions.

A Coorientational Approach to Closing the Gaps

The coorientation model offers a holistic approach to diagnosing the state of a relationship, which can serve as a foundation for developing relationship-building communication strategies. The coorientation framework also offers insights into gap-closing considerations based on traditional service models.

Provider Gap 1: Not Knowing What Customers Expect

According to the Gaps Model (Zeithaml et al., 1990), the first gap that caused a discrepancy between customers' expectations of the service to be provided and their perceptions of the service once received (Customer Gap 5) was based on service executives' inaccurate perceptions about the service expected by customers. As assessed by Gaps Model scholars (Parasuraman et al., 1985, 1988), there was some congruency between the customer expectations anticipated by the executives interviewed and the expectations expressed in customer focus groups in the research leading to the Gaps Model and SERVQUAL. However, there were also noteworthy discrepancies revealed between expectations as expressed by the customers' and executives' understanding of those expectations.

The executives' inaccurate perceptions were indicative of what Gaps Model scholars viewed as an inadequate orientation to customer needs (Parasuraman et al., 1985, 1988). The researchers noted the tendency of service firms to lag behind their tangible goods counterparts in their use of marketing research to develop a customer orientation, and noted other missed opportunities in this regard, such as stronger upward communication from customer contact employees to management, and better handling of customer complaints to capture the nature and meaning of unfulfilled customer expectations.

A relational unit as suggested by the Gaps Model (Zeithaml et al., 1990) and the proposed coorientation model of customer service (Williamson, 2009a) would consist of “company A

providing service X to customer B” and “customer B receiving service X from company A.” A process of merely determining what service providers (A) think about the service they provide (X), comparing that to customers’ (B) expectations of the service (X), evaluating any gaps or disparities, and recommending communication strategies to close these gaps would be similar to the public relations practice of conducting an audit of the effectiveness of messages intended to change public perceptions of an organizational issue. Instead, determining what service providers perceive that customers expect from the service, and then assessing how accurately providers’ perceptions of customers’ expectations reflect customers’ actual expectations, would be a first step in what public relations scholar Broom (1977) would describe as a proposed mutual orientation or coorientation of service providers and service recipients regarding service.

In a coorientation model, a mutually positive attraction between the service executives and the customers being served regarding their mutual orientations toward the service being provided would represent a balanced, or symmetrical state of co-orientation (Newcomb, 1953). In the Gaps Model (Zeithaml et al., 1990), this would imply that Gap 1, the difference between what the service provider perceives that the customer expects from the service and what the customer really does expect from the service, has been closed as a prerequisite step toward symmetry. Ideally, the existence of Gap 1 creates a strain toward symmetry that could be based, for example, on forces caused by a commercial environment in which an organization relies on revenues from a service that the customer relies on the organization to provide. The communicative acts proposed to close the gap, such as market research with customers, transmitting customer needs upward from customer contact personnel to management, and eliciting feedback from complaining customers, are intended to result in rewards within the A-B-X system such as a mutually satisfying service experience, or secondary rewards such as a loyal customer relationship.

As inferred by Newcomb (1953), the stronger the relationship between the service provider A and the service recipient B, the stronger their mutual attraction toward each other and the more likely they are to continue communication designed to reach a shared accurate belief about the service X.

The result would be a narrowing of the Gap 1 difference between customer expectations of service and the executives' understanding of those expectations. This positive movement assumes an ideal situation that includes no other negative environmental or social forces impinging on the system, such as an unsolved incident of customer dissatisfaction or other factors impeding A-B-X systemic consensus.

These shared expectations or background understandings would symbolize the closing of Gap 1 in the Gaps Model (Zeithaml et al., 1990). This could occur through communication resulting in the executives' beliefs about customers' expectations regarding their service being accurately aligned with customers' actual service expectations.

Provider Gap 2: Not Selecting the Right Service Designs and Standards

The view of work groups as coorientation systems is applicable to strategies needed to narrow Gap 2 of the Gaps Model (Zeithaml et al., 1990). The explanation of the gap as described by the model, in language that resembles a coorientation analysis, is that even when executives of service providing organizations (A) accurately perceived what their customers (B) considered as indicators of high quality service (X), the impact of this Gap 1 reconciliation could be thwarted if the executives' accurate knowledge of customers' expectations was not converted into concrete organizational service performance standards (Gap 2).

One reason given for this second gap is the intangibility of service and services. This requires more dependence on intra-organizational communication to describe and deliver services than is necessary for tangible goods. The communication processes that are integral in the strain toward symmetry could be impaired in numerous different coorientational systems throughout an organization. One such system could consist of members of one department (A) responsible for designing a service (X) and members of another department (B) entrusted with providing the service operational standards that support X. A Gap 2 service breakdown could result from department A and department B not interpreting communication regarding the service (X) in the same manner.

Provider Gap 3: Not Delivering to Service Standards

Even if symmetry is reached regarding the design of service specifications, a new coorientational paradigm could present itself as a Gap 3 service performance gap. This would represent the difference between customer-driven service designs and standards as developed within the organization and the service as actually delivered (X) by customer contact staff (A) to customers (B). Among the problems leading to Gap 3, as explained by Gaps Model researchers (Zeithaml et al., 1990), are conflicts between intra-organizational work groups and conflicts between customer expectations and organizational expectations. Each of these A-B-X systems represents a separate framework to be analyzed using coorientation variables.

Provider Gap 4 - Not Matching Service Performance to Service Promises

The Gaps Model depicted a role for public relations as part of an integrated marketing communication (IMC) mix. Gap 4 was determined to occur as a result of service providers not matching their performance to service promises that helped shape customers' expectations. In the model, customer expectations of service are influenced by factors such as subtle cues, word-of-mouth communication, past experience, personal need, and, importantly, external mass communication in the form of marketing messages conveyed through IMC vehicles such as advertising and public relations (Zeithaml, Berry & Parasuraman, 1996; Zeithaml, Bitner, & Gremler, 2006).

However, Gronroos (1984, 1990), in separate studies regarding the importance of promises in services marketing, suggested that the image of a firm is also important in setting customer expectations. This was echoed by Clow, Kurtz, Ozment, and Ong (1997). In their testing of the Gaps Model's hypothesized antecedents of customer expectations of service, Clow et al. concluded that firm image had been overlooked in service literature and was worthy of further study. Managing the image of a firm is a more strategic view of public relations than its role as part of an IMC mix (Ledingham et al., 1997). In this way, public relations practitioners' use of the coorientation model to help develop image-building communication strategies extends the impact of public relations in closing communication Gap 4.

Adapting Coorientation Research to the Study of Contemporary Customer Service

The exploratory study of service relationships demonstrates that public relations concepts can be efficacious in building on existing service themes and constructs. The seminal work of Ferguson (1984), identifying opportunities to advance theory within public relations, was developed separately but contemporaneously with the mid-1980s development of the Gaps Model and SERVQUAL research regarding service quality (Zeithaml et al., 1990). As the acknowledgement by other disciplines of public relations as a theoretical field of study continues to emerge (Botan & Taylor, 2006), the use of a public relations model of coorientation as a fresh approach to studying service relationships could both accelerate service improvements and broaden public relations' exposure to academicians in related areas.

As the next step in infusing coorientational concepts into the study of contemporary service, a pilot study was conducted to begin to determine the applicability of the coorientation model of customer service in an actual service environment involving both service providers and service recipients. The findings of this pilot study will be discussed in the section that follows.

The Pilot Study

So far this dissertation has discussed the urgent need for new approaches to the scholarly study of contemporary customer service. Exploratory research was presented in answer to the questions of if and how relationship-building concepts from the public relations discipline could enhance the understanding of relationships between service providers and service recipients. The findings of these Baby Boomer pilot interviews suggested that the theoretical model of coorientation could provide a framework for diagnosing service relationships (Williamson, 2009a). Public relations scholars have demonstrated that coorientational analyses can serve as the basis of communication strategies designed to enhance two-way symmetrical relationships (e.g., Broom, 1977; Grunig, 2001).

The exploratory research sought feedback only from service recipients, who shared their insights regarding their random service stories. The study accomplished its purpose of gaining customers' perspectives of the meaning of their service experiences. However, additional research

was needed to determine if the coorientation model of customer service that emerged from the study's findings could be applied in a context involving both service providers and service recipients in the same real-world service setting. This would require determining, as a first step, if there were specific issues for which each party's own perceptions and cross-perceptions could be deemed pertinent to managing their service relationship. A pilot study was conducted to answer this preliminary research question (Williamson, 2009b).

A non-commercial context was selected for the pilot study, to learn from the positive manner in which service recipients in the exploratory interviews perceived service provided for non-monetary gain. Specifically, the pilot study used focus groups to assess service among both service providers and service recipients in the same educational environment.

The educational scenario selected for this pilot study will be referred to under the pseudonym of the Weekend Academy for African American Boys, held in a Midwestern city by Future Leaders Institute, a national consulting firm whose stated mission is to offer "training, guidance, inspiration, and technical assistance to school personnel, parents, and students in today's multifaceted classrooms" (Official site, n.d.). The Academy was a six-week academic enrichment program for selected 8th-grade and 9th-grade African American males. Students admitted to the Academy were nominated by their schools, through their school guidance counselors, as the result of having achieved a level of academic success.

Education was selected as the context for this study for several reasons, in addition to educational service breakdowns noted in the Introduction chapter of this dissertation. First, education has long been recognized as a vital service industry (Cover stories, 1987). More recently, President Barack Obama declared educational reform, along with energy and healthcare, to be one of three national priorities warranting increased government investment in spite of huge federal spending deficits (Remarks, 2009).

Next, service literature is replete with examples of secondary education as a context in which stakeholders such as parents, teachers, school administrators, and students can be viewed as

customers with specific needs to be served (e.g., Abdullah, 2006; Appleton-Knapp, 2006; Bitner et al., 1996; Hill, 1995). These stakeholders span demographic boundaries such as age, which allows for the possibility of divergent perspectives from those of the Baby Boomers studied in the exploratory research.

Finally, in keeping with the purpose of this study, the educational environment is one in which research has documented underserved populations. The sample studied represents one such population, namely African American males. Researchers have extensively studied the significant educational disparities that exist between this group and other student segments throughout the U.S. in areas such as standardized test scores, dropout rates, disciplinary actions, and referrals for remedial education services (Ferguson, 2000; Gordon, 2002; Ogbu, 2003; Watkins, Lewis, & Chou, 2001).

Among the questions raised in educational research is the importance of interaction between educators and parents, presumed to be A and B respectively for this study, regarding X, assumed to be some aspect or attributes of service related to desirable educational outcomes (Cruz, 2010; Davis, 2003; Mandara, 2006; Ogbu, 2003). Weekend Academy administrators have identified school counselors as having the job description responsibilities that include establishing and maintaining relationships with students and their families throughout their tenure at a school (Interview, 2009). As such, the pilot study used focus groups, or group interviewing (Wimmer & Dominick, 2006), to assess the orientations, or attitudes, of the counselors and parents of Weekend Academy participants toward each other and toward the educational service provided to African-American male students.

The pilot study findings suggested the salience of differing perceptions and cross-perceptions regarding numerous issues, including attributes of what was referred to as “parental involvement,” in diagnosing the educator-parent relationship, and in using this information to consider enhancements to the relationship. Table 2.1 identifies the possible dimensions of parental involvement that emerged from the study (Williamson, 2009b).

Table 2.1. Pilot study dimensions of “parental involvement” (X), based on perceptions and cross-perceptions of Weekend Academy educators (A) and parents (B).

Does an “involved parent” of a successful African American male 8 th and 9 th grade student:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteer at the school? • Attend school events? • Attend parent-teacher conferences? • Initiate contact with the school? • Rely on the school to initiate communication? • Ensure that students’ assignments are completed? • Establish boundaries at home on possible learning distractions such as mass media and technology? • Set academic expectations for their children?

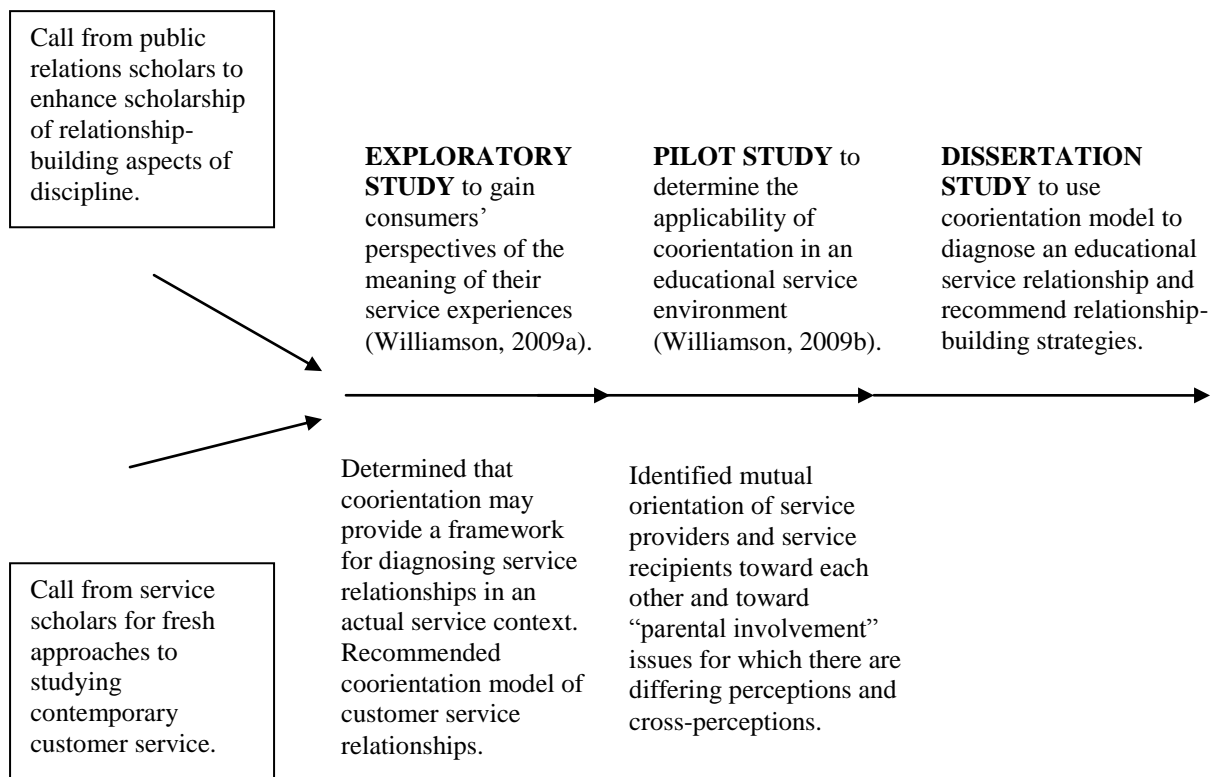
As previously stated, the coorientation service model shown in Appendix D was proposed based on findings of exploratory interviews with a consumer segment whose members discussed a broad range of service experiences over the course of their lifetimes. The subsequent pilot study of service providers and service recipients suggested that analyzing perceptions and cross-perceptions of parental involvement could demonstrate the applicability of this coorientation model of customer service to the relationship between service providers and service recipients in the same actual non-commercial service setting. These conclusions lay the foundation for the dissertation research questions posed in the next subsection.

The Dissertation Study: Applying Coorientation as a Theoretical Framework in Actual Service Settings

My dissertation is the culmination of my previous exploratory and pilot research that seeks to determine if public relations theory can be integrated into the scholarly study of contemporary service (Figure 2.2). To date, I have determined that conceptualizing customer service through the theoretical

lens of coorientation may be consistent with the increasing focus of public relations scholars on the relationship-building aspects of this discipline. My dissertation will use a coorientation model to diagnose an educational service relationship and recommend relationship-building strategies, thus demonstrating how merging the study of relationships from a public relations perspective with the study of service from other consumer-driven disciplines can add to the depth of knowledge in each of these areas.

Figure 2.2. Research stream leading to dissertation study.



My research builds on the service issue that appeared to present the most potential for a coorientational analysis in the pilot study, namely the meaning and importance of parental involvement. Accordingly, my dissertation research questions are as follows:

1. To what extent do schools and parents agree/disagree on issues related to dimensions of parental involvement?

2. To what extent do schools and parents perceive agreement/disagreement between themselves and the other side on issues related to dimensions of parental involvement?
3. To what extent are schools and parents accurate/inaccurate in predicting the other side's views on issues related to dimensions of parental involvement?
4. What coorientation state (i.e. consensus, dissensus, false consensus, false conflict) exists between schools and parents on issues related to dimensions of parental involvement?
5. What recommendations for relationship-building communication strategies may emerge from these coorientational analyses?

The next chapter provides the rationale and details for the qualitative case study method that was used to answer these dissertation questions. Details of the cases selected are presented, as well as the processes used to collect and interpret the data and present the research report.

CHAPTER 3

METHOD

This chapter discusses the qualitative research approach that was used to answer the research questions posed in the previous chapter. The rationale for the proposed case study method will be presented, followed by details regarding the cases selected and the processes and procedures for data collection, analysis, and presentation.

The exploratory and pilot studies leading to this dissertation helped address the need identified by service scholars for qualitative studies to assist in understanding consumer experiences and behaviors involved with contemporary service phenomena (Parasuraman & Zinkhan, 2002). The answers to the dissertation research questions were also best interpreted by qualitative methods of inquiry.

The intent of the research questions is to make sense of a pertinent aspect of the relationship between service providers and service recipients regarding the service provided and received. Coorientation by its nature is dependent on interaction between parties in a relational framework that relies on their mutual attraction toward each other and their mutual orientation toward some object of the interaction. Hearing and experiencing the discourse among the coorientational partners in their natural field setting is essential to interpreting their production of meaning in a social structure such as a coorientation paradigm (Deetz, 2001; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Previous coorientation studies have benefitted from qualitative inquiry of the “sense-making” processes that mutually oriented participants A and B engage in to create the dimensions by which they experience the thing, object, or issue X in their mutual environment (e.g., Cameron & McCollum, 1993, p. 223).

Accordingly, this dissertation used a qualitative case study method to interpret how the proposed coorientation model of customer service helped diagnose the state of relationships between

service providers and service recipients in actual service settings. A case study allows a field investigator to gain an in-depth contextual understanding of a well-defined situation and interpret the meaning for those involved in the situation. Case studies are typically used to address questions pertaining to the workings of social phenomena, such as customer service, in a setting in which the larger context, such as a customer service environment, is critical to the analysis (Creswell, 2007; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009).

More specifically, a case study approach is consistent with the context of the dissertation research, which took place in a secondary education environment. Case studies are commonly used in education to supplement descriptive data with information that is rich in understanding, actions, and consequences (Merriam, 1998). An educational setting was selected for this study to maintain consistency with the pilot research, which was descriptive in its account of how service phenomena might be explored in a real-life educational context using coorientation variables (Williamson, 2009b). The current study is explanatory (Stake, 1995) in that it goes beyond mere description to a more in-depth montage (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005) of the educator-parent coorientational service paradigms that were interpreted.

A case study was also selected given the study purpose of viewing the service relationship through a predetermined theoretical framework such as coorientation. According to Yin (2009), the identification of a theoretical proposition to guide data collection is a major point of differentiation between case study methodologies and some other forms of qualitative inquiry. Case studies can accommodate, test or advance, refine, revise, or expand theories, concepts, and models from other disciplines, such as psychology (Merriam, 1988), in which coorientation has its roots.

Additionally, the description of a case study as a bounded system is applicable to a coorientation framework, as the requirement of a system calls for interrelated parts that form a whole (Creswell, 2007; Stake, 1995). This representation is analogous to the depiction of coorientation as a mutual system of interactive parts (e.g., Newcomb, 1953). The boundaries of the case study system

are determined by a purposeful strategy of setting the parameters of the units of study (Creswell, 2007; Stake, 1995), as detailed in the subsection that follows.

Case Selection

The selection and identification of the case itself is a challenging but crucial first step in designing a case study. In the bounded system of the case study method, the boundaries define the units of analyses such as time, events, and processes that best correspond to the phenomenon of study. The context, or the natural setting, of the case may be conceptualized narrowly, such as specific groups involved in the study or a time period or physical location in which the study is to occur. Alternatively, the context may be more broadly conceptualized, such as a social, political, or historical setting. Boundaries may be redefined as the result of discoveries made during data collection (Creswell, 2007; Stake, 1995).

Two cases were selected for this study. The case study method allows for the simultaneous study of more than one case or bounded systems. Multiple cases can make for a more-compelling study by allowing for cross-case analyses of themes that are common to both cases, particularly when a within-case analysis such as the pilot study has already identified some viable cross-themes. Studying more than one case can strengthen the precision, external validity, and analytical generalizability and replicability of findings. However, a trade-off for the breadth of knowledge that can be gained across cases is the inability to provide as much depth to the study of any individual case (Creswell, 2007; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009).

The first case that was selected for this study is the bounded system of the parents whose sons have participated in what will be referred to in this dissertation as the Weekend Academy for African American Boys, the school counselors who recommended the Academy participants, and the Academy staff and instructors. The Academy is sponsored by Future Leaders Institute (FLI), a pseudonym that will be used in this study for a national education consulting firm whose training and programming is designed to serve the needs of parents, students, teachers, administrators, and staffs involved in urban education. The Academy was expanded after its first cycle from six weeks to nine

weeks in duration, and was offered three times from January 2009 through December 2010 in the school districts of the Midwestern U.S. city in which FLI's national headquarters is located. The 25 to 30 participants in each Weekend Academy session were 8th- and 9th-grade African American males who were nominated by their schools, through their high school counselors, as high-potential students who had already achieved a level of academic success as measured by their grade point averages. The Academy provided math, science, and computer enrichment activities, as well as self-esteem and cultural awareness programming.

As explained in the Literature Review chapter of this dissertation, a six-week Weekend Academy session held in the winter of 2009 served as the site of the pilot research that preceded the current study. The pilot study led to the broad finding that agreements, disagreements, perceptions, and cross-perceptions were salient to the study of the mutual orientation of service-providing counselors and service-recipient parents toward each other and toward the service being provided. The current study built on this finding by assessing how the coorientation model of customer service could be used to analyze the dimensions of parental involvement, which emerged from the pilot as important aspects of the service provider-service recipient relationship. Yin (2009) notes the viability of narrowing the focus of a case study in this manner, when a more robust analysis of an embedded subunit or subcase is more appropriate than a holistic analysis of the entire case.

In addition to providing consistency with the pilot study, the Weekend Academy allowed a reflexive role for me as the researcher (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 1998) and as a parent of a middle school African American son and a former independent contractor and trainer for other FLI programs. The Weekend Academy also offered the opportunity to assess two coorientation frameworks: the relationship between parents and schools, and the relationship between these parents and FLI. Pseudonyms will be used for FLI and Weekend Academy participants referred to by name in this study.

The second case is the middle school program of a church-run private school located in a metropolitan area of a U.S. southeastern state. This school will be referred to under the pseudonym

of Redeemer Christian Day School throughout this dissertation. Redeemer serves approximately 70 pre-kindergarten through 8th-grade students on the grounds of the newly restructured church that owns the school. The school's parents were presumed to be mutually attracted toward each other based on their simultaneous orientations toward the core values they believe should form the foundation of their children's education. Administrators view parents as an integral component of the school community. However, the nature of parents' roles and relationships with the service-providing school and church are being re-assessed as these organizations grapple with economic challenges that are essential to their survival. The fact that parents pay a fee for their children to attend the school also created a bridge between the non-commercial educational environment of the grant-funded Weekend Academy and possible future research applying this study's findings to a commercial service environment. Pseudonyms will also be used for all Redeemer study participants referred to by name.

Redeemer Christian Day School was identified for this study as a result of my unrelated discussion of middle-school issues with a colleague who serves as chair of the school's governing Council Board. Redeemer was ultimately included in the case study because of the instrumental role it could play in allowing for divergent views regarding parental involvement (Stake, 1995). Presenting interpretations of the same topic in similar cases within dissimilar contexts is consistent with Creswell's (2007) advocacy of selecting cases that are unusual and diverse in order to gain a full description of multiple perspectives. Redeemer also allowed for a reflexive role for me as the researcher (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 1998) as a single middle-school parent who is faced with societal challenges in evaluating and selecting appropriate school environments, and regularly interacting with educators.

Data Collection

A case study in its completed form presents a detailed description of the case that emerges through multiple sources of information. This requires in-depth data collection through an array of research methods (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995). This multiple-method approach also allows for triangulation of the data which, according to Yin (2009), occurs not just when multiple sources are

analyzed separately and compared, but when reported case study events or facts have been supported by more than one source of evidence.

Table 3.1 provides a summary of the sources of data used for this study. This is followed by a description of each of these methods and an explanation of the specific procedures employed to use these methods in each of the cases studied. Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was obtained as needed prior to proceeding with the research methods discussed (Appendix E).

Table 3.1. Sources of data collection for dissertation case studies.

Case	Focus Groups	Interviews (some participants interviewed in multiple roles)	Observation/ Participant Observation	Document Review
Weekend Academy:				See Table 3.2
Academy Staff		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Current Academy Director Former Academy Director 	December 2009 Weekend Academy staff meeting	
Academy Instructors		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Math instructor Science instructor Reading instructor 		
Parents		10 parents representing 8 families	November 2009 Weekend Academy Black History parent/student guest speaker presentation	
School Counselors		8 counselors representing the 2 private schools, 3 suburban schools, and 3 urban schools attended by the sons of the parents interviewed	Extended observation of the school environments of 3 of the schools represented by the interviewees	
Redeemer:				See Table 3.2
Council Board	Prior to January 2010 monthly meeting	Council Board parent-president	November 2009, January, February 2010 monthly meetings	
Administrators		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Principal Administrative Assistant Council Board parent-president Parent-Teacher Fellowship (PTF) parent-president 	School event: Donuts with Dad, February 2010	

Table 3.1 (cont.). Sources of data collection for dissertation case studies.

Case	Focus Groups	Interviews (some participants interviewed in multiple roles)	Observation/ Participant Observation	Document Review
Redeemer (cont.)				
Middle school parents		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council Board parent-president • Parent-Teacher Fellowship (PTF) parent-president • Principal/middle school parent • 3 other middle school parents 	School event - Donuts with Dad, February 2010	
Middle school teachers		3 of 4 middle school teachers		

Data Collection Methods

As just shown in Table 3.1, data were collected using focus groups, in-depth interviews, observation, participant observation, and document review. Each of these methods is described next in the context of the case for which it was utilized.

Focus groups. A focus group, or group interview, was used when interview topics were best discussed in an environment with interviewees' peers. I conducted a focus group to collect data from Redeemer's governing Council Board. I was assisted by the facilitator guide shown in Appendix F in allowing the group dynamics to foster social interaction among the interviewees (Creswell, 2007; Krueger, 1994; Merton, Riske, & Kendall, 1956; Willis, 2005), consistent with the premise of the coorientation framework being used for this study.

In-depth interviews. Data were collected from in-depth interviews, given the descriptive and analytic power of this method of broad inquiry in facilitating an understanding of the meanings behind the data (McCracken, 1988). In-depth interviews were one-on-one sessions between an individual participant and me as the interviewer. This method allowed participants to reveal their perceptions, attitudes, behaviors, and emotions in a setting apart from their peers, subordinates, and superiors, particularly regarding sensitive topics such as race and family matters.

I used in-depth interviews to collect data from Redeemer administrators, teachers, and parents, and from Weekend Academy administrators, teachers, parents, and school counselors. Each interview lasted from 30-70 minutes. Following introductions, I posed an opening “grand tour” question (McCracken, 1988, p. 35) that was broad and non-directive. An interview guide is shown in Appendix G; however, a semi-structured interview process was used to allow participants to tell their stories in their own words, with follow-up questions and prompts used only as needed for clarification and elaboration of participants’ responses (McCracken). Interview sessions were audio-recorded to assist with analysis, and the data gathered were analyzed using typed transcripts of the taped sessions and field notes that I wrote immediately after each interview.

Observation. Observations allowed me to collect descriptive and reflective information by becoming passively entrenched in specific scenarios within the research context (Merriam, 1998). Merriam described a spectrum of participatory stances that may be assumed by the researcher-observer. These roles range from being a complete participant who is an actual member of the group with a concealed role as an observer, to a complete observer who is concealed, for example, behind a one-way mirror. Within the middle of the range is the researcher as both a known participant in the group while also a known observer.

For the current study, I assumed the roles of a known observer for three monthly meetings of the Redeemer Council Board and a Weekend Academy staff meeting, a participant observer as part of the audiences for a Redeemer event honoring fathers and a Weekend Academy Black History presentation to which Academy parents were invited, and a known observer at three schools where I took non-classroom tours as part of Weekend Academy counselor interviews. The observation sites were selected based on who or what should be observed, for how long, and when, in order to assist in gathering the case material needed to advance the purpose of the study (Merriam, 1998). In each case, a gatekeeper facilitated my access to the observation site and assisted in determining the role to be assumed by the observer. The gatekeeper also introduced me to the group when appropriate, providing enough detail as needed for ethical and acceptance purposes, but not so much detail as to

distract those being observed from their natural activities. Following entry to the group, I engaged in observations and took notes as appropriate regarding the obvious and subtle aspects of the physical setting, the participants, the activities and interactions, the conversations, and even my own behaviors in response to the phenomena observed. I recorded notes, feelings, and perceptions, but heeded Merriam's cautions that becoming familiar with the setting should supersede blatant signs of data collection if the latter appeared disruptive in the environment being observed.

Document review. Document reviews allowed me to examine materials that assisted in providing a robust understanding of the context, facts, and events of the cases studied. Yin (2009) views the document study process as being similar to other methods that require a thought process organized around openness to both expected and unexpected evidence leading to responses to the research questions. My document review protocol (Merriam, 1998) involved questions such as the history of the document, the purpose of the creator of the document, the intended document recipient, and the document delivery method. Preliminary answers to these types of questions led to my assessment of the amount of time and other resources that should be spent on reviewing the document, or on taking other steps such as copying and preserving the document or including it for comment by participants during other forms of data collection (Yin, 2009). Table 3.2 provides a summary of documents reviewed for each case.

Table 3.2. Case study documents reviewed.

Document	Purpose	Distribution
Weekend Academy		
Academy acceptance letters	Provide program overview and expectations.	Mailed and e-mailed to parents of students accepted to the Academy.
Academy text messages	Communicate requests, information, and responses.	Sent as needed by Academy administrator to parents and students who provide cell phone numbers.
Academy e-mail messages	Communicate requests, information, and responses.	Sent as needed by Academy administrators to parents, students, and counselors who provide e-mail addresses.

Table 3.2 (cont.). Case study documents reviewed.

Document	Purpose	Distribution
Weekend Academy (cont.)		
Future Leaders Institute website	Promote services of national educational consulting firm; link to Weekend Academy page to provide information and solicit donations.	Available to public; url printed on all company communication.
Weekend Academy website	Provide Academy information, student and parent document and information portals, homework drop sites, social networking site links.	Available to invited parties (e.g., students, parents) via username and passcode.
Academy promotional flyers.	Describe Academy vision, mission, and curriculum.	Distributed to school counselors to make available to prospective qualifying Academy students and parents.
Redeemer		
Information folder	School profile information and application for prospective families.	Given to prospective parents during informational visits to the school.
School website	Provide school information and news.	Available to public; url printed on some school communication.
2/10, 1/10, 12/09, 11/09, 10/09, 9/09 Council Board agendas and meeting minutes	Provide and recap policy agenda items such as proposed dress code revisions, church member tuition discounts, development fund prospects, tuition increases, reports from the finance, public relations, scholarship, and development committees.	Distributed to Council Board members before, during, and after meetings.
Weekly parent letters and monthly parent newsletters ending 2/10 and beginning 5/09	5/5/09 weekly letter includes annual parent survey. Weekly letters provide information such as invitation to student awards program, school career day, cookie fundraiser deadline, summer camp registration, development fund solicitations, parent/student fitness challenge, dress code reminder, lab fee, 8 th grade graduation, fall registration/re-enrollment, tuition payment options, parent-teacher fellowship (PTF) meeting dates, requirements for new Council Board prospects, lost and found, school philanthropy event.	Hard copies of 2009-10 school year letters e-mailed. Previous year's copies mailed and inserted in student backpacks.
2/10/10 parent survey re: school uniforms	Solicit feedback re: proposed school uniforms.	E-mailed to parents from school administrative assistant.

Table 3.2 (cont.). Case study documents reviewed.

Document	Purpose	Distribution
Redeemer (cont.)		
2/10 flyer re: women's seminar hosted by school principal	Provide seminar details, encourage participation and contributions.	Random school and community distribution.
1/26/10 informational message to parents re: students filmed for TV commercial	Provide information re: students filmed for commercial to be run with church television program.	E-mailed to parents from school administrative assistant.
11/09 flyer re: school Veterans Day event	Invite parents and veterans to attend school day event.	Hard copies sent home in student backpacks.
9/09 Council Board slide presentation	Train new members on Board purpose, goals, and obligations.	Provided in face-to-face training session.
5/11/09 letter to parents from school principal	Update re: details of anticipated merger of churches; provide assurance of continued involvement of current principal and pastor of governing church; inform of merged church leadership role for pastor of new governing church.	Hard copies mailed to parents.
4/21/09 letter to parents from school principal and pastor of former governing church	Inform of details of anticipated merger of churches; affirm continued commitment to school; invitation to joint church worship service; invitation to continue school enrollment.	Hard copies mailed to parents.

Data Collection Procedures

The procedures used to implement each data collection method will now be discussed in more detail in the context of the cases studied. As previously discussed and as shown in Table 3.1, in-depth interviews and participant observations were used for the case study of parents whose sons have participated in one of the six-to-nine week sessions of the Weekend Academy for African American boys, the school counselors who recommended the Academy participants, and the Academy administrators and instructors. Focus groups, in-depth interviews, observations, and participant observations were used to gather evidence pertaining to the second case, the middle school program of Redeemer Christian Day School. Document reviews were conducted in both cases, with administrators at both sites providing access to available non-confidential communication between

parents and administrators for the time elapsed during the 2009-2010 academic year and any additional pertinent correspondence for the six months prior to that time.

Data collection procedures: Weekend Academy parents, school counselors, and Administrators. Future Leaders Institute (FLI), the sponsors of the Weekend Academy for African American Boys, maintains a database of parents whose sons have participated in one of the three sessions of the Academy since it began in the fall of 2009. These electronic files contain contact information for approximately 90 families, given the average enrollment of 30 students per Academy session. FLI sent e-mails with research recruitment messages to each family (see Appendix H), consistent with the manner in which communication was sent during their son's involvement in the Academy. The letters asked for one parent from each family to voluntarily participate in one-on-one confidential interviews that I would conduct to study their perceptions of parent-educator relationships.

FLI administrators and I determined that interviews would be the best method for gaining the confidence of parents who might feel more comfortable discussing in-depth personal matters in a private environment. This approach was consistent with the reluctance I perceived on the part of some parents to answer certain questions in the pilot study focus groups. The in-depth interview environment allowed for detailed insights to build on pilot study findings, consistent with the study's research questions.

Parents were initially asked to respond by a certain date regarding their willingness and availability to participate in interviews, ideally to be held on their choice of several predetermined dates and times. The suggested times were on Saturdays at the FLI offices that served as the site of the Academy sessions, to maintain a contextual environment with which the respondents are familiar. I followed up on the mailings with random telephone calls to non-responding parents as needed to bolster response rates. Based on their past experience with the Academy parents, FLI expected at least 10 parents to ultimately participate in the interviews. Ten parents were interviewed,

representing eight families broken down as two husband and wife couples, three single mothers, one married father, and two married mothers.

Once the parents were recruited for the interviews, FLI sent recruitment e-mail messages to the counselors at the schools attended by the Weekend Academy sons of the parents interviewed. The parent-counselor match-ups are shown in Appendix I. The counselors were asked to participate in one-on-one interviews, with the stated purpose and the interview process mimicking the parent process as much as possible. One counselor declined to be interviewed based on his stated lack of knowledge of the Academy or the student from his school who had participated. All seven of the other counselors who agreed to participate chose to meet me in their school offices, so their interviews were conducted at the time and place that were most convenient for their work schedules. Counselors were asked questions about the Weekend Academy and African American male students in general, with no direct or confidential questions posed specifically about the students whose parents were interviewed. It should be noted that the primary purpose of the parent-school matches was not to directly compare responses, given the interpretive nature of this research and the relatively small populations studied. The matches were instead designed so that the overall responses were focused on the same general contexts. Additionally, two Weekend Academy administrators and three instructors participated in one-on-one interviews to address the same types of issues that were raised in the parent and counselor interviews. A sample interview consent form is shown in Appendix J.

The parents, school counselors, and Academy administrators and teachers who participated in the interviews were asked questions that broadly addressed their perceptions of the Academy, the Academy students' schools, the role of the parents in their sons' education, and other academic success factors for African American males. In keeping with the nature of qualitative case study research, the pilot study dimensions of parental involvement were used to help inform data collection for this study, but not to pre-determine the findings that would emerge (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2009).

A separate coorientation interview guide was developed to be read or handed out to participants as needed to facilitate answering questions that asked for speculation regarding the

attitudes and behaviors of others (see Appendix K). These inquiries first asked the respondents to answer questions based on their personal experiences, thoughts, attitudes, observations, and beliefs, regarding the likelihood of parents of African American males to engage in certain activities depicting the posited dimensions of parental involvement. The interviewees were then asked to respond to the same question with the answer that they perceived would be the dominant view of their son's school and/or the Weekend Academy (e.g., Broom, 1977). In keeping with the interpretive nature of this research, the cororientation interview guide was used to assess participants' responses as being high, low, or neutral on the scale used, and was not intended as a source of quantitative data measurement. The guide was modified as needed to accommodate insights gained throughout the interview process.

Interaction with participants in the Academy pilot study also suggested that when questions were asked concerning sensitive issues such as race and parenting, respondents were more likely to offer their own experiences if the questions were asked generically rather than if the questions specifically asked for them to relate their personal experiences. Respondents who appeared nervous about stating their beliefs concerning sensitive matters were reminded of the value of their opinions to the research and, in some instances, were reminded that they could decline to answer any question or ask that the tape recorder be turned off.

Approximately one-third of the 20 hours of Academy interview data were collected by telephone due to inclement winter weather that forced school closings and travel disruptions during two scheduled research trips. Although unintended, the nuances of interacting via telephone and e-mail helped create an understanding of the types of communication challenges that were being studied. All interviews were tape-recorded, and the tapes were transcribed for analysis along with the handwritten notes that I created following each interview.

Data Collection Procedures: Redeemer Christian Day School. The Redeemer Christian Day School research process began with my introduction at the November 2009 monthly meeting of the school's governing Council Board. The Board currently consists of nine of the 11-member

maximum authorized by the school's by-laws. The Board is chaired by the parent who served as my gatekeeper into the research site. I was allowed to observe the January and February meetings of the Council Board, which currently consists of the school principal, two representatives of the church that owns the school, and six parents, including the Council Board chair and the president of the school's Parent-Teacher Fellowship (PTF).

The chair requested the Council Board members' voluntary participation in a Council focus group that was conducted during the first 70 minutes of an extended January 2010 Council Board monthly meeting. The Council Board group structure allowed me to maximize the number of participants from whom data was collected (Creswell, 2007), and did not exceed the general guideline of focus groups optimally being conducted with six to eight, and no more than 10 participants per group. As anticipated, the focus group was useful in understanding the attitudes and behaviors of the group participants, who share certain characteristics or qualities relevant to the research (Wimmer & Dominick, 2006). As the focus group researcher, I served as the purposeful but unobtrusive facilitator of these in-group discussions (Krueger, 1994). The questions I posed were broad, and probes were limited to those needed to address the stated research objectives of collecting data pertinent to the research questions (see facilitator guide in Appendix F). Reactive probes were also used to elaborate on interviewee responses that required clarification. Each group member was allowed to respond to each question. Although the personalities of the group members helped me understand the context of the case, all Board members participated in the focus group and no participant dominated the group to an extent that precluded the involvement of others (Krueger, 1994).

As part of the written research consent process (Appendix L), the participants agreed to maintain confidentiality among themselves regarding responses given during the focus group. Interviewees were also asked for consent to audiotape their sessions, and were advised of their option not to use personal identifiers on tape in order to preserve their out-of-group confidentiality. The data gathered were analyzed using typed transcripts of the audio-taped sessions (Creswell, 2007).

In addition to the Council Board focus groups, I conducted individual interviews with the Redeemer principal and with her administrative assistant, who is also closely involved in school administrative and governance issues. The Council Board chair and the Parent-Teacher Fellowship (PTF) chair also agreed to participate in in-depth interviews, to share their perspectives as both administrators and as the parents of Redeemer middle school students. To a more limited extent, the Redeemer principal also shared her perspectives as one of the school's middle school parents. Three other middle school parents volunteered to be interviewed, and interviews were also conducted with three of the four middle school teachers. Consistent with the Weekend Academy case study, a separate coorientation discussion guide was developed to assist Redeemer focus group and interview participants in answering questions related to their perceptions and cross-perceptions.

Data Analysis and Presentation

Analysis of the data collected for this study relied on the three-step process recommended by Miles and Huberman (1994). For the case study method, these steps are typically applied first to within-cases analyses and then across cases. The first step, data reduction, involved sorting, focusing, and organizing the data. This step followed a pattern-matching process in which an empirically based pattern or replicated patterns are compared with the predicted pattern (Yin, 2009). In keeping with Yin's preferred analytical strategy of relying on a predetermined frame of reference or theoretical proposition, the patterns sought to be confirmed, refuted, or elaborated on were the dimensions of parental involvement that were gleaned from the pilot study (Williamson, 2009b).

A second step of data display was intended to provide visual assistance in organizing and compressing the large amounts of information gathered using, for this study, data matrices. For multiple-case studies such as the current research, this step represents an opportunity to develop separate data displays for each case as well as cross-case comparisons and syntheses (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

The third step recommended by Miles and Huberman (1994) is to begin drawing conclusions in some meaning-generating form. Based on the purpose and research questions of this study, this

last step involved using the proposed coorientation model of customer service relationships (Appendix D) to diagnose the educational service relationship in their natural settings, and using this diagnostic information to recommend enhancements to the interactions between the service providers and service recipients in the case contexts.

As envisioned by public relations scholars, the major outcomes of a coorientation study are analyses that can serve as the basis of relationship-focused communication strategies (e. g., Grunig & Hunt, 1984). In keeping with this premise, as well as the Miles and Huberman (1994) data analysis process, I involved administrators from Weekend Academy for African American Boys and Redeemer Christian Day School in member checks and reviews of the data during analysis, and engaged them in brainstorming sessions to give feedback to interaction strategies that I recommended based on the case study results.

Scholars agree that case study findings should be presented in a compelling narrative manner, although there is no standard reporting format (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009). Merriam recommends a flow that begins with a vignette that creates a vicarious experience for the reader. An extensive description of the case and its context may then be presented, followed by a presentation of issues, with an in-depth probe of the most pertinent issues.

Importantly, Merriam (1998) suggests that a disproportionate portion of a case study report be spent on description versus analysis. Stake (1995) views a plainly disclosed background and role for the researcher as being a criterion for a well-written case study report. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) would also likely caution against the researcher reverting to colonial or judgmental interpretations of persons within this case study who are of differing races, classes, and religious beliefs as being “the other” (p. 1).

The following Results chapter of this dissertation presents the case study findings and organizes and displays this data relative to the insights that emerged. The Discussion and Conclusion chapter that follows corresponds with the third Miles and Huberman (1994) step of presenting the

conclusions to be drawn in response to the coorientation research questions, and summarizes the implications and importance of this study.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

The results of the two cases I studied individually and collectively demonstrate the importance of the nature of the relationship between educational organizations and the parents they serve. The first section situates my studies of the Weekend Academy for African American Boys and Redeemer Christian Day School within the contexts of the timeframes and business cycles during which the research was conducted. These contextual settings are followed by one section for each case summarizing the research discussions and impressions that revealed agreements and disagreements, as well as perceptions and cross perceptions, regarding the nature and meaning of the attributes, or dimensions, of parental involvement as articulated by key stakeholders within each case. These findings are first presented in the form of broad themes that surfaced to guide the interviews, focus groups, observations, and document reviews comprising the case studies. The data were then analyzed through an explication of the dimensions of parental involvement that are conjectured to be the basis of coorientational analyses presented in the Discussion and Conclusion chapter that follows.

Case Study Contexts

The new director of the Weekend Academy for African American Boys was exhausted but exuberant. Mr. Frank, as he is called, had just closed out the ninth and final week of this enrichment program for 8th and 9th-grade students who have risen above dismal U.S. statistics that predict their academic and social failure. However, there was little time right then for Mr. Frank to celebrate how the Academy had served the youth by attacking this trend. He longed to leave his office and salvage the weekend by catching up with the December holiday season already slipping past him. But instead of taking the snowy roads home in the Midwestern city where the Academy is housed, Mr. Frank hustled down the short hall and into the conference room of the recently expanded offices of Future

Leaders Institute (FLI), the Academy's parent organization. He had been summoned to an impromptu meeting with FLI's president and founder, Eric Carter.

Eric has devoted most of his three-decade career to addressing the plight of asocial African American males. He has become well-known in his local community as a local political staffer, the head of a state-funded agency charged with addressing issues plaguing African American men, and a reform candidate who lost his bid to serve on the local school board. He founded FLI nearly 20 years ago in the garage of his home that he insisted on keeping in urban surroundings despite many of his peers' flights to the suburbs. FLI was started based on the premise that the best time to detour African American males from paths leading to a seemingly endless underclass was to capture their minds and potential at the earliest possible age. He developed a network of educators and trainers from across the country to serve as FLI independent contractors. They quickly began to rack up miles traveling across the country to provide training, guidance, inspiration, and technical assistance (Official site, n.d.) to school administrators and teachers of African American male students. The Weekend Academy is one of FLI's new direct-to-student approaches, launched in January 2009 to respond to what Eric believed was still an inability of most schools to serve the needs of African American males.

This perceived service gap was explained to me by Denise, the FLI administrative staff member who assisted Eric in implementing the first six-week Academy. "There's always been a huge achievement gap between, dealing with African American males. And we were trying to get them at that age where we could make a difference. Or make a change in their lives." Before Mr. Frank assumed management of the Academy during its third and most-recent cycle, Denise's Weekend Academy duties included creating and sending fliers to area middle and high school counselors to ask them to identify 8th and 9th grade African American males with at least a 2.5 grade point average who they could recommend for the program. The success of the Academy administrators and instructors in instilling character-building skills in these racial minority students, while supplementing their 21st century knowledge of science, technology, and math, had quickly

earned the respect of parents of the young men who had attended the three six-or nine-week Academy cycles offered to date.

However, as Eric shared in the December meeting that I was allowed to attend, this Weekend Academy class could be the last one for a while unless funding could be secured from other economy-battered FLI programs or external sources. In contrast to this reality, the 28 Academy students who had just departed left with a chorus of good-byes, thank you's, and questions regarding "what's next" from parents who profusely thanked the Academy staff as they picked up their satisfied sons.

"Parents want more," Mr. Frank informed Eric Carter in the December post-Academy staff meeting. He repeated in the meeting the concerns he had shared with me during our conversations leading to the research. Mr. Frank knew that Eric did not know that parents' praise of the Academy's positive educational and social programming for their sons was tempered by their belief that the Academy should go even farther in this regard.

Three states to the south, parents gathered the following Thursday evening to enjoy their pre-school through 8th-grade children's roles in the annual Christmas celebration held at Redeemer Christian Day School. The event had been promoted by the weekly and monthly school newsletters as a time for families to worship together. Redeemer administrators also viewed the evening as providing a rare face-to-face opportunity to communicate with a large group of the families of the 72 students served by the school. One of the lures of this year's event was a chance for parents to get another look at the leaders of Redeemer's new parent church. This recent change in hierarchy had resulted from the prior spring's merger of the school's cash-strapped founding church and another congregation in the community that was looking for land to expand. A large Faith Vision International Church sign had been erected at the secluded entrance to the parking lot where school buses were lined up still bearing the logo of Christ Redeemer Church, which founded the school 20 years ago. Helen Peale had been a Christ Redeemer Church member since that time, as well as a Redeemer Christian Day School teacher and, for the past 12 years, the school's principal. During her interview, she easily recited the school's three-fold mission to "guide a diverse student population in

developing a lifelong personal relationship with Christ, in building Christian character, and in pursuing academic excellence.” This commitment has presumably remained unchanged as communicated by the pastor of the new church owner to the school’s administrators, faculty, and parents.

Redeemer’s Christmas celebration this year also marked the last one for the school’s 8th-grade students, since plans had not yet materialized to address parents’ requests for the school to expand beyond middle school to include high school grades. Nonetheless, turnout for the event may be only half as large as in past years. The school’s enrollment had gradually dropped to nearly 50% of its size just five years ago, believed by Redeemer administrators to be caused in large part by family economic woes that had made Redeemer’s modest tuition unaffordable to many parents. “We were a dying school,” Mrs. Peale said quietly as she explained her perceptions of the church merger on the school during our pre-interview tour of the school grounds. “Parents are our lifeline,” she continued as we walked past the parking lot trailers that house the four small middle school classrooms of 8-10 students each. “If they don’t choose to bring their children here, we don’t exist.”

Findings: The Weekend Academy for African American Boys

The Weekend Academy study challenged me with a circuitous web of interaction between the Academy, the parents of the students served, and the parents’ and the Academy’s relationships with the schools attended by the students. I talked to parents, school counselors, and Weekend Academy teachers and administrators in Academy classrooms, in restaurants during workday lunch breaks, in homes or offices, and in school environments ranging from musty and dark to campus-like splendor. The tone of the conversations ranged from relaxed to hurried to formal to passionate to humorous to troubled. The perspectives that surfaced tended to revolve around parents’ expectations that the Academy should supplement the roles they had already established with their sons’ schools. Interpreting these parental roles within the parent-educator relationships thus became the focus of my Academy data collection and analysis. My findings are presented here first from the perceptions of each of the stakeholder groups within the case: 1) the parents, 2) the schools, and 3) the Weekend

Academy. Issues that emerged from the similarities and differences between these group's perspectives will then be analyzed.

The Parents

Weekend Academy parents appeared to span the strata of African American family types. I became acquainted with single and married mothers and fathers whose children attended urban, suburban, and private schools. With professional sophistication, with broken English, and with foreign accents, they talked to me about their dreams, desires, and disappointments concerning their middle school and high school sons and the environments in which they were educated. When woven together, the parents' insights gave meaning to the following types of interactions known to them as parental involvement in their sons' educations: evaluating, volunteering, attending events, communicating with educators, and working behind the scenes.

Evaluating. Each parent I interviewed spontaneously initiated a lengthy discussion about what he or she believed to be the importance of parents' efforts to evaluate and select educational environments that would best serve their needs. They recounted the plethora of service options they faced, including terms such as charter schools, public schools, private schools, magnet schools, career centers, and, infrequently, enrichment programs such as Weekend Academy. As it related to the Academy, the parents unanimously praised it for what they perceived as its role in filling gaps in traditional education. However, in evaluating the Academy, they had each concluded that societal educational deficiencies were so large that the Academy needed to do more to close them.

The mother of a suburban Academy student would only talk to me in her husband's presence. During our conversation, which I arranged for a time that matched both their schedules, they agreed with each other that, as stated by the father:

...[w]hen our son came home, he was very excited about some of the things that they had covered within each Saturday, but we didn't feel that the boys really interacted with each other. Meaning you have them there every Saturday and they're being instructed with different types of information that's being delivered to them, but...they need to look at trying to get these young men to bond with one another...I think that's one of the challenges that African American boys face and African American men have. We don't network very effectively. And I think that if we recognize that and we can deal with it early on with the

boys, then that will help them as they get older. So I guess the point that [wife's name] and I have made to one another was it needs to be some sort of on-going, maybe they get back together periodically....We go on with our lives and there was really no follow-up with the boys trying to maintain some type of relationship.

A suburban school father recalled over lunch with me his son's initial reaction to his parents' desire for him to participate in the Weekend Academy. The parents had heard about the Academy not from their son's school but through their own community networking. The father agreed with his son's evaluation of the Academy after participating in the program. "His first impression was, '[W]hy do I have to do it, and why does this have to be on a Saturday morning?'" the father told me. "[Now] I honestly think that he wishes it would have lasted longer." The same parent described himself as "a little disappointed that there are currently no extensions of the Academy concept." He explained his belief that "[C]ontinuation and consistency are key in a child's education. And so without it structured to say, ok, you've gone through this...what are we going to do to try to kind of stay in touch with those kids?"

Parents evaluated specific aspects of the Academy as well, such as the admissions requirements. The single mother of an Academy student, who she had transferred from an urban school to a private Christian school, expressed her belief that her son's less-credentialed peers should be able to attend the program as well.

[T]here needs to be more than one program. So that maybe there's programs that focus and strictly allow participation based on grade point average? Because you do want those high-achieving students to continue achieving at that rate and to continue to succeed. And there needs to be a program for those who need a little more help academically that maybe wouldn't be accepted into this program.

Most parents, however, praised the Academy for keeping its standards high. Some parents even shared their thoughts that the grade point average requirement should be higher or that the Academy should eliminate a \$100 stipend paid to students for attending.

When I asked, all parents indicated that they would have been willing to pay for the Academy, or for some future follow-up version. They vaguely agreed that the price should be

“reasonable” and that they would subject the Academy to even closer scrutiny and evaluation if it were offered in some other version than its current no-fee, no-tuition format.

Beyond their evaluations of their sons’ educational environments, parents critiqued themselves and other parents for their involvement or lack of involvement in their sons’ educations. Their assessments included the concept of volunteering, as discussed in the following subsection.

Volunteering. Most of the parents I interviewed chastised themselves for not being as “involved” in their son’s educations as they believed they should be, either in the Weekend Academy or in their sons’ schools. When I asked them to elaborate, their comments usually pertained to their lack of involvement in parental organizations or some other volunteer capacity. The most-common attitudes they conveyed about the incongruity between the beliefs they expressed concerning the importance of parents being “involved” and their critiques of their own behaviors were to cite reasons why a volunteer style of involvement was impractical based on their experiences, lifestyles, or family structures. For example, the Academy mother of the private Christian school student had stressed the importance of “involved parents” early in her research interview. However, she gave the following responses to later interview questions regarding her own participation in volunteer activities.

Q: Do you volunteer at [current school]?

A: I am a part of the Booster Club for athletics. Last year I was a part of the [PIE] group. It’s called Parents in Education. It’s a group where the families are able to come in and help support teachers. The teacher appreciation events, helping out with tutoring, things like that in the classroom wherever those needs may be at the time. Volunteer efforts. So I did that last year. I haven’t done that this year.

Q: Do you go to PTA meetings?

A: I have not been for the 2009-2010 school year. But prior to that I made sure that I was at a quite a few of them. [Current school] also has something called coffee with the headmaster. So monthly, quite early in the morning before school starts, you get maybe 30 minutes to an hour with the headmaster of the school, for that reason. Voice concerns, talk about things, they give you an update of what’s happening with the school, here’s what’s going on, what are some of your feelings, how can we all work together to make sure this is a good environment.

Q: What was the attendance like at those meetings?

A: Pretty low. A lot of the same faces. And that may have a lot to do with the time of day it was.

Q: How was the attendance at the PTA meetings?

A: I'd say it was a pretty good number of parents there. But again, it's the same families.

Q: And you're talking about [current school]?

QA Yes. [Name of current school]. At the public school I wasn't very involved at any of the parent PTA type of activities.

Q: Why not?

A: I just wasn't happy academically. So unfortunately I didn't spend a lot of time in the building other than making sure I was helping to support and manage my son's education.

Parents repeatedly noted their personal schedules and being "busy" as reasons why they were as visibly involved as they felt they should be in their sons' educations. The single parent of an Academy student who attends an elite private Catholic school explained her lifestyle issues:

I don't get a chance to get to my children's schools as often as I'd like. I'm a single parent, I work fulltime in a paralegal type role. I have my own law practice and I also have my own notary business. So I'm pulled in so many directions...and then I have to have time for me. There's just not enough hours in a day to do all the things I'd like so I have to prioritize. So I think that, part of that is my fault.

I heard the same sentiments from two-parent Academy households. Probing was needed to determine the extent to which the suburban school mother and father who were interviewed together fulfilled the expectations they had discussed for other parents to participate in their children's educations:

Q: Were there opportunities for parents to be involved in the Academy?

Mother: I think that we were all welcome to come in and observe whenever we felt we wanted to. So I think that it was open.

Q: Were there specific occasions or events that parents were specifically asked to come to?

Mother: They did attend an event downtown that we were asked if we were interested in chaperoning that we could do so.

Q: What was that event?

Mother: If I'm not mistaken, it was the...

Father: ...a play...

Mother: ...the dancers? The Alvin, what was that? It was the dancers, the ballet dancers or something out of New York. If I'm not mistaken.

Q: Were you as parents able to take advantage of any of the opportunities to be involved in the Academy?

Mother: We did not.

Q: What would be your thoughts if they built into the program some type of required parental involvement?

Mother: That would not be something that I would be able, or would be interested in doing. We have our schedules and we have our commitment. So I don't know that that would be something that I would be able to do. It depends on, exactly, as my husband just stated [earlier in the interview], it depends on what the request is. We are involved in a number of different activities that our children participate in, but it's not an ongoing involvement, it's for whatever the occasion may be and for whatever the requirements are. But we are involved and active in our children's school as well as extra curricular activities, so again it just depends.

Most parents interviewed seemed to similarly credit themselves with attending educational events and extra-curricular activities. A summary of their comments follows as the next category of parental involvement that emerged from the Weekend Academy parent interviews.

Attending events. Parents consistently noted events as providing opportunities for short-term involvement in their sons' educations. The single parent of a suburban school student stated her intent for her son and her to sign up for an African trip being sponsored by a speaker at an Academy event that parents had been invited to attend. An urban school mother spoke highly of the same event:

They had a speaker come in...he went, from an African American perspective, way back in Egypt time. ...[I]t was excellent, I just loved that program. It just moved me. And they had the parents, they invited the parents to come in, and take part in it with the boys, and listen to the speaker, and it was really cool. I enjoyed it.

Q: Did many parents come that day?

A: Yes. Well, let me think. Yes, it was about half full, yea. It wasn't all the parents, but it was a nice handful of parents that did come.

Some other parents added that they were especially likely to attend extra-curricular activities if their children were personally involved. Several of these parents expressed a concern that they

thought that schools viewed African American parents as likely to support their children's athletic events but not other types of events. The mother of a suburban Academy student emphatically stated her opinion:

...when I am attending some of these [extracurricular] events, I don't see other parents that look like me [African American]. For whatever the reason may be. And there's a plethora of reasons. It may be we work two jobs, we can't make it, but I think we are highly underrepresented at these types of activities, but you most often see us at all the sporting events. I think that sends the wrong perception to the administration especially, and maybe even to our children, that we're not as focused. Or that the academics aren't as important as the athletics. Because it could be band, it could be dance, whatever else they're doing. I think that's the perception. Too often. Even within my own family growing up (laughs). Very evident. They wouldn't miss a game, a track meet, but if it was an academic activity, it maybe wasn't thought of as 'as important' or as a priority.

A suburban Academy parent and school volunteer had harsh words for those parents, especially African American parents, who, in her experience, were not even likely to be involved in their children's athletic events.

I used to be a cheerleading coach. Parents would not come to see their kids play. I had to be responsible for those kids. I would get them to the game, my husband and my mother would make hot dogs and sandwiches, I had to buy their food for them while they're there, and then get them home. And they're there all day long. Where was the parents at? I should not have had my mother and my husband transporting kids. But it's all the time. My son played football. The parents were not there. They'll come for the little children, and they'll laugh, and they're not even paying attention to them, but then they're gone. Once the kids get a certain age they leave them off. But you go to a white function, parents are there. So again, we have to take some responsibility and stop blaming it on everybody else. We have to be responsible ourselves.

All parents interviewed believed that even if they did not volunteer or attend events, they found some way to communicate with educators. Their descriptions of how they were most likely to engage in this interaction is summarized in the next subsection.

Communicating with educators. The mother of an Academy student who attends a historically well-known urban school that is being shut down told me she attended community meetings held by the school board to explain the closure decision. She appeared humble in her admission that she did not use the meeting to voice the concerns she expressed to me about the board's decision.

The school system is closing, like, nine schools. And it's a nice school [the school attended by son], it's actually a nice school. And the teachers there are actually very, how can I say, caring towards our students. They want them to learn and excel in what they do. But I don't know how the school system works and how they came to that conclusion. But they tried to explain due to less enrollment, because kids are going to the charter schools, and private school, and in certain areas so many schools don't have many kids in parts of [name of school district], so they're just doing this reassignment thing.

Q: Did the school district have any kind of communication with parents as part of their decisions?

A: Yes. They had several meetings with the parents of all the schools they're closing and they explained, kind of in detail why, because of the low enrollment of the students, and they're reassigning kids to different schools, they may not be going to schools in their own neighborhood, they may be kind of, to go further out, bused further out, just in order to, I guess to have a balance in the other schools.

Q: So they had meetings once the decision was made?

A: um-hm.

Q: Did they seek parent input during the decision-making process?

A: Yes, they asked for our input, but it still came down to where they wanted to still close them.

Q: In what way did they get input from parents?

A: They had different meetings at different schools. To get parent's feedback. Like my school, my son goes to [name of school], so they had a meeting at his school. So they got input from the parents, what they thought about it and, it was like a roundtable discussion, however you want to call it, like town meetings, in that sense.

Q: What did you think about the meetings?

A: I didn't make it to the one at [name of son's school]. But they had several other ones, and I sat and listened.

The same parent was still soft-spoken, but patient and deliberate in explaining to me how she believes she does stays involved in her son's education:

"...[T]here's not much parental involvement [at the school]. But the parents do, like the Open House, parent-teacher conference, it's always stacked. But as far as parental involvement, like the PTA thing...I can never make it to the PTA meeting. That was one bit that I was trying to do for this, for last year, but couldn't get around to do. My husband working third shift and he has the car and I just could never make it to none of the meetings. But as far as like trying to get into the fundraisers, I would do that. As far as helping my son with that. As far as taking it to work or church.

I asked this mother to clarify her seemingly contradictory statements regarding “not much parental involvement.” She responded with a question of her own:

As far as with the school or with my son? More with my son. As far as homework, assignments turned in on time in class, parent-teacher conferences, I converse back and forth either by phone or e-mail with his teachers just to make sure [son’s name] is on task.

The same parent, when specifically asked if she was involved as a parent with Weekend Academy, answered without hesitation, “yes”:

I don’t know how to explain it. With the [Academy] website. It’s out there for every parent to see. What’s going on, what’s the latest thing, how are their kids, what’s going on in their minds and what do they think of at school [the Academy], and different things that the school [the Academy] is teaching them.

I asked her if she also visits the school website. She said that she did, but she expressed a different perception of the school’s site and parent portal:

It’s just your average website. There really is...like with their [Weekend Academy] website, it’s more involved. It’s a different thing going to [it]. With the school website, it’s just there for, you know, the school, the location, what’s coming up in the next months.

Several parents felt that some forms of communication technology used by the Academy, such as social networking sites and advanced website applications, were targeted more toward their sons. Another parent was concerned about the cost of receiving group text messages on her cell phone from the Academy.

Simpler forms of technology-based communication were lauded by some parents as a way for their sons’ school to keep them informed. The mother of the Christian private school talked about her satisfaction with communication with the new school:

The school has embraced technology so I get a lot of e-mail notifications about what’s happening at school. It used to be that there were hand pieces of paper that the students were responsible for getting to the parents. I get the direct communications now. There’s e-mails to me and there are phone calls to me, I’m kind of more in the loop about what’s happening, even when he wasn’t paying attention in school, for the announcements or something. I’m also pleased with his teaching cluster. They e-mail very frequently, at least his cluster. I can’t speak for the other teachers in the building. He’s been pretty fortunate for the last three years. I have a really good cohesive group [of teachers], and they communicate and they team teach, they make sure that at least I’m paying attention, I’m aware of his major assignments and due dates, not that he hasn’t been given that information, but just as a back-up. And I appreciate that kind of stuff.

Despite their unanimous agreement that Weekend Academy was a good choice for their sons, some parents lamented what they perceived as conflicting signals from the Academy as to whether they wanted face-to-face communication with parents and, if so, in what form. A suburban father expressed his annoyance at the lack of parental participation in the African American parent advocacy group that he and his wife chaired for their Academy son's suburban school district. He voiced similar frustrations with what he perceived was a deficiency in the Weekend Academy's emphasis on parental involvement, saying that this aspect of the Academy "needs improvement."

And I say that because I saw too much of a drop-off mentality. Drop the kid off, pick 'em up, but then I don't know that the Academy created an engagement process. Which I think, that needs to be worked on too. How do you want me to be engaged? How do you want me to be beyond a drop-off area? We can't treat these programs as a babysitting drop off service. It was convenient to take your son there at 9:00 in the morning and then after, not have to pick them up 'til 12, and go off and do whatever you wanted to do for that day...I took it upon myself each week to not only, I may have dropped him off, but I took it upon myself to go inside and kind of look and see what his facial expressions were as he came out of the class, as he came out of the session, and to talk to Eric. ...But it wasn't because we were encouraged to do so, as much as it was because that's just our normal attitude about our kids. But I didn't see a process in place to say, ok, the Academy was saying 'I'm going to make sure you stay involved. I'm going to make sure you do this and do that with your kid.'

Other parents, however, stated their firm opinion that the Academy did more parent communication outreach than schools, particularly to those parents who my interviewees believed were likely to be less involved or uninvolved in their students' schools. When asked about parental involvement with the Academy in general, the single parent volunteer of a suburban school student replied that: "I think the [Academy] parents were great. I think once they understood that they [the Academy] were not accepting of the bullcrap that the schools are allowed to accept, I mean have to accept, it was different because the Weekend Academy, they could kick your kid out."

When I asked the same parent what she thinks uninvolved parents may be thinking, she surmised that parents who appear to be truly uninvolved have a "lack of understanding how important education is. Most of the time it's because they grew up with no parental involvement, or they barely made it through school themselves. They don't have a respect for education that they probably should have." When I asked her if she believed the Academy addressed the issue of uninvolved

parents, she referred to what Eric Carter communicated to parents during the mandatory opening day orientation:

All the parents had to come. There were parents that came in late. And one lady came in an hour late. And he's [Eric] stressing... '[i]f you're here on time, you're late!' Which I agree. If it starts at 9:00 and you get here at 9:00, you're late. You should be in your seat waiting at 9 for it to start. And then how do you teach your children to be prompt or to be present if you're not doing it yourself?

Another parent recounted that what the Academy had communicated to parents during the opening day orientation made her emotional. She passionately explained her feelings in the contexts of her personal roles as an Academy parent, of a mother of African descent, and as a substitute teacher at a public school. As she was speculating to me regarding the possible impact of cultural differences, she was interrupted by her cell phone ringing during her explanation. She asked the person calling internationally from her homeland if she could get back to them once she finished her interview. She turned off her cell phone and continued to express her thoughts to me.

I don't really understand... from my own cultural background, I'm from Nigeria, if my mom was able to live for this level, socially, academically, I wanna live this level, better than my mother. Or better than my father. That is the way we've been brought up. Now my children, coming behind me, they wanna live better than me. So parents don't see that. Most of this African American society in the schools, there's no eager. There is no enthusiasm. Like oh, I wanna be a nurse. I wanna be a doctor. I wanna be a bank manager. I wanna be this. No. Well, if it doesn't work, pssh. I'll be pregnant I'll be having my baby I'll be goin' on. Because then the cycle comes back again. My mom did that. I did it. I'm doing it now. My child will do the same thing. No. So it aches me most of the time... I visit my son's school, I just show up by surprise!. ...[T]hat's why when Mr. Carter started this program, the first meeting he had with the parents, I think it was in this room, I was almost in tears that day. You know, the vibe I got from him is like, if we can door to door and knock on this parent's head and go hey, wake up, you know what, this are our future. Let's get 'em straightened up now.

Consistent with the different perceptions expressed by parents regarding the form of parental involvement that may be most valued by the Academy, parents conveyed their uncertainty about whether their sons' schools want regular parental communication and if it should be initiated by educators or by parents. The mother of the elite Catholic school Academy student is a single parent of two sons and a daughter in addition to her Weekend Academy student. She reflected on what she perceived as differences between the extent to which the three schools her children attend value

interactive parental involvement. She attributed this difference in part based to what she believed to be diversity issues:

But what I see with the other parents who I talk with who have children who go to my schools, the schools welcome their participation. And I think [name of the elite Catholic school] is the only one that's a little bit different in that they don't feel the need to be accommodating to African American children, or their parents. It doesn't mean that they have totally ostracized us, but they don't coddle us at [school]. They're just like, well we didn't recruit you, and you're here because you wanna be here, and this is what we're doing, this is how we're doing it, and if this is what you want for your son, we welcome you with open arms, but if it's not, there's other schools up the street (laughter) and you have to take it or leave it.

Another suburban mother used her personal experiences as an example of what appeared to be conflicting responses from school representatives regarding their perception of at-school parental communication:

I'm very involved in the school, as far as I'm up at the school, I'm talking to the teachers, I know all the teachers, but I think that's just me, because I'm that type of person, I wanted to be involved. Do they do outreach? I can't say that they do. Matter of fact, I've called the PTO [the parent-run Parent-Teacher Organization] several times trying to volunteer, and I've left messages and left messages and left messages and to this day no one has ever called me back.

The same parent attributed what she viewed as her positive regular communication with teachers as being based on their accurate perceptions that she wanted personal communication from them:

Now the teachers, they're gonna get involved with you as much as you get involved with them. I guess if they see that you want them involved then they will....one of the teachers called me, my son came to school late. And he walked in with his girlfriend who he's not supposed to have. She called me, 'I just want you to know he came in 15 minutes late and he came in with a little girl, her name is such and such,' and I said 'oh, ok, thank you!' I appreciated that. But again I think it's because that particular teacher knows how much I am involved with him. So I think that she, she said 'I know I probably shouldn't be doing this, but I want you to know.' So...I think that if the parents get involved, then the teachers would be more acclimated to care. Me, I think if they see that you care, then they have the tendency to care because they know that they're not wasting their time.

Once again, parents lambasted their peers who they believed did not communicate with educators and showed little or no interest in being involved in any way in their children's educations. Unique perspectives regarding the perception of parental uninvolvement were shared by Academy parents who had also worked at schools. For example, the mother of a suburban Academy student

sighed deeply as she related her experiences as a tutor for her son's school. She also noted what she believed to be racial and cultural issues.

I honestly would have to say that it's [parental involvement] not the school's responsibility. And I know that that's probably wrong to say, but they're not the parent. It's your responsibility to get involved with your child and education. They've [the school] got five or six hundred kids. How do they make parents be involved with their children?

There were all white tutors and there were only two black ones...I was able to get those kids [the black ones] under control. I'm talking to these kids what they're used to hearing. The passive voice, these kids were not used to hearing it like that, so they're just doing whatever they want to do. These are 5-year-olds. If a teacher can't control a classroom of 5-year-olds, she definitely can't control a classroom of 12-13 year olds. And I think that the teachers, their hands are tied. They can't discipline kids anymore. So what can you say? And we would like to blame it on them but we can't. We have to take some responsibilities ourselves. ...[P]arents are not involved.

A suburban father included multiple forms of communication and interaction with the student and educators in his definition of parental involvement:

I think it's important for parents to ask questions, and be available for those students, to say, 'hey, let's talk about it. How can I help you? Not do your work for you, but also how can I help you?' And also at the same time be involved with the teacher. I spent time, [wife's name] and I both spent time at [name of school attended by son]. They knew who we were. We'd get e-mails, every day, if necessary, every week, on the kids' education, what they're doing in school, they know they can call us, if necessary, even when they do bad or good, but I can walk in [school's name] right now and not even go past the office and get a visitors badge. And when I walk in the building the principal knows me, the teachers know me, some of the students know me, and because we're not there to spy, but we're there to be involved...[S]o there's different levels of involvement, but I think parents need to be involved in some kind of way. Find what their role is, and find out how they can get involved. And not necessarily be complainers all the time, but be engaged.

Numerous other parents also talked about the aspects of parental involvement that may not be as visible or known to educators as volunteering, attending events, or direct communication, but which they nonetheless believe is a form of involvement that directly impacts their children's educations. Their insights regarding these behind-the-scenes activities are summarized in the following and final subsection of feedback from parents interviewed.

Working behind the scenes. Checking homework was mentioned numerous times as a way that parents believed it was important to be involved in their sons' educations outside of the actual

educational environment. A suburban father complimented an aspect of the Academy that he believed fostered parent-student interaction at the end of the day:

I would drop him [his son] off [at the Academy] and tell him ‘ok, listen and make sure you pay good attention,’ but I would ask him after the class was over with when I picked him up later on in the afternoon or later on that morning, ‘what’d you guys learn today?’ And he was always able to repeat back what they had learned. And so it got beyond the point of saying, ‘oh today’s class was good’ and not give me the one word answers. That was one thing that Eric talked about was, ‘go beyond the fact of it was a good day.’ Why was it a good day? And so I think his [his son’s] vocabulary of involvement [got] a little bit wider.

When asked whether parents who may seem to be uninvolved may be likely to be involved behind the scenes, most parents expressed skepticism and stated their belief that there are parents who are likely to be totally uninvolved, perhaps due to their lack of understanding of its importance or their lingering discomfort from their own educational pasts. When asked to brainstorm on what they believe educators could do to get seemingly uninvolved parents more involved, the ideas of my interviewees primarily involved social events at the schools. One parent had a more commercial idea.

In public schools, I think if parents were made to pay for their child’s education, then they would value it more. You pay for anything that you do, I mean anything that you have to pay for, you value. When it’s free, you don’t value it as much... I would love to mentor other parents. Would they show up? Would they like what they hear, which means ‘you gonna have to give up your TV time? You gonna have to watch your own child instead of letting the TV’s watch them and things like that?’ I don’t know.

Again, disparaging comments were made regarding parents who did not appear to even be involved in their children’s educations behind the scenes. The parent who has tutored in her son’s suburban middle school shared her angst about her lack of interaction with families in the school and an example in her own family of lack of involvement even at home.

Honestly, I don’t know what [could be done about parental uninvolvement]! I know my girlfriend is over [name of charter school]. And she makes it mandatory that the parents come before their kids can even go to school there. At her school, they have to come and meet with her. And she’s individually talking to each and every last single one of them. But then I have a niece who has a son in her school, she went to that first meeting, but then, there’s rules that my own niece who knows that this is my girlfriend and how embarrassing it is for me, she won’t abide by the rules! They have dress codes. She lets her son, she puts her son in whatever. Talking about ‘he gets tired...’. He’s 5 years old! He don’t get tired of it, you [her niece] get tired of it! And then they pass that stuff down to their children. Because now my five year old nephew is saying ‘I get tired of wearing that.’ But if I tell him ‘you put that on’ he puts on whatever I tell him to put on. We have to change our mentality and let

these, the parents have to see how important education is. We need to stop beating around the bush and say, 'look you're the ones who's at fault.'

Given this parent's strong opinions about uninvolvement, I asked her to expound on why she believes that parental involvement is important. She responded with examples.

I only can tell you by my experience. I have one girlfriend who during the summer, her kids are doing homework every day. The ridicule that she gets from other people is unbelievable. And she's like, 'well maybe I should...'...no, you make 'em! They're not doing nothing else! But she's now at the point, so many people have ridiculed her and dogged her out because she's making her kids do schoolwork during the summer, but these kids are straight A students. They understand the value of education. She don't have to come home in the evening and say, 'do your homework.' They're already coming home and doing their homework and done with it most likely by the time she even gets home.

My son is the same way. I come home, his homework is done. Straight A student. But I'm on him. No, you get two hours of TV and games, that's all-inclusive in one night. You don't have free access to the computer. You get on the computer when you ask me can you get on the computer. I punch in my code and then I sit there while you're on it. Because I don't want him on porn or anything else. He's 13 years old. His hormones are raging. That's where he would rather be. But I'm not gonna allow that. Now what he does over his friends' house and stuff like that, I can't control if their parents are not there. But while he's in my household, no.

On a positive note, a father of an urban school Academy student came with the mother to the interview in which she had agreed to participate. The father was content to keep an eye on the family's other children until his wife persuaded him to participate in a brief interview with me after her interview was completed. The father related another use of Weekend Academy technology that helped him participate in the parent session at home that he was unable or unwilling to attend in person:

They [Weekend Academy] had some speakers come in. They had this one guy come in and he was talking about Egypt. And then come to find out, Egypt was basically black people. And the black people who was in Egypt came from Africa. And it kind of stunned me a little bit, I'm sitting there going, ok. So when my wife told me about it, I said, naw, so she had bought the DVD of it. And I played it and I sat there and listened to the whole thing. And I was kind of amazed about it. And I said I never knew that Egypt people was black people. And now that I know that, my whole thought's different now, I more concentrate now on Africa, I look into it more deeply now than I normally do. And it's more me training my younger son and my older son about Africa and everything now.

The father, at first reticent and nervous about talking to me, sat back and spoke assuredly as he told me his thoughts about his sons' educations:

We have a saying in our family, we can not do until we try. And keeping my base and our feet planted into church and to God. And then when they're home, they're subject to do their homework. No matter what. No matter what time it is I want it done. And I do not punish them, I do not kind of chastise 'em. I always tell 'em what you learn today is gonna benefit for you in the future. What you're doing today is gonna tell your future. And I told him [his Academy son], I said, it's what you doin' now is gonna help you. If you don't wanna do it, when the future come, it's not gonna help you. And I said you can be like the rest of these young black mens [sic] out here, selling dope, get a babysmama get pregnant, doin' things you shouldn't be doin' when you already have the knowledge to do better. And I always tell him, put your best foot forward, give it a shot if you can't do, I understand. And the one thing I always tell 'em, I will never, ever, never tell 'em they should do it. I let my two boys make their own decision on what they want to do. Even [when they going] to church, even things in church. If they wanna be in the program, they wanna be in the program, I tell 'em, it's up to you.

The father spoke further of the positive impact he believed the Academy had had on his son, even compared to the predominantly African American urban school his son attends.

...[T]he main thing that [son's name] showed me was when he came home and said Daddy, I wanna go to the Weekend Academy. And I said, well, I need more information about it. He went and got the information and I said ok, we signed the papers....

I reluctantly ended the interview with the father so as not to keep subsequent interviewees waiting.

But in the short time I was with him following his wife's interview, he opened up and told me more in general about his perceptions of how his son's educational needs were served by the school, by the Academy, and at home:

...[m]y son was more of a quiet type person, and I was kind of worried about that because if he's a more quiet type person, it would mean that he'd get picked on a lot and I wouldn't know where he stands and if he had some problems, would he come and talk to me about 'em. But since he came to the Weekend Academy school, sh-hoo [sound and motion of an airplane taking off], he just totally turned everything around. His school grades, his goals for what he wants to do, and what he wants to become, and the Academy kind of opened him up a little bit more than the way he was before. [Son's name] wasn't a bad kid or anything, it was just that we needed him to open hisself up more. But he just wouldn't do it. So when he came here [to the Academy], I think the structure for him to be around other young men like him, it kind of opened him up a little more. And now that he's open more, he's practically unstoppable now at home. I mean, everything is positive...well, next year he'll be in high school, well he told me and his mother that the school that he goes to, if it does not have art, he did not want to go to that school. If it doesn't have art, what he's taken up to be, he didn't want to go to that school. And I kind of shook my head, I'm sitting there, oo-kay, 'this the first time you ever told me anything like this.' And now that he told me, I see what kind of impact that this school [Weekend Academy] had on him. And when I'm seeing what the school has done for him now, I wish there was more schools like this for our young mens [sic].

The father ended the interview by, as other parents did, evaluating Weekend Academy and the school his Academy son attends.

Now that I know all this about it [Weekend Academy], I wondered if they was gonna open a school or not. Because it's just a great school for him [their son]...all in all, it's a great school for black young mens. To actually get theirselves together and become what they can become. Because we don't have that in our schools today. Whatsoever. And that kind of upsets me.

The parents – summary

The previous subsections summarized parents' perceptions of the likelihood of other parents, as well as themselves, to be involved or uninvolved in their children's educations in the form of volunteering, attending events, communicating with educators, and working behind the scenes. Contemporaneously with hearing the parents' perspectives, I interviewed the school counselors who recommended the parents' sons to the Weekend Academy. I sought their individual perspectives on parental roles within the parent-educator relationships. The findings are presented in the following section.

The School Counselors

As previously noted, the Weekend Academy stakeholder perspectives that emerged in my case study tended to revolve around parents' expectations that the Academy should supplement parents' roles with their sons' schools. Interpreting these parental roles within the parent-educator relationships thus became the focus of my Academy data collection and analysis. In explaining these roles, parents spoke of their own activities and their observations and opinions of their peers. Counselors tended to speak of parental involvement in ways that reflected not only their relationships with the parents, but also with the students of the parents served by the school. Counselors' perceptions are recounted below, presented based on their cut-and-dry designations of: 1) parents who are involved, and 2) parents who are not involved.

Parents who are involved. A white counselor at a soon-to-be-defunct urban middle school that has been a historical community icon gloated about her school's parental involvement in terms that seemed to emphasize the likelihood of personal and regular interaction. The after-hours entrance

to the school was opened for me by parents selling tickets to a girls' basketball game. The waiting area outside the counselor's office still bore the photo of a deceased principal who had served the school and the community for several decades. "Our parents are very active. And very involved," the counselor told me.

They have a question they'll call. They'll come in, they're very involved in their students' success. We have a great turnout for our Honor Roll breakfasts and they're [the breakfasts] in the morning during the week. Parents will rearrange their work schedules, take a day off, whatever they need to do to come to functions like that. So I was very blessed in the fact that when I handed out the [Weekend Academy] forms they came back very quickly for those students who were interested. So meeting that very quick turnaround time wasn't, I didn't have to go chase the kids down because our parents are looking for the opportunities to let their students shine.

There's also the difference between middle school vs. high school. In high school I think parents are trying to have their students be a little bit more independent. Whereas in middle school everything is very much hands on. Hands on with us working with the student, hands on with the parents coming in and being involved and making those phone calls when they need to, and coming in for conferences, and things like that. I would say also, too, the fact that because we are a schoolwide lottery, our parents sometimes have a, not a long commute, but they don't live as close to the school. ...[S]o for here our kids come from all over the city. And for parents to still be as active really says a lot. Because they're willing to take the time and to make sure they're here at school and to block out that time that they're going to need and everything.

Another urban counselor referred to the parent-school relationship at her school as "good," explaining that "50% work and can't always come in. But they'll come to school if called." She concluded that she's "fortunate to have parents who are so helpful when I ask." She spoke in particular about parents of students she referred to the Weekend Academy. "They would never pass up an opportunity that good," she said. "I'm so happy you let my son be in this," she said, mimicking the parents' appreciation to her. She also talked about the extent of the service she believes her school quietly provides to parents, with the help of a community resource hotline. "I will help parents get resources. They don't know about them [community assistance available] or won't call. Children will tell me [about their families' needs]. Food, clothes, material assistance, things parents may be embarrassed about like eyeglasses, job training."

A Caucasian counselor at a suburban school answered assuredly when I first posed general questions regarding parental involvement. However, she seemed nervous in expressing her opinions

regarding questions I asked her near the end of her interview concerning any differences she may perceive in certain demographic segments of parents served.

Q: When I say the term 'parental involvement,' what does that mean to you?

A: Oh, so much. Parents that are aware of things that are going on at school, who are knowledgeable or informed about how their kids are doing academically and have a sense of how their child is progressing, parents who do attend functions, come to anything that we might have here at school, parent-teacher conferences, orientations, speakers or anything special, maybe awards ceremonies and things like that. I'm trying to think if there's something major. Sometimes it's parents who will read, read our website and read our newsletters when they get home.

Q: Some people have told me they believe that perhaps parents of African American youth are not as likely to be involved as majority parents. Do you have any thoughts on that?

A: (long pause) No. I'm trying to think if I'm thinking of my own stereotype or what I actually really experience here at school. (long pause). I don't see a difference, our PTO president is a Black man. (nervous laugh). We really don't see a big difference here now. I'm trying to think back, I guess you're taping so it's not just between you and I, we used to be more of a white majority school, I'm trying to think if I felt like parents were more, really more involved back then. We certainly had a stronger PTO. So the above-board things, the things that you really saw, I think sometimes maybe our African American parents aren't involved in some of that. Our parents, I feel like we have really strong parents here. I'm kind of rambling so I don't know if I answered your question at all.

Q: Can you think of any ways to get parents more involved?

A: No, but well, I have, but we've been speaking about this quite a bit, but one thing I wish here at our school that I think we could do is, I think that they're more likely to come to things like performances. And there are some activities here at school that are more comfortable for parents. They don't feel like they're going to hear bad news, so they don't feel like they're not going to look smart in front of teachers, and so sometimes I think we need a little more opportunities to invite them in more casually. So they start to feel more comfortable coming in to our building. I don't know if that makes any sense.

After the counselor declined my offer to turn off the tape recorder, our interview finally struggled forward to an issue that the counselor surmised was dealt with in part by family support.

Q: If you had any advice that you could give Weekend Academy about the needs of African American males from your perspective, what would that be?

A: Oh, I don't know. I think they know a lot much more than I do. (sighs) Let me think about that for a second. (long pause). Nothing's coming to mind.

Q: Within your school do you sense that there are any issues that are unique to African American males?

A: Oh yes.

Q: What would those be?

A: [Not] exclusively unique, but yes.

Q: What types of issues would those be?

A: Hmmm, I don't know how to say this. Um...

Q: Don't be reluctant.

A: The first thing that came to mind, I'm just gonna say it, 'cause it's not really culturally correct. That whole 'acting white' thing. The kid, a young man who's really trying, doing the right thing in school, following dress code, wearing his pants up, maybe attending the Weekend Academy, there's just an awful lot of peer pressure on some of our African American boys in particular, that they're not being true to their race somehow, not being true to their culture, they're trying to pretend, that that's a big faking thing, breaks my heart. And a lot of peer pressure with that, I noticed. And a lot more with the boys than the girls. A lot more. Very rarely do we get girls being teased about acting white. Where boys are regularly teased.

Q: Those boys who are being teased, how do you see them responding to that?

A: Some of them are very strong, and I think they have a very good sense of where they're headed, and I think their family has instilled in them a lot of strength to sort of be their own person and not fall victim to that. Pop culture, stuff that's going on with the other kids, I think a lot of our boys are, fall victim to it. And now, they'll still do well in class but they'll act out a little bit, or they'll wear their clothes a little different, just to sort of not have anybody say anything to them. Talk a certain way, even though I think maybe given, if that peer pressure wasn't there they wouldn't. Especially at school. I don't know if that...(trails off; silence).

A counselor at an elite private Catholic high school spoke to me about ways in which he believed "the wrong type" of parental involvement could place too much pressure on students. One of several examples he gave was in response to his perception of the involvement of the scarce number of African American parents served by this high-tuition private all boys' prep school.

Well, a few, and this would apply to the Caucasians or anybody else as well. We have a few kids who are forced by their parents to come to [name of school]. They have not done well up through grade 8, so the parents think, by God, [name of school] is gonna shape you up. Well, it doesn't always happen, you know. I don't think any more or less for the Afro Americans than the Caucasians or vice versa. You know, if a kid doesn't wanna be here, I don't care if he's black, white or what he is, he's not gonna be happy here. And we had one withdraw mid-year who says he wanted to be here, but wasn't doing any work. Just nothing. Nothing. I think he was rebelling against his parents, but that's beside the point, I guess.

The same counselor spoke, as did most of his peers, not only about the range of ways in which they believed parents were involved, but also about parents who did not appear likely to be involved. Their input is summarized within the next subsection.

Parents who are not involved. The counselor at the elite Catholic all boys' preparatory school described the school's overall support from parents as "...excellent. Coming and volunteering in everything that you can think of. Basketball mothers providing food for the kids after the games, just anything you...every area has a lot of parent support. And without it I don't think we'd exist."

When I asked him specifically about African American parents, he turned to the class photos on his wall to count the small number of students of color who are enrolled at the school. He apologized for not knowing the exact number, citing his advanced age and his part-time role as a retired counselor after many years at the school. He had previously shared with me what he believed to be a humorous eye-opening experience regarding his discovery that some of the "African American" students he had attempted to refer to the Academy were of different ethnic backgrounds than they appeared. After repeatedly apologizing if he seemed insensitive, he said with his eyes lowered:

Whether it's correct or not, I have this impression in my head. Let's say the parents of some of the guys we have here, African American parents. That those people'd be coming from an environment that was kind of tough. I don't mean to say the ghetto so to speak but you know what I mean? An academic environment from which they didn't benefit as they now would have wished that they would have benefited, and some of them, I don't think know quite how to support their kid. It comes, I think, from their own student experience and they don't know exactly what to do. Period.

Similarly, a white suburban school counselor expressed concerns regarding claims she said some parents made about their at-home involvement once they were contacted by the school. She felt it was "hard to believe" that these parents were active at home when there was still "no follow-through, no homework being done" even after their school conferences. She also criticized parents who, in her opinion, did not seem likely to set boundaries that would allow their children to perform educationally. "So much unsupervised time," she concluded regarding students of any race who she believed "are not doing anything productive." She noted that her opinions could be applied to all

parents, and that any demographic distinctions she made would likely regard socioeconomic status rather than race.

However, several African American counselors spoke bluntly about disproportionately negative consequences they believed faced African American students whose parents were not as likely to be involved in their children's educations versus their minority peers. The African American counselor who reported providing social service referrals for parents shared her observation that African American parents were more responsive to Caucasian school representatives than to her. "I had to go the extra mile to get it done for myself," she said in elaborating on her earlier comments that parents would respond to her calls. She noted what she believed were too many instances in which "I just worked with the child at school and never bothered the parents. African American parents don't question," she almost whispered, calling it "an opportunity lost." She cautioned that, "African American parents have to play a different role. If they did, their children would be more like what we want them to be."

An African American counselor at a private Christian school projected dire consequences for parents who she did not perceive were as likely to be involved in ensuring that the school served their needs and the needs of their children.

Now you're able to achieve a voucher from the government in order to come to a private school if your school is in academic distress. So now we receive those students and then we started to see a decline in our white students and the majority now being a school of African Americans.

Q: Do you think those two factors were related?

A: Yes I do.

Q: If you had to speculate on why that happened, what would your thoughts be?

A: White flight.

Q: Do you have a sense as to why parents choose [name of school]?

A: Hopefully for Christian character.

Q: In general, how would you overall, regardless of race, characterize the parent-school relationship here?

A: Not a lot of involvement.

Q: When you say 'involvement,' what do you mean?

A: We've had to discontinue our parent-teacher group, our PTA, lack of volunteers, no longer having meetings because they weren't well attended, not a lot of parent-teacher conferences, not a lot of contact with parents. Not a lot of support.

Q: Why do you think that's happening?

A: I don't know. You have a lot of those students who are here, it's not costing them anything to come, and you would think that the parents would feel some sense of appreciation or maybe they'd want to volunteer having seen that. But for our parents who are paying, you don't see a lot of involvement with them either.

I have the unique position (laughing) in that I worked at [name of suburban school] which is a predominantly white, affluent school. I am used to walking down the hallways and seeing parents in the hallways, every other classroom having a parent reading to elementary school kids, parent volunteers in and out all day long. Yes, I think this is unique. However there are other schools who are struggling with parental involvement as well. However, knowing people who work in [large public school district], it varies on the school. There are some schools that [parents] are involved, and there are some who don't [have parental involvement].

Q: If I were to talk to parents of middle school and high school African American males at this school about parental involvement, what do you think they might say in general about parental involvement?

A: I don't know. I really don't. That's something I'm trying to change.

Q: What do you mean by that?

A: I'm trying to get our parents more involved. We have students here that are academically not succeeding. Behavior issues, not a lot of communication between teachers and parents. I think communication is a two-way street. We have people with 17 write-ups and parents have never been notified. We have grade cards going out through e-mail, well a large majority of what we service, they don't have e-mails. So they're not even getting grade cards. And it's up to the parent to say 'I didn't get the grade card,' as opposed to us saying, making sure that you have it. So I think there's a lack of communication both ways.

Q: What types of things are you doing to try to get parents more involved?

A: Well, we're trying to do a week where we get parents involved. Because once you, what studies have shown is, if you can get parents to volunteer, it's a program called Three, Three for Me. You're promising three hours out of the entire school year. Once you get parents involved and they realize there is a need, hopefully they'll come back. Just getting people here once. We had one game we have five parents in attendance to watch their students. That to me is unheard of and unthinkable. The number of times that I attend basketball with my son, who is, it's not my favorite sport but that's my child. And so those types of things, trying to get parents to come out at least once per game. Wear school colors. Scream and

holler. And then hopefully it's such a pleasant experience that they'll want to come back. So those are the types of things that I'm trying to figure out how to at least get them here.

We have the same challenges as anyone else. We have a lot of African American males who have no male mentorship, no involvement with a male figure positive, negative or otherwise. The majority are here with, single parent homes. We have an active sports program with really good coaches. However, character building, there's only so much a coach can do. It's only one part of their life. So I would love to see some type of mentorship program initiated here. Some type of parental classes for teaching fathers how to be a father. We have a lot of first-generation people going off to college. Yea, we're a small Christian school, however, nothing's changed much. Our divorce rate is just as high as anyone else's.

I think unless you can get parents to look at education as a partnership, I don't think we're going to see the success we need out of our students. Not going to see the accountability of the teachers. I think that we are going to fail. Which is what we are doing.

As previously noted, perspectives that surfaced from my counselor interviews summarized in this subsection, as well as parent perspectives summarized in the preceding section, tended to revolve around parents' expectations that the Academy should supplement the roles parents had established with their sons' schools. As such, the Academy's perceptions of their relationships with parents, as explained in the next subsection, are critical to completing the educational service paradigm that comprised my first case study.

Weekend Academy Administrators and Teachers

The Academy's mission is to foster the educational and social development of African American males at a critical time in their lives. My findings from interviews with Academy teachers and administrators are presented based on their views regarding: 1) "doing the job" with parents and 2) "doing the job" without parents.

"Doing the job" with parents. Mr. Frank explained the manner in which the Academy has kicked off each of its three sessions to date, and the ways in which he believes parents have responded to the Academy's parent outreach efforts.

In orientation we always tell the parents we can not do this job without you. And it's known. Because we send out mail every week, e-mails and phone calls every week, to the parents. About what is happening in these five hours on Saturday. Their homework assignment. What to expect next week. What needs to happen. Make sure that your child's, we have them wear a uniform, shirt. So make sure this shirt is clean. Make sure the student comes in with a belt. Believe it or not, that's a chore. For the parent. So we definitely try to get a lot of parental involvement.

Parents were engaged, they made phone calls, they e-mailed me on a regular basis, they asked questions. And then we always reassured them. And for the most part they were satisfied with the response. Not too much in-depth with the questions. [For example] we had developed a social network for them [the students] to communicate on. 'So why is my child going to get on the computer at night or during the day when I have restrictions already blocked?' So they were, they wanted to know what exactly what their child was getting into.

I asked Mr. Frank how he defined parental involvement and how the Academy sought to foster the concept.

Parental involvement in education means to me being aware of what your child is learning and who your child is learning it from. And that's all across the board. When they're not with you, where are they getting their lessons from. Because as they walk out the door they're getting lessons. Whether it be on their way to the bus stop, on the bus, in the classroom, in the lunchroom, recess, in the library.

Parents, at the Academy, we have orientation where everybody comes in and we make a presentation for everybody so that they know what their student's gonna be doing, and then also we have a, field trips, we have at least one field trip to where parents can chaperone on that, and then we also invite all the parents to come in for our Black history session. Which, that has been very, very successful and very helpful to the parents, to learn their own history. And so it generates great conversation throughout the family, and then we hear throughout the community. People actually take the information to their church, to their job, that's been extraordinary itself.

Q: Do you get many parents who participate in the orientation session?

A: Yes.

Q: About what percent, would you say?

A: About 100.

Q: What about the field trips?

A: About 25 percent.

Q: And what about the Black history presentation? About how many parents attend that?

A: About 80 percent.

Mr. Frank spoke of being pleasantly surprised regarding the number of Academy fathers with whom he interacted, given national statistics regarding African American fathers who appear to be absent from their children's lives and educations. Mr. Frank spoke knowledgeably about single parenting.

Single parenting...I've seen that as being one of the things that really struck me about dealing with the Academy. Is how these boys were somehow pushed to be young men without a positive male influence. And for a while now, I've been researching this little title called 'parental alienation syndrome.' And parental alienation syndrome affects the child and the parents. Where the child is alienated from one parent. Nine times out of ten it's the father. So once that child is alienated from the father, then the father ends up alienating themselves.

Mr. Frank was upbeat when asked for his perception of parents' perception of the Weekend Academy.

From the three sessions that we've had in 2009, parents seem to love it. I haven't heard anything negative. And it's funny because I haven't heard anything negative from any sessions and our parents are diverse. So I would think I'd hear something at least some kind of negative from the parents, but we haven't. So that's a good thing.

However, one issue that Mr. Frank said he is aware of and passionate about is his future effort to expand the Academy to meet the needs of parents clamoring for more programming tailored to serve African American boys. Denise, the FLI staff member who helped launch the Academy, explained how the Academy solicits parent feedback.

We took surveys, and just interacting with the parents when they came in in the morning, when they dropped them [students] off, when they left in the afternoon to pick them up, and phone calls and letters and cards they've sent. Some parents sent cards thanking us for having the program. And wrote letters thanking us for having the program.

The Academy's math, science, and reading teachers also formed a bridge between the Academy and its parents. Each teacher reiterated the importance of parental participation throughout their own lives, without any prompting, and throughout their careers as educators. The reading teacher noted her father's longtime community advocacy for African American males and her observations about how parental participation affects their children's educations.

It's kind of like a tag team. If you're getting it from your parents, then when you come to me, get it from me, then it gets into your head more. Or, when you come to the Weekend Academy, you know that your parent's gonna be involved in your learning, then you're going to be more prone to learn, more prone to try.

The science instructor stated simply that, "I wouldn't be where I am without my parents." He continued, "Even though high school counselors are great, they're bombarded with so many students. It becomes a game of numbers." He described his efforts to let school and Academy parents know that "this [education] only works with your involvement on some level. You have to meet us

halfway.” He verbally illustrated how he tries to motivate parents. “I draw a triangle. Here we are as the educators, here you are as the parent, here’s the child. And all this stuff works best, [with] the three of us are working and communicating together,” he said.

The math teacher recalled that, “My parents were very active. The parents that were active in their children’s academic careers, those young people were successful. I think there’s a direct correlation to parent participation in their child’s academic activity to success. I really do.” He called the parent-teacher relationship a “...two-edged sword.”

...[J]ust for the simple fact that I think it’s very important for there to be an outreach from the parent, from the teacher, because I think one of my strongest assets of being a teacher was my parent-teacher relationship because I reached out to them. I didn’t only call when their child was doing bad. I also called them when the student did something great.”

He stressed his roles as a parent and as an educator, too.

I put educators on the forefront of this as well. And I say this all the time, I’m not trying to toot my own horn or any of that, but this is what God put me on this earth to do. And I think it’s very important, if you weren’t, if you don’t have the gift to be a teacher then you shouldn’t be a teacher. Because there are just extra things that you do to make sure that your students are going to succeed.

Or, as Mr. Frank’s e-mail auto responder told me and other parents and educators who communicated with him via e-mail later that week, “Make your footprints known.”

Although Academy teachers and administrators stated their strong preference for working with parents, the demands of its mission seemed to call for being diligent in making an impact even if there were situations in which parents were not likely to be involved. Their sentiments regarding this latter situation are presented in the following and final subsection of findings from the Weekend Academy case study.

“Doing the job” without parents. During my post-interview member checks, Mr. Frank expressed surprise that he was inaccurate in predicting that most Academy parents would at least respond to the request to be part of this research, even if they gave a negative response due to logistical difficulties. He had based his perception on what he believed would be the parents’ desire to continue a relationship with the Academy. Out of 14 households that I called to follow up on the e-

mailed research solicitations, five of the telephone numbers supplied by FLI were disconnected or apparently the wrong number, three resulted in voicemail messages that were never returned, one family declined to participate due to a two-job work schedule, two families didn't keep their promises to get back in touch with me, and only three of this group of families that I called ultimately fulfilled their agreement to participate. Although we had discussed possible differences between the parents' willingness to be involved in research versus their willingness to be involved in the Academy, Mr. Frank was concerned that the Academy was in fact losing its relationship with its past parents. I recalled his speculation during his interview regarding why some parents appeared to be unlikely to be involved in the Academy or in the schools.

Q: Do you have any sense as to why they weren't more involved?

A: (pause) Work schedules. Multiple children. And probably just used to the, once the young boy will reach a certain age, 'you're responsible for this now, you know you take care of it.' It's your education type feeling...I don't know if the PTA or the PTO is designed to do this, however there needs to be an organization or a class on how to interact with your child's education. At different levels. There's the daycare level, there's the grammar school level, there's the junior high level, and there's the high school level. Because what's happened is that we forget that we still need to be educated ourselves.

The Academy's science, math, and reading instructors agreed in their separate interviews that their limited interaction with Academy parents was comparable to their experiences in the broader environments in which they held fulltime educational jobs along with their part-time Academy positions. One teacher agreed that parents were "very, very seldom" involved in the Academy, although the effort was made.

Q: So did you have interaction with their parents at all?

A: I made it a point to be there every morning when they were dropped off. Anytime that I'm teaching I think it's important to greet the students when they first come in for that day, and I think it's always good to see a smiling face. So I was pretty much there when they got there in the morning, and fondly shake the father's hand, shake the mother's hand, give the mothers hugs or whatever, hey, let 'em know they were in good hands. Let 'em know that their boys were in good hands and that they were gonna be ok for the next 3-1/2 to 4 hours.

Q: Were the parents typically involved in the Academy?

A: We had open door policy but a lot of them just dropped them off and took off in the morning. And came and picked up.

However, this teacher speculated that the limited face-to-face interaction he had with Academy parents was perhaps “by design.” He surmised that, “I think that’s the way we wanted it. Because what we’re trying to do is get these boys to be a little bit more independent too, because they’re reaching the stage in their lives where they needed to be more independent.”

One of the other two Academy teachers even shared his belief that parental involvement in the form of constantly critiquing and changing their African American children’s educational environments could go too far and become more counterproductive than he thought the parents thought it was:

What I see and what a lot of my friends are doing is trying to take their kids out of public schools and run them to the suburbs. Expecting for that environment in middle schools to raise their kids. And I always give them a speech about it, because they’re not getting any type of cultural support or cultural awareness. The kids end up, for the most part, acting like what they see on TV.

This teacher further explained to me that he understood parents’ desire to avoid what he thought they viewed as troublesome public school issues such as a nearly 60% school dropout rate. However, he believed that parents’ tendency to flee from urban public schools made the problems worse, and led them back to programs like Weekend Academy to fill the resulting cultural voids for their sons.

The third Academy teacher shared her thoughts about her perceptions of the ineffectiveness of parents who were involved only when the Academy contacted them.

Q: In your role at Weekend Academy, did you interact with the families?

A: Just if I telephoned. Or [the Academy’s mandatory parent] orientation, but not week to week interactions, no.

Q: What would be an example of something that would prompt you to talk to a parent by telephone?

A: When the boys weren’t turning in reports. Then I would have to place a phone call to their parent to speak with them.

Q: In general, what was the response when you would have to contact the parent in those situations?

A: The parent would be surprised. Because their child would communicate that they had turned the report in. So when I told the parent, no, your child did not turn the report in they would act surprised. Because the parents...when we [parents] get busy, we don't have time to sit down, 'ok, let me see your book report.' So they just take their child's word.

Q: Generally, once you contacted the parent, did that resolve the situation?

A: No. Not at first. Most of the time, they would make sure it got done before the end of the session, but the instructions were that they needed to be done by a certain deadline. But they wouldn't reach that deadline. They would wait to, we had to scare them, like you can't get your money. Or you won't complete the program.

The same teacher affirmed her belief in the importance of parental involvement, and her belief in the potential for more involvement that exists in the schools for parents who are willing to pursue it:

Q: Do you get the sense that schools in general reach out to parents?

A: I think they do.

Q: Do you get the sense that schools reach out to parents of African American males more or less or about the same as other students?

A: I think that...it's about the same.

Q: And thinking again of the parents of African American males in particular, do you think that Weekend Academy reached out more or less or about the same as the boys' schools?

A: I think about the same. I think that they [the Academy] could have had a little more parental involvement...the event that they did try to reach out to the parents, very little came. I don't know if that's discouraging for the...planning team, when parents don't participate. Do you get discouraged or do you go back and see what you did wrong? Do you re-evaluate your whole planning? But I think it was about the same.

The same teacher speculated on her perceptions of why parental involvement might be lagging in the Academy and the African American community.

I know some of the families of the Academy, education has been seen, is important. But in some of the other families it's about survival. So you don't have time to read a book. Because when your mom goes to work you have to watch your siblings. So it may be that. And then some of it where you have that mom and dad at home, but mom and dad doesn't have time to even sit down with you and tell you to even read a book. So I think those are the reasons. And also, because kids already feel like, 'well I have homework to do, so why should I read something extra?'

The first teacher lamented that:

The parent-school relationships have changed. Because like I say, what I've seen and what I've heard, a lot of the parents, I'm not gonna say a lot, but parents that we're dealing with right now, we're dealing with a lot of young parents. So you've got, you're dealing with kids that are in high school now and they're 14, 15, 16 years old, their parents are only 32, 33, 34 years old. During a particular time there was a lot of teenage pregnancy. So we're dealing with mothers and fathers that weren't real successful in school and school, when you say school, it's a negative connotation. They're really, they have a chip on their shoulder so to speak before they even come in to the school.

The second teacher related his experiences of parental issues.

I've come in contact with some parents who are jealous of their child, their student...[W]e [the educational program where he works fulltime] just try to be encouraging. I find that sometimes we try to start like a parent group. A lot of times when you bring parents into a program or you bring them into the school and make them feel involved. Some parents can't be involved because, due to jobs. Others can't be involved due to just the increase of split families. Some times, a lot of times I find fathers that care and who aren't involved just because they don't know or aren't aware where their child is, or vice versa. You know mom with multiple children and just doesn't have the time to follow up with her child or to give the child the type of nurturing I think a student needs just to get through school.

One of the Academy teachers summarized for himself the dichotomy between his belief regarding the importance of parental involvement versus his tendency to move forward in serving students even if their parents were not likely to be involved.

No, I never heard anything from any [Academy] parents, outside of the four individuals I [already] knew. ...[I]t's kind of sad, but I'm so used to not having the involvement, I'll say the [Academy] parents that I knew, they followed up with me. But that was maybe 4 people out of 30 plus kids. So when I got it [parental involvement], I'm just sort of used to teaching, trying to get these kids first to see the importance. It's their life, it's their investment. Yes, share it with your parents or guardians, but this is for you.

Another Academy teacher, despite dismal reviews of the extent to which Academy parents may or may not be likely to be more involved if there are future Academy sessions, closed our interview with the same type of call for more educational service that Mr. Frank communicated from parents during the snowy December meeting.

...[T]hings [at the Academy] are just phenomenal, what they do, and I think that it's something that, it's a benefit and it will be a benefit to anyone who is able to experience it. Eric has expressed many times he wants to do his own school. You know, it's time to do it, because we're losing them! We're losing our Black males.

Summary of Weekend Academy Findings

The findings in the previous three sections reflect the perspectives gleaned from my interviews with the parents of the 8th-and 9th-grade African American boys served by the Weekend Academy for African American Boys, the students' middle and high school counselors who recommended them to the program, and Academy administrators and teachers. I integrated these data with information I collected from my meeting participant observation and my document review. The remaining steps of my Academy data analysis are explained in the following section.

Analysis: The Weekend Academy for African American Boys

My first analysis step of data reduction (Miles & Huberman, 1994) involved sorting, focusing, and organizing the information gathered through, as summarized in the previous section, in-depth interviews with Academy parents, school counselors, and Academy administrators and teachers. My initial sorting of the data resulted in the analytical categories identified in the previous section from these stakeholder interviews. Parents described their roles in evaluating, volunteering, attending events, communicating with educators, and working behind the scenes. School counselors typified their involvement with parents based on these educators' depictions of the parents as either involved or uninvolved. Academy administrators and teachers, in their role in filling what all stakeholders perceived as gaps in the educational service provided to African American boys in traditional settings, believed their mission was best served by getting the job done with parents, while acknowledged situations in which they would have to get the job done without parents. My insights and interpretations from these interviews were sharpened and refined through my participant observations and document reviews, which were integral in providing a robust understanding of the contexts, facts, and events of the case study (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2009).

My focus then turned to an empirical pattern-matching process, in which replicated patterns that I detected were compared with any predicted patterns. My approach relied on an analytical strategy of relying on a predetermined frame of reference or theoretical proposition (Yin, 2009). The patterns I sought to confirm, refute, or elaborate on were dimensions of parental involvement that I

postulated may serve as the basis of issues for which there were differing perceptions and cross-perceptions salient to the parent-educator relationship. I sought to determine if such dimensions could be identified and, if so, whether the data allowed me to discover issues relevant to these dimensions that created a mutual orientation of these educational service providers and service recipients toward each other and toward these dimensions.

Dimensions of Parental Involvement

Within my categorizations of the stakeholder interview feedback were first, patterns of parental involvement that appeared to characterize how most interviewees were initially apt to use the term. This distinction typically described parents whose involvement was readily apparent through their patterns of regular visibility at the school or related events, or because they regularly initiated contact with the school in a way that made their presence known. Supporting documents invited or encouraged parents to engage in this type of out-front involvement, or facilitated these parents' visible or virtual involvement in some way such as providing contact telephone numbers and e-mail addresses. The parents interviewed who criticized themselves for their lack of parental involvement were generally referring to this type of out-front involvement, although they often quickly pointed out examples of what they believed to be their own patterns of involvement, which will be described next as behind-the-scenes efforts.

Parents' less-visible patterns of behind-the-scenes involvement were usually contextually carried out in one of two manners. Parents who referred to themselves or others as active behind-the-scenes usually talked about their engagement in what I viewed as physical patterns of involvement, such as creating a supportive at-home educational environment including ensuring homework was completed, creating boundaries to limit learning distractions such as excessive television and computer use, and enforcing school rules. Like their more out-front counterparts, parents who are active behind-the-scenes may also be visible at school or events, but are more selective about prioritizing what circumstances warrant this type of physical participation with their sons' educators rather than in some other type of life activity. These parents also reported taking steps to reply to

communication from the school in the form of phone calls, messages, or some of the documents I reviewed that mandated parent responses. They also recounted their physical involvement in responding to requests for behind-the-scenes participation in activities such as out-of-school fundraisers.

I also identified a second type of behind-the-scenes parental involvement, based on feedback from parents who seemed more likely to be cognitive rather than physical participants in issues related to their sons' educations. This more passive, versus active, pattern of involvement includes parents who either actively or passively evaluated and considered educational choices, and ensured the availability of resources such as tuition and transportation to support those choices. These parents prided themselves on providing thoughtful guidelines to their children regarding academic and life expectations. As with their more-active behind-the-scenes counterparts, these parents' efforts were not always communicated directly to educators. Some, but not all, of these parents only appeared likely to communicate with the school at all if a response was required to some issue related to their child's behavior. **These parents rarely initiated direct interaction with the school.**

The final pattern of parental involvement that emerged from the Academy data was discerned only from the perspectives of other stakeholders. So-called uninvolved parents were presumably not a part of this study. I made this determination based on other parents' characterization of them as being so uninvolved in their children's education that they likely would not even have made a decision for their sons to apply to the Weekend Academy or complete the application. Based on my consideration of the pattern of behavior predicted by other stakeholders for uninvolved parents, even parents who were perceived as not being involved in their sons' Academy participation at least appear to have completed the required paperwork, provided transportation resources, and attended at least the opening orientation session. Thus, it appears through the observations of other stakeholders in the educational paradigm that there is an "invisible" group of parents who are uninvolved at any level that can be discerned.

The resulting typology of parental involvement that emerged from my first data analysis step of sorting, focusing, and organizing the data is depicted as a second analysis step of displaying the data (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Table 4.1 is a data display matrix providing visual assistance in relating the data that emerged from my study to the typology that constitutes the posited dimensions of parental involvement.

Table 4.1. Examples of data supporting identification of typology/dimensions of parental involvement: Weekend Academy for African American Boys.

Type/dimension of parental involvement:	Examples of supporting data collected from:	Examples of supporting data collected from educators:		
		Academy Administrators	Academy Instructors	School Counselors
Out-front parental involvement	<p>"I think that we were all welcome to come in [to the Academy] and observe whenever we felt we wanted to."</p> <p>"I didn't see a process in place [at the Academy] to make sure you stayed involved."</p> <p>"They [Academy] had a speaker come in. And they had the parents come...it was about half full..."</p> <p>"I did that [volunteered at the school] last year. I haven't done that this year."</p> <p>"It's the same families..."</p> <p>"...the [school] teachers are gonna get involved with you as much as you get involved with them..."</p> <p>"...the principal knows me, the teachers know me, some of the students know me, and because we're not there to spy, but we're there to be involved."</p> <p>"I visit my son's school, I just show up by surprise!"</p>	<p>Letter to parents of boys accepted requiring the parents to attend opening day orientation.</p> <p>"They [parents] made phone calls, they e-mailed me on a regular basis, they asked questions."</p> <p>"Some parents sent cards thanking us for having the program."</p>	<p>Thinks Academy may have limited visible parental involvement to make boys "independent."</p> <p>"...no, I never heard anything from any [Academy] parents."</p> <p>"I think they [the Academy] could have a little more parental involvement."</p>	<p>"Parents will rearrange their work schedules, take a day off, whatever they need to do to come to functions..."</p> <p>"Our parents are very active. They have a question they'll call."</p>

Table 4.1. (cont.) Examples of data supporting identification of typology/dimensions of parental involvement: Weekend Academy for African American Boys.

Type/dimension of parental involvement:	Examples of supporting data collected from:	Examples of supporting data collected from educators:		
		Academy Administrators	Academy Instructors	School Counselors
Behind the scenes – Active	<p>“[Involved] as far as with the school or with my son? More with my son. As far as homework, assignments turned in on time...”</p> <p>“...unfortunately I didn’t spend a lot of time in the building other than making sure I was helping to support and manage my son’s education.” [former volunteer mother, now disgruntled].</p> <p>“No, you [son] get two hours of tv and game, that’s all-inclusive, in one night.”</p> <p>“We are involved in a number of different activities that our children participate in, but it’s not an ongoing involvement, it’s for whatever the occasion may be and for whatever the requirements are. But we are involved and active in our children’s school as well as extra curricular activities.”</p> <p>“...as far as like trying to get into the fundraisers, I would do that. As far as helping my son with that. As far as taking it to work or church.”</p> <p>“I [attended the meeting and] sat and listened.”</p>	<p>“Make sure this shirt is clean. Make sure the student comes in with a belt. Believe it or not, that’s a chore. For the parent.”</p> <p>“People actually take the [Black history] information to their church, to their job, that’s been extraordinary itself.”</p>		<p>“I was very blessed in the fact that when I handed out the [Weekend Academy] forms they came back very quickly for those students who were interested.”</p>

Table 4.1. (cont.) Examples of data supporting identification of typology/dimensions of parental involvement: Weekend Academy for African American Boys.

Type/dimension of parental involvement:	Examples of supporting data collected from:	Examples of supporting data collected from educators:		
		Academy Administrators	Academy Instructors	School Counselors
Behind the scenes – Passive	<p>“The school has embraced technology so I get a lot of e-mail notifications about what’s happening at school.”</p> <p>“I think we are highly underrepresented at these types of activities, but you most often see us at all the sporting events.”</p> <p>“We have a saying in our family, we can not do until we try.”</p> <p>Heard about the Academy from community networking.</p> <p>Evaluating program: “...there was really no follow-up with the boys trying to maintain a relationship...”</p> <p>Evaluating program: “...there needs to be more than one program.”</p> <p>Evaluating program: “I hate how it was a one-hit-or-miss type thing.”</p> <p>“There’s just not enough hours in a day to do all the things I’d like so I have to prioritize.” [parent at high-tuition school].</p> <p>“I saw too much of a drop-off mentality.”</p> <p>Indicated willingness to pay for Academy.</p>	<p>“In orientation we always tell the parents we can not do this job without you. And it’s known. Because we send out mail every week, emails and phone calls every week, to the parents.”</p> <p>“The Academy parents are very engaged in the program...they dropped their child off or sent their child by a bus or by a friend...”</p> <p>“Once the young boy will reach a certain age, ‘you’re responsible for this now, you know you take care of it [parent expectation.]”</p>	<p>“They just take their child’s word.”</p> <p>[interacted with the parents] “...just if I telephoned. Or orientation. But week to week interaction, no.”</p> <p>“We had open door policy but a lot of them just dropped them off and took off in the morning. And came and picked up.”</p> <p>Evaluating: believes parents’ tendency to flee from urban public schools made the problems worse.</p>	<p>“50% [of parents] work and can’t always come in. But they’ll come to the school if called.”</p> <p>Evaluating: “They would never pass up an opportunity that good [as the Academy].”</p> <p>“Sometimes it’s parents who will read, read our website and read our newsletters when they get home.”</p> <p>“...are knowledgeable or informed about how their kids are doing academically and have a sense of how their child is progressing.”</p> <p>“I think their [students’] family has instilled in them a lot of strength to sort of be their own person and not fall victim to that.”</p>

Table 4.1. (cont.) Examples of data supporting identification of typology/dimensions of parental involvement: Weekend Academy for African American Boys.

Type/dimension of parental involvement:	Examples of supporting data collected from:	Examples of supporting data collected from educators:		
		Academy Administrators	Academy Instructors	School Counselors
Uninvolved	<p>"I used to be a cheerleading coach. Parents would not come to see their kids play. I had to be responsible for those kids. ...[W]here was the parents at?"</p> <p>"I don't see many parents [at school events] who look like me..."</p> <p>"...they have a lack of understanding how important education is."</p> <p>"How do you teach your children to be prompt or to be present if you're not doing it yourself?"</p> <p>"I don't really understand...from my own cultural background..."</p> <p>"They have dress codes. She lets her son, she puts her son in whatever."</p>	<p>"...once that child is alienated from the father, then the father ends up alienating themselves."</p> <p>"Work schedules. Multiple children."</p> <p>Surprised at the number of Academy parents who did not respond to the research request.</p>	<p>"What we're trying to do is get these boys to be a little bit more independent too, because they're reaching the stage in their lives where they needed to be more independent."</p> <p>"[I]t's kind of sad, but I'm so used to not having the involvement...I'm just sort of used to teaching, trying to get these kids first to see the importance. It's their life, it's their investment. Yes, share it with your parents or guardians, but this is for you."</p>	<p>"No follow-through, no homework being done...so much unsupervised time."</p> <p>"Some of them, I don't think, know quite how to support their kid."</p> <p>"...Parents don't question..."</p> <p>"...we had one [basketball] game [at which] we have five parents in attendance to watch their students. That to me is unheard of and unthinkable."</p> <p>"I'm trying to get our parents more involved...unless you can get parents to look at education as a partnership...we are going to fail."</p>

Summary: Dimensions of Parental Involvement

Similarly, the results of the Redeemer interviews and focus groups are summarized in the section that follows as the initial within-case data reduction analysis step for my second study. This approach is consistent with my purpose of studying more than one case to strengthen the precision, external validity, and analytical generalizability and replicability of findings (Creswell, 2007; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009).

Findings: Redeemer Christian Day School

Redeemer study participants had as many questions as answers, and seemed very introspective regarding the school's past, present, and future. Accordingly, my findings are presented next in the form of the overriding broad theme that dominated my inquiries with parents and with school representatives into Redeemer and its parent-school relationship: Redeemer's past, present, and future.

The parents

The Redeemer Christmas event proceeded uneventfully, unlike the following month's meeting of Redeemer's nine-member governing Council Board. The church merger. Continued enrollment declines. The doubling up of middle school classrooms due to recent teacher layoffs. And now the presence of the new governing church. Student uniforms? A fundraising endowment fund? New marketing efforts? A high school? A creeping change in the ratio between minority and non-minority students? The vocal Board presence of the new pastor's wife, both as a Redeemer parent and a perceived step toward more church governance of the school? All of these forces were present throughout the Council meeting, one of three that I was allowed to attend, and throughout the research study as well.

Carla, the Council parent-chair, kept the January monthly meeting moving efficiently through the lofty agenda items. She had shared with me in her parent interview for this study her concerns that, although the mission of the school would presumably remained unchanged, the environment just felt "different," more than any other time in the past eight years since she had enrolled her 5-year-old daughter in Redeemer as an alternative to her neighborhood public school. Carla was one of five parents I talked to individually. Two of them, Carla and Phyllis, the head of the parent run Parent-Teacher Fellowship (PTF), are both middle school parents and parent-leaders based on their volunteer roles with the school.

Redeemer's past, present, and future. Carla perceives Redeemer principal Helen Peale as the force bridging Redeemer's past, present, and presumably its future. Over a businesslike restaurant

lunch, Carla recalled for me her first visit to the school. As she does with every prospective parent, Mrs. Peale personally met with her and gave her a tour. Carla was referred to Redeemer by a neighbor while she was evaluating educational choices for her daughter, now one of the middle school's 25 students.

She [Mrs. Peale] was very affirming of myself, and of our future, and not necessarily with Redeemer, but she came across as providing affirmations as to who [daughter's name] and I could be in terms of our future. She was [also] very knowledgeable of the academics requirement. I could tell strong professionalism. I liked how she presented herself, I liked how she presented the school. She was just very comforting and easy to work with. ...I hadn't really decided to do faith-based education. It really wasn't on my agenda.

Carla's confidence in the school was reinforced by the caring manner in which a teacher consulted with her on the tough decision to keep her daughter in 1st grade an extra year to allow more time for social and academic growth. Carla also recounted to me with a laugh how Mrs. Peale "twisted my arm" and convinced her to assume visible volunteer roles in the school. Carla's four-year stint on the Council Board had included two years as the chairperson and only member of the PTF, one year as one of the Board's parent representatives, and her current post as Board chair. Carla is by nature and profession a planner and an organizer, skills she has lent to the school, but admittedly with less pleasure now given her mounting concerns regarding "change." She acknowledged her lingering discomfort in the role of the parent who other parents would approach, socially and as they dropped off and picked up their children at school, with their questions and perceptions in response to communication sent from the school during the church merger process. She told me that although she provided assurance to other parents in the past, she presently has her own concerns regarding her perception of how the merger has progressed during its first school year.

Q: Was the Board involved in any way in the decision for the churches to merge?

A: No. The position we were given was that the school would not be impacted at all. It would be seamless. We wouldn't see any change in the way we were doing business... [T]hat has turned out not to be true. There were some physical changes in terms of when the new church moved into place, some of the space that we used for the school were cleaned out and absorbed into the church's usable space. One of the classrooms was converted to a storage room. And if we grow, we're going to need that classroom back.

Carla also related non-physical changes she perceives in terms of the new church's increased oversight of the school. What has remained unchanged for Carla through the years is her sense that she is one of the school's few remaining visibly-involved parents.

You have the same parents covering a lot of activity throughout the year. There's a select group of parents that you can count on to be available to help all the time. There are some parents that if you find the right fit, and that means you have to really understand what you're asking of that parent, understand their circumstances, i.e. their job requirements, do they work at home, do they work in a corporate office, do they travel, or work at night, you have to know that parent. If you find the right fit for them, they'll come up for you. And that's been my personal experience with them. Then there's that third group that just shows up. That's if their kid is involved.

Speaking more specifically of the parents in the middle school program that comprised the Redeemer case study, Carla noted that their school involvement may take the form of making small donations to the school beyond tuition, but that their visible involvement typically lessens.

They start off strong in the elementary school and it kind of wanes as they get into middle school. And I've even seen that happen with myself. And I think it has to do with, I've been doing this for so long, how about I step aside and let somebody else try it? I'm on the Council Board, but even my involvement in [name of daughter]'s classroom is minimal. And it could be just the fact that in middle school parents just aren't allowed to go in the classroom. Kids are abhorred at their parent walking in the classroom. They're not excited like they were in kindergarten.

A major issue that surfaced throughout the research is the difference between the size of Redeemer's past and present student enrollments. Carla reflected on this problem based on her own observations.

I came in on a time at Redeemer where we had 120 students. It was probably an optimal time in terms of the number of students, and having resources available, having programs, athletic programs that were fully staffed by kids, and coaches. There was a lot of activity going on and thus we had many more parents to participate. We went through a period where we lost a lot of our students, a number of our teachers transitioned and students left with those teachers. I probably still didn't understand the politics of it, but I saw it happening. A number of the teachers left and went to a competitive Christian school, and as a result the parents who were associated with those teachers, most of them were associated with them through their church, so when those teachers left and went to the other Christian school, the parents took their kids and went with them.

Carla perceived that a variety of environmental and social factors had led to the school's declining enrollment, currently and in the past.

I think we were hit with the perfect storm in terms of change in the climate of the church and change in the economic climate of our society. A lot of people were forced out because of economic issues, a number of people used that opportunity to, if they were unsure of the school, this seemed like a good time to make a change. Others...we had resignations from the Council that were a result of them moving their kids over to another Christian school with not as quite a diverse background as we have. ...I think in the last seven years, there has been a steady decline in enrollment.

Q: Why do you think enrollment has been declining for that long?

A: A lot of it had to with, I see it as we had no marketing for the school whatsoever. So whatever declines for the school that would be considered normal, we were not able to offset those declines because we had no marketing in place. So all we were doing was losing. And we had nothing in place to counter those losses, to draw in an increase in revenue. We were just, we just kept doing what we were doing and hoping somebody would see. So we've always been in need of a marketing program. Always.

Q: Do you have a marketing program for the school now?

A: Not officially. But coming back to where we were talking about how much the church has been involved in the school activity, that is one thing that they are bringing to the school activity is a better marketing of the program. Now it's a joint marketing function. Marketing in association with the church itself, but it is marketing nonetheless. Something is better than nothing.

In addition to her concerns about the size of the school's enrollment, Carla, who is African American, raised issues about the composition of Redeemer's student body.

I have a concern on what I've seen this year is that our ethnic breakdown is starting to erode. One of the other reasons I liked Redeemer is that it had a very diverse school program. We had kids from many different backgrounds. I liked the fact that my daughter would be exposed to different types of individuals, because that's what she was going to encounter when she went off to college, when she went to the workforce, and I wanted her to understand that differences didn't necessarily equate to something being wrong. So now we're at a point with the merger of the two churches, the African American church [the current owners of the school] and the predominantly white church [the former owners of the school], that a number of our white parents have started to leave. They've either opted to go to public school, or if they could afford, then they'd transfer to another Christian school. So that leaves us with an imbalanced diversity make-up. And I've decided I'm going to let the Lord handle that. He's got a plan for this school and it'll be ok.

At present, Carla, like other parents interviewed, was unsure if the same factors that brought them to Redeemer in the past would be enough to keep them there in the future. "The parent role has to be larger part of it [the school's future]," she told me during her interview. "And it needs to be brought back to the forefront. Which means the activities surrounding the school have to be managed and planned and set up by parents for parents."

Only three middle school parents who were not in Redeemer administrative roles agreed to be interviewed for the research study. I elicited their feedback in one-on-one interviews instead of in focus groups as I had anticipated. All three parents appeared less willing to engage in discussions about the school than in non-school topics that we discussed casually during the course of the interviews. The father of an internationally adopted son said that Redeemer was “great” for his family, except for his observation there were not enough boys enrolled to have an active sports program. He recounted his family’s abrupt transition to Redeemer several years ago.

We had just moved my older son [who has now left Redeemer for high school] from a magnet school...[H]e was having trouble because of the class size in public school. He’s quiet and he doesn’t ever ask questions. Anyhow, so we moved him from the public to [the magnet school] and...there was a dispute between this church that’s part of the school, and the school, and they shut it down...so we were left without a school. It looked like in two days that it would be closed. ‘No more. Don’t come back tomorrow because there will be nobody here.’ And Ms. Peale was kind enough to offer an opening, they said that Redeemer would accept any of the kids [from the closed magnet school] for the rest of the year. So it was kind of a blessing.

Q: How did the [magnet school] parents find out about Redeemer’s offer?

A: I don’t know. I got an e-mail, I think, from one of the other parents, so I don’t know if the administrator had the other school contacted other private Christian schools or what. I don’t remember now. It was very fortuitous. ... I think the Christian education is better, because you get the foundation. It wasn’t an aim of ours originally because it seems that we should support our public schools. But if they fail, you’ve got to do what you can to get your kid educated.

When I asked the father for his present opinion of Redeemer, he referred to the school’s teachers and principal as being “accommodating and accessible.”

Q: In what form do you communicate with them?

A: It depends. Either by phone or in person. Last year we were struggling with my younger son [who attends Redeemer] with just, I don’t know if he didn’t want to come to school or whatever, but he just like pitched a fit, not get dressed, that type of thing 15 minutes before we were supposed to leave. So we called Ms. Peale and said, ‘could we meet with you about, he’s acting like this? Can you help us with some strategies?’ She’s been here for many years, plus she has her own children so, she knows. So she gave us some strategies.

The father expressed little knowledge or concern of the school’s declining enrollment. His only observation on these topics was the fact that his son’s 5th-grade class had shrunk and been combined with a 6th-grade class this school year, which integrated his son in with middle school

students. He repeated what he had heard about the economy's role in the enrollment decline, but noted that the fact that he was laid off from his job several years ago had not yet made Redeemer unaffordable for his family. He also cited his continued unemployed status as a reason why he said that he and his wife "...aren't as involved [with the school] as we would like to be."

I know there's a lot of like families that do a lot of work, like the PTF. Some people are involved in that. To help with the fundraising, they have parents who come in and teach. There's a certain—I can't think of her name—she comes in and she teaches like their drama and to dance. And I know there's another family, every time they have a school production, like in the fall and the spring, there's a family that does all the props and all the background. They're very artistic and build the sets, I guess what it's called, and stuff like that.

Actually, we aren't as involved as we would like to be. It's more of a time constraint. My wife works full time. I am looking for work. So it doesn't always work for us two to have the time. I help with the soccer team. There was another coach, but I was free in the afternoons during soccer season and I helped them with practices. I went to all the games. My wife went to a couple of the games. We would go to my son's other games, but just when we were off. We'd take a week day off from work.

As for his family's future with Redeemer, he noted his support for public schools, and was unconcerned and uncommitted about the possibility of keeping his son at Redeemer through high school if the opportunity became available.

I think we're very happy here [Redeemer] and will keep him through 8th grade. The high school part, well, right now there's none, so we have thought about, we live in [name of public high school]'s district. That would be the high school they would go to and it's a good academic school. It's one of those nationally ranked, but it's good. It's probably the best in [name of city]. But I don't know how they would transition going from such a small school [as Redeemer]. That's the thing that I think will be a challenge, but we'll find out.

A second father interviewed also recounted the reason why his family had brought their now high-school-age older daughter to Redeemer as a pre-schooler 10 years ago. He told me the three reasons why he and his wife were attracted to Redeemer at that time.

I think number one was Christian education. Number two was convenience, because we live south of here...and we both travel north to come to work. So those two things. Smaller class sizes, that was encouraging. Those were probably the top three things.

The family currently has a 5th grade son at Redeemer, and the daughter now attends the public high school that the previous father had told me about as well. That school is "nationally recognized and rated in the top 10 high schools in the country," the current father told me boastfully. However,

he responded quickly and assuredly when our conversation turned to Redeemer's future plans for a high school.

Q: This is speculative, but if Redeemer had had a high school, do you --

A: Yeah, we were absolutely committed to it. I've been here numerous times asking, 'Are you still going to do it? Are you still going to do it?' And they just couldn't put it together, unfortunately.

Q: So you believe you would have sent your daughter here --

A: Oh, yeah.

Q: -- had there been a high school.

A: Yeah. The gang had been together for nine years -- actually 10, because some of those kids, five of them were in the [Redeemer] daycare together, all the way through 8th grade, so for 10 years they'd been together. So, I would've thought most of them probably would've stayed with the program. Why move if you like the education and you like everything else around it?

He described his current relationship with Redeemer as still being "great," adding tongue-in-cheek that "Helen Peale abuses me all the time, and I try to return the favor."

Then the teachers, once a year there's a basketball game, and we've played the boys' team, but the boys' team shrunk to the point there was no boys' team, so then we played the boys that had graduated from here. And we do okay the first half, but I guess what I'm getting at it is there's a good sense of companionship, and just playing that basketball game is something that's pretty cool for me as an old man, just getting out there and bouncing around with the kids, and I like it. I'm with the teachers, and the basketball coach, he's been here three, four years now, he donates his time to the school. So I might be getting off track here, but those kinds of things are important to me, and I really, really appreciate that.

However, he described his involvement with the school in more muted tones. "To me personally I'm not involved that much," he said.

I mean, we're not involved in the programs. We're not involved in helping out for... they'll have events, for example, Donuts for Dads, okay? Not that I [don't] eat donuts, but the point is it's a great thing, and the... 'my daughter reminds me of Jesus because' [comment cards to be completed by parents and students prior to the afternoon event], and it got me thinking, and I thought about some things that have really impressed me about her. And she wrote the same thing about me, and that poem is in my car. I keep it there, and I like reading it. But there's involvement, some of the parents give up time, and they'll be there and they'll set up the... in the gym, they'll set up the tables and the chairs and set up the punch bowl and all that kind of stuff, and then they'll break it all down, where for me I'm going to make everything I can make, but I'm out the door. I mean, I'm running a couple of businesses and just going crazy.

Q: So you came to Donuts for Dad?

A: Oh, yeah.

Q: But you're saying you were not part of the...

A: I was not part of the...there's people that are doing more than I can do.

Q: Are there other ways that you and/or your wife communicate with the school?

A: I'd say most of it's face-to-face verbal stuff, but I talked to [school administrative assistant] today on the phone. I emailed [her] yesterday. So she e-mails us about just different things going on, and there's a -- the Donuts for Dads thing was one thing, well, there's another thing for mothers, Muffins for Moms. So I just e-mailed back that we're going to be out of town that week, so she's not going to be able to make it. But that's it. Mostly face to face, though.

Once the interview tape was turned off, the Caucasian father confided in me his observations that the school's racial mix was changing. He speculated that the change was due to the new governance of a previously African American church.

The mother of a 14-year-old noted changes overall in her past 10 years as a Redeemer parent, but attributed the differences mainly to her new status as a divorcee. When she described how the school accommodated her daughter's physical challenges, I recognized the family as the one whose father-daughter singing duet had served as the entertainment for the Donuts for Dad event I observed on a Friday afternoon at the school. The school principal had become tearful as she announced to the audience that, since the daughter was in the 8th grade, this would be the last time the duo would perform for the school as they had in the past. The mother also spoke of how the school had accommodated the family after the divorce.

When we started [at Redeemer] I was married, my husband and I, then we got divorced a few years ago and I'm a single mother. ...The school is very family oriented. In the PTA meetings and the different things like that they do talk about family, because even though my husband and I are divorced, they still communicate with both of us and invite both of us to different things. Make it so that were both involved in things that are going on at the school. Very Christian-based, I think, the school is. The teachers here are, which I love that part of it. It's a good atmosphere.

The mother also blamed her marital status and the resulting changes to her life as a reason why she was not as "involved" with the school now as she was in the past.

I think a normal parent or, not normal, but a typical parent I guess you would say, would probably have more involvement than I have. I just wish personally myself I had more time to come and do that because I think it is important for a child to know that their parents are involved and want to come to programs and things like that. My job requires me to work some late nights and I work 40 minutes away. So it's hard for me to come over and do lunches or things like that. If I'm doing something it has to be something that they're planning for the parents to get involved with PTA at night or special programs. And then that way I'll know I can ask ahead of time to be off to come to those things. But I wish that I was closer so that I could come over and do lunch, volunteer some at the school with the kids. Because when she was younger I would come and volunteer at lunchtime to watch the kids while the teachers went and did things. I would help them make copies and things like that. But since I'm working farther away now it's hard for me to do that. ...

I asked the mother about her future plans for her 8th-grade daughter.

Q: Where will you send her after 8th grade?

A: She is going to go to a public high school unless, we're applying to get her into some early college programs. Maybe that's what she wants to do and I'd love for her to do.

Q: If Redeemer had a high school would you leave her here at the high school?

A: Probably yes.

Q: Would you consider other alternatives or would you just leave her at Redeemer?

A: We may consider other alternatives simply because of the fact this school is limited on things that they offer the children as far as extracurricular activities. My daughter wears a brace on one of her legs due to nerve damage when she was a little girl. And she can't do basketball and that kind of thing, the sports things. They don't offer anything else here for her to do like getting into a drama club or doing chorus or things like that. Plus I'd like for her to go to school where she could take a foreign language because they don't offer that here either.

This parent only had one concern about her current relationship with Redeemer, brought on in part by the logistics of the church merger.

I just wish there was a little bit more communication from the teachers with the parents. And I've talked to Ms. Peale about that recently. We discussed that because the church switched over and all that stuff. The emails, they weren't getting my emails that I was sending to them, so they're definitely working on that. But other than that the school has been great.

Q: The teachers weren't getting your emails?

A: Right. Because of some issues. They changed over the email system or something once the churches merged together.

Q: So you communicate via email. How else do you communicate with the school?

A: Just leave a message on their answering machines for the teachers. You call the school number and they have a specific answer machine number and you leave messages there and they'll return calls.

The group that parents I interviewed sometimes referred to as "the PTA" is officially known by the school as the PTF (Parent-Teacher Fellowship). For her one-on-one parent research interview, Phyllis, the current PTF president, had cordially invited me to a brown bag lunch at the law firm where she works as a legal assistant. She had firmly but calmly shared her perspectives on topics including why her family rejected public education for their now-middle school daughter ("...the teachers were not focused on the children, teaching. They were focused on other things such as behavioral problems and trying to feed them a bunch of pills in order to calm the children down..."); what her family currently valued about Redeemer ("...the academics are very high and the teachers there really and truly care about the kids"); and the merger and the school's future with the new governing church ("...there was a lot of communication...the parents were kept in the loop...they weren't surprised by it...I personally believe that the pastor has vested interest in the school..."). She spoke matter-of-factly in our one-on-one discussion about Redeemer's troubling trend of downward enrollment due to about half of the school's parents who had left in the past few years:

I think some of it is economics. ...I think some of it has to do with the fact that they had kids that were in older grades and they didn't want the older kids and the younger kids split [when the older ones reached high school age] so they would just move all the kids at one time. ...as far as the fact that some people left because of the merger, some people don't like change. ...they have their right to their opinion and if they don't like where the school is headed, they're not believing in your vision, then you're probably better off not having them there.

Later the same evening, in the focus group that I conducted with Redeemer's governing Council Board, Phyllis demonstrated the animation that other research participants had told me to expect from her. Her perspectives of the school from her vantage point as a parent in an administrative role is presented in the next section that summarizes how she and other school representatives described to me Redeemer's past, present, and future.

The School

The February Council Board meeting began an hour earlier that month to accommodate the focus group I conducted for my study. The 10-member group consists of parents, the school principal, and church representatives. Throughout the focus group and the regular monthly meeting that followed, parents and other Board members heartily debated Redeemer's future based on its past and its present.

Redeemer's past, present, and future. "The vision is still the same!" The adamant voice of Phyllis, the PTF president, rose above those of the other Council Board members as they were discussing Redeemer's future in the focus group. "Oh, absolutely," she insisted as a fellow parent member attempted to interject his perception of whether plans for a prospective Redeemer high school would materialize. "God said 'write the vision and make it plain so that the people can run with it.' The vision hasn't changed. God's mandate hasn't changed. The timing for our part may have changed. But the vision hasn't changed."

Several of Council Board focus group members were just as demonstrative. All members were active participants, although some participated in a quieter manner. The most bantering among the group arose amid speculation as to how to stem the problematic enrollment declines. Was it really just the economic burden on middle school parents after numerous years of private education, as Redeemer administrators perceived to be the problem? How could they find out what they didn't know if departing parents didn't give reasons before they left, and didn't respond to school requests for information after their departure? Were there not enough boys in the middle school to create sports teams? Was there continued uncertainty about the proposed high school, despite recent letters to parents from the new pastor offering assurances that the upper grade levels were still in the new church's three-to-five year plans? Or was it, as the pastor's wife continually interjected, the need for the school's future marketing efforts to extend beyond the past reliance on word-of-mouth referrals?

An elderly male church representative gave his opinion on the impact of not having a high school, based on his past personal experiences.

What it boils down to is if you ever, I been to couple of three graduations, some of my grandchildren graduated from here. If you go to graduation at Christ Redeemer Church, when they finish their last grade, it is a time of celebration but a time of mourning. Those kids that have been together, and a lot of them have been together for five or six or seven years. The day that they finish their last class here is not a happy camper by any stretch of the imagination. It's not the enrollment we need, it's the infrastructure we need. Because in the two or three graduations I've seen, I have very little doubt that if the school had provided the additional grades the vast majority of them would have stayed. Not only that, if we provide those grades then more will start early because there's a future there.

A younger male father gave his perspective of how a change in the environmental dynamics surrounding the school has caused change in financial dynamics within the school.

Historically the church that founded the school, and I've been a member of it for a number of years, was basically a working class church. ...[A]nd so the budget based on tithes and offerings coming in the church established the budget for the church and also established what they could do to help with the school. The school has always tried to make the tuition affordable over the years to get a good mix of the residents in the area. So the church has subsidized the tuition over the years to keep the tuition affordable so you could have families bringing more than one individual here. So we have a diverse student body, not just from the social or economic or racial, it's a combination of all those.

But the problem over the last few years has been the economy has really impacted working class families and small businesses to a large degree, which has impacted the budget for the church, which has impacted the budget for the school...[i]f they [parents] leave it's generally economic on their end and it's hard to recover when you're always trying to recover what you're losing instead of building and moving. Not just from graduation rates, because the graduation classes are big or small, it's just some people...something happens where they lose their job, or they have pay cut or they have to move, or something that comes up that they have to pull their child out of school or they don't look at it for the next year.

We're really trying to encourage an opportunity for families that may not know that they have an opportunity for a private education at a Christian school, they have that opportunity here. But in that same respect...when we make it affordable, it's kind of a Catch-22, we also are courting the people that are, can possibly drop from the school rather quickly and not be able to recover, 'cause it's real close for a lot of families.

However, the wife of the new governing church's pastor, also the mother of elementary grade Redeemer students, challenged the extent to which parents' decisions to enter or withdraw from the school were purely economic. A father joined the pastor's wife, the principal, and the elderly male church representative in verbally tracking enrollment trends.

Wife: I don't think it's just economic. Because last year was the worst recession we've seen in umpteen years and we got how many new students or families?

Principal: We're down 10 students this year from last year.

Wife: We're down, but we got a lot of new families.

Principal: We got a lot of new families.

Church representative: We're down 10 but we graduated some too.

Principal: We graduated 8.

Church representative: So we're actually down...

Wife: We got 15 new families that weren't in private school before. So I think that's real important. Is it 15 families or 15 students?

Principal: Students.

Wife: So 15 students with a population of 70, I mean that's a huge increase. So it can't be just financial. I mean economic.

Father: Question. You mentioned, I'm just trying to make sure I understand the numbers right. We got 15 students, we had 8 graduate, of the 10 that we lost were those 8 included in that 10? Or was that 8 that graduated and an additional 10 we lost? Did we lose a net 18?

Principal: No, we were at 85 last year. We're at about 73 this year. So those 8 are part of the 10, yes sir.

Father: ok. So the other two were for other reasons.

Principal: Right.

Wife: So you see we did really well in a slow economic period. To get 15 new students.

Father: 'Cause you're up 5.

The father further questioned whether the school was providing parents in the community with the school information they needed.

Father: ...[I] wasn't here in the past. But what I'm hearing about the past was like the church itself was the avenue to feed the students in. So you didn't have to go outside to do marketing. So now in the present, with the combination of the congregation first maybe dwindling and now merging and the possibility of it increasing brings you to the present where you don't want to get to the point where you rely on the church again. You don't want to create that same scenario. (muttered agreement).

So from a future perspective, it's how do you market what you have? Because we all know in this room and, I think you said you had grandchildren that graduated from here, they know the value of it, but letting the general public know that...[W]e drive a half an hour every day to get our daughter and our son here. ...[w]e are a working class family, so it wasn't, 'well we can't go here because it costs too much.' We looked at the cost, while cost had some factor in it, our main concern was 'what are we getting for our money?' And what we saw here, even if the money was the same as the other places, we still would have come here.

And I think that, one of the things that in this room and we need to realize this, is don't sell yourself short. Once you get the secret out, and you let people know, then they see the value of it, then you can increase your revenues that way.

The church representative and several Board parents inadvertently linked together gender and racial diversity issues as they pondered school enrollment issues.

Church representative: It's hurt us in some ways [race]. Some reasons from an enrollment standpoint. Being racially diverse, the fact of the matter is most private schools came into being, particularly in the South, when they went through integration. That's why they were formed. That's what started them. This church and diversity in our school, in some of the other Christian schools in the community, [school administrator] shared this with me, I was not aware of it, personally, she said that when she goes in an advisory role in some of them, when you get into the athletics it gets integrated. 'Cause white men can't jump. (Board laughter).

Female parent: Athletics generate revenue.

Male parent: Boys, for boys...

PTF president: It is for boys and girls.

Pastor's wife: But, I mean, but coming in the door they know that, so you think that's the reason why they leave? 'They knew that before they made the decision.

PTF president: I think as it gets into the older grades it is bigger and bigger.

Board members questioned whether more or different types of communication could help them get answers to their questions.

Pastor's wife: But what about the ones, I've heard from parents that leave, because it's not financial, it's because they have issues. And I think those are the things that concern me...

Parent-Board chair: Yea, and they won't say anything. It's probably an unresolved, something, it probably began at the early part of the year and there really wasn't a viable communication that would have brought about communication one way or another. So there are an umber of factors, some of it comes from miscommunication, some of it comes from non-communication, some comes from just a differing opinion on how things should be. ...[S]o I've witnessed many of those in each of the grades we've been in, why parents have left, the school didn't meet their needs as they perceived for their family. And whether it was, whether we were too strict, or our academic bar was too high, or we didn't seem to be fair enough to allow for that particular student whatever those needs might be, that's been part of it. I've heard them mention, especially families that have more than one child, if they've got a child that's transitioning towards high school...

Pastor's wife: Well in a situation like that, that's more understandable, but I'm talking about the issues where we can say well why did so-and-so leave? Well I don't know. That's a problem...we don't know.

Father: I agree. There's some people where you don't ever get a reason why.

PTF president: But with those people, you're never gonna get a good reason. Because the issue is that they're never gonna own up to the fact that the real reason is – 'blah.'

Pastor's wife: Like 'why are you asking now that I'm walking out the door?' Those are the ones that I have the concern with.

Church representative: Those are the ones we can't do anything about.

Pastor's wife: yea, but the things that we can change...

Mother: I know this probably sounds... 'cause we have 70 some students, but if there was some way to check up halfway through the year, and just say how is your year going, how is your communication with parent and teacher going? Are you telling your teacher what's going on? And asking questions, what's going on. And not even wait until registration time and just get that...

Father: ...going to them. Being proactive and saying, 'ok, we want to improve. We know that in the past we've lost some parents and students, and we may not be clear why. They may have said one thing and was another. 'Is there something going on or is there something that concerns you that you want to address?' They may not be able to go to the teacher because it might be with the teacher. Or they may not feel comfortable going to Ms. Peale. They may just want like a suggestion box where it will keep them anonymous.

PTF President: I think that's ok, but I think you usurp authority by doing that. I think that's not Biblical. They need to go to the teacher if they have a problem with the teacher.

Pastor's wife: It's just like a customer service, like 'how are we doing?'

Father: (amidst much conversation)...not personal grounds...

Father: There would be a number of parents that would give you that information, and then there would be a certain number of parents that won't give you that information.

Pastor's wife: In this day and age you get customer service requests constantly. You place an order online, 'ok, send us, how did we do?'

Church representative: I do have one slight problem with that. It's more than a slight problem. For some 35 years in the business world we used to do an every-year survey. I didn't call it employee surveys, it was a 'beat me' form. Things that people wasn't even thinking about complaining about until they got the form and then it became a donnybrook. And I saw organizations so, so many times go through so many gyrations trying to straighten things out that really really, really, really wasn't bad problems until you asked people to start thinking about 'em. The best thing in terms of finding out why people are leaving is that lady [the principal] standing at the front door when they bring the kids in...

Pastor's wife: But what if it's her? The reason they're leaving? I'm not being funny...

Principal: I usually know, and we send an exit survey as well, and give them an opportunity to say whatever they wanna say in that...and some we get back, some we don't.

Church representative: And what my brother said a while ago was very true. The ones that's gonna complain are gonna complain without any help at all...

Council parent-chair: True.

Church representative: And the ones that's not gonna complain, they're not gonna say anything anyway.

Despite uncertainty about why parents leave the school, the principal professed to know the main reason why parents come to the school.

I do open houses or when people want to enroll I interview all the parents and I always say 'how'd you hear about this school?' Once in a while it's the Internet, recently, never is it newspaper. People don't read the...and that's not just been recently, that's been the last 5-8 years, I don't ever hear about an advertisement. And once in a while it's the phone book. But majority of people, 80% or higher, it's 'I know so-and-so who used to go to school here. Or I know their mama.'

Although her focus group involvement consisted mainly of answering factual questions posed to her, Mrs. Peale, the principal and a Redeemer middle school parent, talked to me at length during her personal interview about Redeemer's history. All of her days appeared hectic during the occasions that I visited the school. However, she took the time to sit patiently in a chair across from me in her office and share her thoughts on what she has come to view as a "family relationship" that has developed between Redeemer and its parents by the time their children reach middle school. She believes that most parents think the school views the Christian principles they teach as the main reason they have brought their children there. She is a staunch advocate for the school's Christian teachings, but she instead believes that parents chose Redeemer's for its small, quiet environment that represented a safe harbor from public schools. The spiritual environment is one that she has come to believe grows on the parents, largely because of her influence and what parents have learned to respect about the nature of her interactions with them and with their children.

One thing I do is before school...I stand outside and open car doors when children are coming into the school. I can't do that as often now. We've had to lay off some teachers and I have other duties that I have to tend to some mornings now. [But] the other way [of communication] informally is during the course of the school year, I pray with each student alone, pull them aside and say 'how can I pray for you at your home or you personally?' And then when I do that, I have a letter, this year I'm e-mailing those letters, last year I mailed them, to the parents letting them know 'I prayed with your child today' and at the bottom I

put generally what we prayed about. I call each family, the parent, and pray with them in the course of the year, I'll do that for every family and every child. Then just walking halls or catching parents in the afternoons...or I went to a ball game yesterday, I go to ball games and talk to parents at the ball games.

Mrs. Peale expressed her relief that the current school year was half over, and that the school's current parents did not seem to have reacted negatively to the governing church's decision to merge or her own decision to lay off several teachers and combine classrooms. She acknowledges, though, that the parent-school relationship "varies from year to year," and explains it as "a God thing." She speculated that parental response to the research request was low because "satisfied parents don't necessarily respond" to school communication. She's grateful that her current relationship with parents has improved since a past series of incidents that she describes as involving negative interaction between a small group of unruly boys, their parents, and a few inexperienced teachers.

Two years ago it was tough with our middle school parents. It just flat was tough. And some of them hung in here, some of them left, some of them were ticked at me personally, and decisions that were made. But this year, morale-wise and knowing what I said about combination classes and things like that, these parents overall have been very gracious, very kind, very understanding. I haven't had a whole lot of belly-aching. Which could have happened because of what we did, had to do. I could have had 10 more kids leave. That didn't happen! So overall this year I have been extremely grateful, appreciative, and feel like because parents still have their children here and it's January and had to adjust to the multi-groupings that we've done, I'm still really tickled with the overall morale relationship, camaraderie, between the school parents and the teachers. I couldn't be happier.

Mrs. Peale also expressed her gratitude for the support of the school's teachers through "tough" times, as well as their current steadfastness during what she believes to be continued hard times due to the economy. "It's a gift," she said of her belief that the Redeemer "family" is supporting her during the school's current challenges.

The four teachers I interviewed returned Mrs. Peale's praise with praise for her and for the school's parents. One of them, currently a Redeemer middle school teacher but in the past a pastor-turned-car salesman-turned-coach-turned-public-school-teacher, spoke of his relationship with Redeemer parents as "supportive" and shared his observations regarding parental involvement.

A: How involved they [parents] are specifically at home. The very fact that they send them [their children] to a private school and are willing to accept the responsibilities to pay tuition, that shows you that they are already involved here at the school. Parental involvement then...do they carry through the same principles at home?

Q: If a parent is involved at home, what would you expect that that parent is doing?

A: I would find that the students are having their work completed. And actually the parents that work with their students at home normally are the students that have better work. Their work is complete, their work is more accurate and better graded.

Another teacher I interviewed was a middle school science teacher who had left Redeemer for a higher-paying Christian school job, but returned after that position “did not pan out according to the Lord’s will.” He perceived Redeemer parents as “pleasant” and “supportive.”

Q: How much contact do you have with parents?

A: It’s pretty much every day in the sense that we see them in the car or when they meet the kids out there. We have conversations when they drop them off. I probably see every parent at least three or four times a week, and there’s always a wave or a nod, or a conversation. And we send folders home on Mondays with their work and so the parents are always aware of what the kids are making. We send progress reports home halfway through, so there should never be a surprised parent by the grades of their children. And they have to sign that and send it back, so that involvement is good paper-wise, but they can always contact us either by phone or by e-mail.

Q: Do they contact you by phone or e-mail often?

A: Not really, not for me. If they want to talk to me, they usually just catch me out there. This morning, I had a parent come in and ask about the science fair, that the judges asked the daughter a question or two. She didn’t know if that was the normal thing for judging, and so she felt free to come up to me, and I felt free just to talk with her. They’re free to do that. Now, I don’t want them coming, just busting into my class right in the middle of it, but since it was before class at 8:00 this morning, that’s fine. But, yeah, they feel free to talk to me or they can call here and I’ll call them back.

Mrs. Peale and I also had a dialogue about what she perceives as the school’s progress and challenges as they transition to new ways of reaching out to parents via mass communication.

We have e-mails for faculty. My teachers, some of them are good about checking e-mails, some of them are not. That’s something I have to prod at times. And too, e-mail is a whole ‘nother thing because of the merger. It’s a different server, and a different process, and some of them [teachers] have had to figure that out. There’s different passwords and ways to get in that’s a little bit more complicated than the previous e-mail system we had. And the church purchases that and makes that decision, not the school. So that’s been a learning curve for some of the faculty. And some because of their age feel more comfortable using the telephone than using the e-mail and don’t wanna touch an e-mail, and don’t have personal computers at their own home. But anyway, we provide e-mail, and we have a website.

Q: Does every teacher has a computer in his or her own room?

A: They have one but none of them are Internet accessible. Only the ones in the computer lab, so teachers would have to go in there and access their e-mail. And again, like I said, it's a little bit more complicated than what it was before. The other thing is teachers before had voicemails. Everybody. Now only some have voicemails. And again that was a church...because they provide the system. And I didn't get way bent out of shape about that because, not all of them [teachers] use their voicemails. Voicemails were kind of fading and some of them were better at using e-mails, but anyways, we also, this year for the first time we have started doing all our communication by e-mail. Up until this year not every parent had a computer so we were mailing...I do a letter to parents the first of the month; that was being mailed up until this year. This year it's being e-mailed. And then we do a weekly update, it's called the Crusade, and last year that was sent home by hand with children. This year it's e-mailed and not sent home.

Q: Does that mean that all the parents have e-mail now?

A: Yes. Yes.

Q: Do you know if they have it at home or if they access it someplace else?

A: I don't know that. This was the first year that we got e-mail addresses from every parent. We e-mailed before and sent it out but it's just that it didn't go to everybody. So therefore we would do both. We would e-mail as well as mail, and e-mail as well as send it home with the child. And there are downfalls with that. You know, sending things home with a middle school student doesn't always go home. (laughing). Again, just little things to help with communication.

A central point of communication at the school is the office of Barb, the school's longtime administrative assistant. Barb is staunchly loyal to Redeemer and to Mrs. Peale, both in her current role and in the past as a Redeemer parent. She dutifully put aside her work and talked to me matter-of-factly about her opinions of what she believes has changed and what has stayed the same regarding the dynamics of parent relationships. She related, for example, that:

...we are seeing more single parents or divorced parents. So that's interesting...that is growing...and that presents its own problems. You know, communication-wise and whatever the conflicts are within their family spill over into the school. So you have, you just have to be careful there. You have to know what you're doing, you have to know where to step and where not to step, but just to be careful... animosity between parents, you just learn what's, who's gonna be upset and who's not. You're talking about customer service. That's what you have to do. You just have to know what your customer needs and how to get them the information that they need. I come from a background of automotive service. So I do think, I use the term customer service, because they are our customers. And part of building a business of any kind is you keep the customer happy, and then they send more people your way to be your customer. So that, I think of it from a customer service perspective just because of my background in business.

Q: Who do you believe views themselves as being the school's customers?

A: Well, the parents are your customers. They're the ones making the decision. And they judge your product in their child. So I would think that the family, but primarily the parent, because they are the ones distributing the funds, but the product has to be seen in your child, in the children. Their education, the report card, their behavior here at school, what kind of telephone calls you're getting or what kind of conferences you're having. That's where they're seeing what the value of their dollar is.

Some of Barb's perceptions appeared to present a more-dogmatic view of the present state of Redeemer parental involvement than the views expressed by teachers and Mrs. Peale. Barb shared that:

...the biggest thing [changes in the school versus the past] I've seen is the changes in parent attitudes. That when my children were here, and I was a parent here, I was not an employee so I was a parent. Most of the parents I knew were cooperative with the teachers and the administration and did not question, now this is as a parent looking in, I don't know what went on in the office. Now I see parents that challenge the authorities. Challenge the teachers. Challenge the principal. Instead of understanding that they [the teachers and the principal] are the professionals giving you information about...they want to defend their child I guess a good way to put it. Where they need to be listening not to the child but to the person in charge.

Q: Why do you think that parents think they should interact with the school in that way?

A: I think our society as a whole is in a challenge of authority mode. And we don't respect authority like we should. We question authority. And in some instances that's good and we need to use common sense but when we don't know the answers, when we are not the one prepared, if we're not a teacher, we shouldn't be telling the teacher how to run their classroom. If we're not a principal, we shouldn't be causing conflict there, or causing disruption or challenging that authority.

Q: Does the school have strategies to deal with what you view as this new parental attitude?

A: Well, it is a challenge for the teachers in the classrooms. And they do their job, they put the information out there, they talk to the parents, they try to help them to understand. Sometimes they're successful and sometimes they're not. If they are not able to deal with the situation in their classroom then that does move to the next level of the office and Mrs. Peale comes in to the situation. Not always do people like to listen. Not always do they submit to that. But it's never done with an arrogant or a haughty attitude on our behalf. You just put the information out there and then they have to...either they're cooperative or they're not.

However, contrary to what Redeemer parents and staff may expect from cooperative parents like Board-chair Carla, in member checks following the research, Carla surprised me by indicating to me that, unbeknownst to the school, she was unlikely to send her 6th grade daughter to the new

Redeemer high school if one materialized in the future. Perhaps it would be better to expose her to a less insulated or more well-established high school environment in preparation for her future. Or perhaps, Carla admitted, it was due to her nagging perception that a survey just distributed from the new church asking for parents' opinions on school uniforms felt a bit more like a mandate, perhaps a bit too much change.

Likewise, Parent-Teacher Federation president Phyllis, since the research, has informed the school that her family will not be part of Redeemer's future after the end of the current school year. They are withdrawing her 6th grade daughter from the school, noting the need for a change.

Summary of Redeemer Christian Day School Findings

The findings in the previous three sections reflect the perspectives gleaned first from my interviews with middle school parents of Redeemer Christian Day School, focusing on the school's past, present, and future. I also presented a second group of viewpoints regarding Redeemer's past, present, and future from the school administration, gathered through interviews with the school's principal and her administrative assistant, and a focus group of the school's parent, church, and administration representatives who comprise the school's Council Board. I integrated this data with information I collected from my observations of the Donuts with Dad school event and three meetings of the school's governing Council Board, as well as my document review. The remaining steps of my Redeemer data analysis are explained in the following section.

Analysis: Redeemer Christian Day School

My first analysis step of data reduction (Miles & Huberman, 1994) involved sorting, focusing, and organizing the information gathered through in-depth interviews with Redeemer parents and administrators, and a focus group with the school's governing Council Board. My initial sorting of the data resulted in the analytical categories of Redeemer past, present, and future, as related in the previous section by each of these stakeholder groups. My insights and interpretations from this feedback were sharpened and refined through my participant observations and document reviews, which helped me grasp the contexts, facts, and events of the case study (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2009).

As with the Weekend Academy within-case analysis, I determined: 1) if replicated patterns within the Redeemer case could be compared with the predicted dimensions of parental involvement and, if so, 2) whether these dimensions could inform the identification of issues for which there may be agreements, disagreements, perceptions, and cross perceptions within the educational service paradigm. I used an empirical pattern-matching process, in which replicated patterns were compared with the predicted patterns in reliance on my theoretical frame of reference (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Yin, 2009). I expound on each of these determinations in the sections that follow.

Dimensions of Parental Involvement

Redeemer parents tended to describe parental involvement as being synonymous with visible activities such as serving in volunteer capacities within the school. Another type of visible participation included regularly attending major parent events such as Donuts with Dad, Muffins with Mom, and the annual school Christmas event that administrators combined with a parent meeting. Supporting documents such as weekly and monthly newsletters kept parents regularly informed of visible volunteer and visitation opportunities and special events.

Other forms of involvement that were readily apparent were parents who initiated contact with school administrators or teachers by phone, e-mail, or in person, usually regarding issues specific to their children. This type of contact was perhaps a by-product of the smaller class sizes that led parents to choose a Redeemer education. Other parent-initiated contacts with the school may have been for the purpose of complaining, as evidenced by parent dissension from past years. Active parental complaining is noteworthy since some Redeemer administrators viewed this interaction as more productive than passive dissatisfaction. Parents also credited themselves for visits to the school that they initiated for reasons such as classroom visits or parent-student lunches.

Engaging in school activities on a selective, less frequent basis fell short of the type of high-level involvement that parents viewed as being acceptable for themselves. Additional forms of this second-tier type of involvement included parents who took the initiative to make financial contributions to the school. This was especially viewed as a means of proactive involvement when it

was considered to be a substitute for more visible activities deemed as unacceptable to the children of middle school families, or the result of burn-out of parents who were more visible in the past. Supporting the school by referring it to other prospective parents was also viewed highly as an important proactive behind-the-scenes activity.

Most Redeemer parents visited the school daily for drop-offs and pick-ups. However, I determined that this type of parental activity seemed to be yet another notch lower on the participation rung when the context showed it to be more of a passive than an active form of involvement. School representatives who took the initiative to stand curbside were the proactive parties in turning an otherwise passive parental logistical ritual such as providing transportation into an opportunity for parental interaction. Another type of passive parental involvement that emerged from the Redeemer data included the important parental decision-making process of evaluating Redeemer to determine whether to enroll or re-enroll, resulting in the related decision of whether to pay for another year of tuition. This decision was deemed by the study participants to be based to some extent on the economy. However, the decision was suspected to be based equally or to a greater extent on parents' on-going, but, in the case of passively-involved parents, often unspoken evaluation of whether the school was meeting families' needs.

Finally, the plethora of communication sent to parents in the form of newsletters, student work, and e-mail messages provided regular opportunities for one-way or two-way parental interaction. The range of parental responses to school-initiated communication, whether merely reading, initialing, or some other type of response, determined at what level I coded this type of parental involvement.

I did not interact with parents who could be identified as uninvolved during my Redeemer research. Some parents and administrators spoke broadly of deficiencies in parental involvement. Although I captured those opinions in the typology of uninvolved parents, it could be argued that all Redeemer parents are at least passively involved by the acts of selecting the school and paying the fees since the school does not offer full tuition waivers.

The resulting typology of parental involvement that emerged from my first Redeemer data analysis step of sorting, focusing, and organizing the data, is depicted as a second analysis step of displaying the data (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Table 4.2 is a data display matrix that provides visual assistance in relating the data that emerged from my study to the typology that constitutes the posited dimensions of parental involvement. Between-case analyses of the Redeemer Christian Day School and Weekend Academy typologies strengthened the precision of my development of typologies, as demonstrated by my ability to highlight different components of the same data that I interpreted as revealing different types of parental involvement.

Table 4.2. Examples of within-case data support for typology of parental involvement: Redeemer Christian Day School

Type of parental involvement	Examples of supporting data collected from:	Examples of supporting data collected from:	
	Parents	Redeemer Administrators	Redeemer Teachers
	(underline highlights added)	(underline highlights added)	(underline highlights added)
Visible parental involvement	<p>“<u>There’s a select group of parents that you can count on to be available to help all the time</u>...then there’s...that group that just shows up...that’s if their kid is involved.”</p> <p>Seemingly pervasive view among parents that they are not as [visibly] involved as they believe they should be, which they attribute to time constraints.</p> <p>“<u>I’m on the Council Board</u>, but even my involvement in [name of daughter]’s classroom is minimal. And it could be just the fact that in middle school parents just aren’t allowed to go in the classroom.”</p> <p>“<u>I help with the soccer team. There was another coach, but I was free in the afternoons during soccer season and I helped them with practices. I went to all the games.</u> My wife went to a couple of the games. We would go to my son’s other games, but just when we were off.”</p>	<p>“...I see parents that challenge the teachers. Challenge the principal. Instead of understanding that they are the professionals...”</p> <p>“<u>This year I haven’t had a whole lot of belly-aching...which could have happened</u>...parents still have their children here...”</p> <p>Principal personally meets with prospective parents.</p> <p>“<u>Some of it [parents leaving] comes from miscommunication</u>, some of it comes from non-communication, some comes from just a differing opinion on how things should be.”</p>	<p>“<u>It’s pretty much every day</u>...we see them in the car or when they meet the kids out there... I probably see every parent at least three or four times a week, and there’s always a wave or a nod, or <u>a conversation</u>.”</p> <p>“Now, I don’t want them coming, just busting into my class right in the middle of it, but since it was before class at 8:00 this morning, that’s fine. But, yeah, they feel free to talk to me or they can call here and I’ll call them back.”</p>

**Table 4.2 (cont.). Examples of within-case data support for typology of parental involvement:
Redeemer Christian Day School**

Type of parental involvement	Examples of supporting data collected from:	Examples of supporting data collected from:	
		Redeemer Administrators	Redeemer Teachers
Visible parental involvement (cont.)	<p><u>“I help with the soccer team. There was another coach, but I was free in the afternoons during soccer season and I helped them with practices. I went to all the games. My wife went to a couple of the games. We would go to my son’s other games, but just when we were off.”</u> <u>“I help with the soccer team. There was another coach, but I was free in the afternoons during soccer season and I helped them with practices. I went to all the games. My wife went to a couple of the games. We would go to my son’s other games, but just when we were off.”</u></p> <p>“But there’s involvement, some of the parents give up time, and they’ll be there and they’ll set up.”</p> <p><u>“...when she was younger I would come and volunteer at lunchtime to watch the kids while the teachers went and did things. I would help them make copies and things like that. But since I’m working farther away now it’s hard for me to do that.”</u></p> <p>“Just leave a message on their answering machines for the teachers. You call the school number and they have a specific answer machine number and you leave messages there and they’ll return calls.”</p>	<p><u>“There would be a number of parents that would give you that information, [why they’re leaving] and then there would be a certain number of parents that won’t give you that information.”</u></p> <p>“You have to know what you’re doing, you have to know where to step and where not to step, but just to be careful... animosity between parents, you just learn what’s, <u>who’s gonna be upset</u> and who’s not. You’re talking about customer service.”</p>	

Table 4.2 (cont.). Examples of within-case data support for typology of parental involvement: Redeemer Christian Day School

Type of parental involvement	Examples of supporting data collected from:	Examples of supporting data collected from:	
		Redeemer Administrators	Redeemer Teachers
Behind the scenes: Active	<p>“I’m on the Council Board, but <u>even my involvement in [name of daughter]’s classroom is minimal.</u> And it could be just the fact that in middle school parents just aren’t allowed to go in the classroom.”</p> <p>“There’s a select group of parents that you can count on to be available to help all the time...<u>then there’s...that group that just shows up...that’s if their kid is involved.</u>”</p> <p>Parents stopped other parent leaders in passing and asked them about the merger.</p> <p><u>“I help with the soccer team. There was another coach, but I was free in the afternoons during soccer season and I helped them with practices. I went to all the games.</u> My wife went to a couple of the games. We would go to my son’s other games, but just when we were off.”</p> <p>“...<u>once a year</u> there’s a basketball game, and we’ve played the boys’ team.”</p> <p>“...‘my daughter reminds me of Jesus because’ [comment cards to be completed by parents and students prior to the afternoon event], and it got me thinking, and I thought about some things that have really impressed me about her. And she wrote the same thing about me, and that poem is in my car. I keep it there, and I like reading it.”</p> <p>“I think it is important for a child to know that their parents are involved and want to come to programs and things like that.”</p>	<p>“This was the first year that we got e-mail addresses from every parent.”</p> <p>We have e-mails for faculty. My teachers, some of them are good about checking e-mails, some of them are not. So that’s been a learning curve for some of the faculty. And some because of their age feel more comfortable using the telephone than using the e-mail and don’t wanna touch an e-mail, and don’t have personal computers at their own home. “</p> <p>“The other thing is teachers before had voicemails. Everybody. Now only some have voicemails..”</p> <p><u>“They [teachers] put the information out there...they talk to the parents, sometimes they’re successful, sometimes they’re not.”</u></p> <p>“...we send an exit survey as well, and give them an opportunity to say whatever they wanna say in that...and <u>some we get back</u>, some we don’t.”</p> <p>“...majority of people [prospective parents], 80% or higher, it’s ‘I know so-and-so who used to go to school here. Or I know their mama...”</p>	<p>“We send folders home on Mondays with their work...<u>they have to sign that and send it back</u>...there should never be a surprised parent...”</p> <p>“...how do they carry through the [spiritual] principles at home?”</p> <p>“...the parents that work with their students at home normally are the students that have better work.”</p>

**Table 4.2 (cont.). Examples of within-case data support for typology of parental involvement:
Redeemer Christian Day School**

Type of parental involvement	Examples of supporting data collected from:	Examples of supporting data collected from:	
		Redeemer Administrators	Redeemer Teachers
Behind-the-scenes: Active (cont.)	<p>“I just wish there was a little bit more communication from the teachers with the parents.”</p> <p>“I just e-mailed back that we're going to be out of town that week, so she's [the mother] not going to be able to make it [to a mothers' event].”</p>	<p>“One thing I do is before school...I stand outside and open car doors when children are coming into the school. I can't do that as often now.”</p>	
Behind the scenes: Passive	<p>“There was a lot of communication <u>from</u> the school about the merger]...parents were kept in the loop.”</p> <p>“...some people don't like change...if they don't like where the school is headed, they're not believing in your vision then you're probably better off not having them here...”</p> <p>Every parent discussed their evaluation of educational alternatives that led them to Redeemer.</p> <p>“I'm going to make everything I can make, but I'm out the door. I mean, I'm running a couple of businesses and just going crazy.”</p> <p>“I've decided I'm going to let the Lord handle that [diversity changes]. He's got a plan for this school and it'll be ok.”</p> <p>“...a number of our teachers transitioned and students left with those teachers. I probably still didn't understand the politics of it, but I saw it happening... when those teachers left and went to the other Christian school, the parents took their kids and went with them.”</p>	<p>“This year I haven't had a whole lot of belly-aching...which could have happened...<u>parents still have their children here...</u>”</p> <p>“<u>They [teachers] put the information out there...</u>they talk to the parents, sometimes they're successful, <u>sometimes they're not.</u>”</p> <p>Weekly and monthly e-mail newsletters sent to parents <u>to read.</u></p> <p>“We would e-mail as well as mail, and e-mail as well as send it home with the child. And there are downfalls with that. You know, sending things home with a middle school student doesn't always go home.”</p> <p>Disturbing number of parents are deciding to leave the school without communicating the reasons.</p>	<p>“The very fact that they send them to a private school and are willing to accept the responsibilities to pay tuition...”</p> <p>“Parents don't phone or e-mail often...”</p> <p>“It's pretty much every day...we see them <u>in the car</u> or when they meet the kids out there... I probably see every parent at least three or four times a week, and there's <u>always a wave or a nod</u>, or a conversation.”</p>

Table 4.2 (cont.). Examples of within-case data support for typology of parental involvement: Redeemer Christian Day School

Type of parental involvement	Examples of supporting data collected from:	Examples of supporting data collected from:	
		Redeemer Administrators	Redeemer Teachers
Behind-the-scenes: Passive (cont.)	<p>“I help with the soccer team. There was another coach, but I was free in the afternoons during soccer season and I helped them with practices. I went to all the games. <u>My wife went to a couple of the games. We would go to my son’s other games, but just when we were off.</u>”</p> <p>“...even though my husband and I are divorced, they still communicate with both of us and invite both of us to different things.”</p> <p>“we were absolutely committed to it [Redeemer high school]. I’ve been here numerous times asking, ‘Are you still going to do it? Are you still going to do it?’ And they just couldn’t put it together, unfortunately.”</p> <p>“We may consider other alternatives [to a proposed Redeemer high school] simply because of the fact this school is limited on things that they offer the children as far as extracurricular activities.”</p> <p>Some visibly involved parents do not intend to enroll in high school if one materializes.</p>	<p>“...something happens where they [parents] lose their job, or they have pay cut or they have to move, or something that comes up that they have to pull their child out of school or they don’t look at it for the next year.</p> <p>“Some of it [parents leaving] comes from miscommunication, <u>some of it comes from non-communication</u>, some comes from just a differing opinion on how things should be.”</p> <p>“why are you asking now that I’m walking out the door?”</p> <p>“There would be a number of parents that would give you that information, [why they’re leaving] and <u>then there would be a certain number of parents that won’t give you that information.</u>”</p> <p>“...we send an exit survey as well, and give them an opportunity to say whatever they wanna say in that...and some we get back, <u>some we don’t.</u>”</p> <p>“I call each family, the parent, and pray with them in the course of the year, I’ll do that for every family and every child.”</p>	

Table 4.2 (cont.). Examples of within-case data support for typology of parental involvement: Redeemer Christian Day School

Type of parental involvement	Examples of supporting data collected from:	Examples of supporting data collected from:	
		Redeemer Administrators	Redeemer Teachers
Behind-the-scenes: Passive (cont.)		“...the parents are your customers. <u>They’re the ones making the decision.</u> And they judge your product in their child... <u>they are the ones distributing the funds,</u> but the product has to be seen in your child, in the children.”	
Uninvolved	“The parent role has to be a, a larger part of it. And it needs to be brought back to the forefront. Which means the activities surrounding the school have to be managed and planned and set up by parents for parents. “	“Satisfied parents don’t necessarily respond.”	

Between-case Dimensions of Parental Involvement

The findings presented in each of the two previous sections for the Weekend Academy for African American Boys and Redeemer Christian Day School case studies point to the existence of comparable dimensions of parental involvement that inform the relationship between service-providing educators and service-recipient parents. Table 4.3 shows a typology of parental involvement that represents the manner in which I converged the data between the two cases by organizing and comparing the findings, based on my interpretations of the within-in case patterns of educators’ and parents’ interactions with each other. It should be noted that these attributes or dimensions define types of parental involvement and not types of parents. An individual parent may engage in multiple types of involvement activities.

Table 4.3. Between-case typology of parental involvement: Weekend Academy for African American Boys and Redeemer Christian Day School

Type of Parental Involvement	Dimensions of this type of involvement (Parents who:)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Out-front, visible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Volunteer for in-school activities ○ Regularly attend academic events ○ Regularly attend extracurricular events and activities ○ Are active members and/or leaders of parent organizations or groups ○ Regularly visit the school ○ Initiate, as well as respond to, school communication ○ Initiate feedback to school, including complaining
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Behind the scenes - Active 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ensure homework is completed ○ Create boundaries to limit learning distractions ○ Enforce school rules ○ Respond to, rather than initiate, both behavioral and non-behavioral communication from the school ○ Volunteer to participate in at-home school activities such as fundraisers ○ Selectively attend events and activities ○ Selectively visit the school ○ Make financial donations to the school ○ Share word-of-mouth information about the school
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Behind the scenes - Passive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Evaluate educational environments and make decisions regarding what schools/programs to enroll their students in and withdraw them from ○ Set academic expectations for their children ○ Read/listen to information sent home from the school ○ Provide resources (e.g., transportation, money, tuition, donations, etc.) to support their child's education ○ Respond to behavioral communication from the school ○ Rarely visit the school
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uninvolved 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ No discernible involvement in their child's education

Between-case Issues Related to Dimensions of Parental Involvement

The third data analysis step recommended by Miles and Huberman (1994) is to draw conclusions in some meaning-generating form. Based on the dissertation purpose and research questions, this last step required determining whether the data revealed issues relevant to the

dimensions of parental involvement that could help inform the relationship between the educational service providers and service recipients.

Embedded within my two case studies were environmental and social factors that appeared to underlie agreements, disagreements, perceptions, and cross-perceptions salient to relationship issues and possible relationship strategies. Table 4.4 displays examples of the data from which these factors emerged within and across each of the cases studied.

Table 4.4. Environmental and social factors emerging from Weekend Academy for African American Boys and Redeemer Christian Day School case studies

	Weekend Academy for African American Boys	Redeemer Christian Day School
Educational alternatives	Perception of inadequate public school alternatives to meet educational needs of target population.	Perception of inadequate public school alternatives to meet educational needs of target population.
Economy	Funding needed in order to have future programs.	Are student enrollment declines due only to the economy? Teacher layoffs. Funding needed for high school.
Family structure	<p>“I don’t get a chance to get to my children’s school as often as I’d like. I’m a single parent, I work fulltime...”</p> <p>“My husband working third shift and he has the car and I just could never make it to none of the meetings.”</p> <p>“Single parenting...boys are being pushed to be young men without a positive male influence.”</p>	<p>More single parents.</p> <p>Parents with two working spouses creates busy households.</p>
Organizational structure	Six-nine week program only with no follow-up in place.	<p>No high school.</p> <p>Growing school involvement of new church?</p>
Expectations/reasons for enrolling and withdrawing students	Perception that students are underserved by schools and perhaps by the Academy.	<p>Perception that students are underserved by public schools.</p> <p>Economy?</p> <p>Unknown?</p>

Table 4.4 (cont.). Environmental and social factors emerging from Weekend Academy for African American Boys and Redeemer Christian Day School case studies

	Weekend Academy for African American Boys	Redeemer Christian Day School
Communication	<p>Is the lack of more structured parental interaction in the Academy a missed opportunity to fill a need unmet by schools?</p> <p>Some technology targeted toward boys too sophisticated for adults?</p>	<p>New marketing efforts needed?</p> <p>“My teachers, some of them are good about checking e-mails, some of them are not. That’s something I have to prod at times.”</p> <p>Technology glitches since church merger.</p>
Technology	<p>“...like with their [Weekend Academy] website...it’s more involved [than the school’s website]. It’s [the Academy’s] out there for every parent to see what’s going on, what’s the latest thing, how are their kids. ...”</p> <p>“...the DVD...I played it...”</p> <p>Mr. Frank’s bounce-back e-mail messages.</p>	<p>“All parents have e-mail addresses now...”</p> <p>“I do a letter to parents the first of the month...this year it’s being e-mailed....and then we do a weekly update...this year it’s emailed and not sent home.”</p>
Other Communication	<p>Strong word-of-mouth referrals from parents and school counselors.</p>	<p>Strong word-of-mouth referrals from parents.</p> <p>Commitment of new governing church to enhanced marketing efforts.</p>
New business models	<p>“I wondered if they was gonna have a school.”</p> <p>“Eric has expressed many times he wants to do his own school...it’s time to do it.”</p>	<p>Letter from pastor of new governing church affirming 3-5 year goal of expanding to high school program.</p> <p>Opportunities for new parent leaders?</p>
Diversity - race	<p>“They [the school] don’t feel they need to be accommodating to African American children, or their parents.”</p>	<p>Racial mix changing following merger with African American church?</p>
Diversity - gender	<p>“There’s always been a huge achievement gap between, dealing with African American males.”</p>	<p>Should boys be a target for bringing in new students?</p>
Leadership/reputation	<p>Longstanding reputation of parent company’s president in addressing needs of African American males.</p>	<p>“I liked how she [principal presented herself, I like how she presented the school].”</p> <p>Perception that parents value Christian principles taught in school.</p>

I used the between-case dimensions of parental involvement as the framework for categorizing these environmental and social factors that I assessed as being pertinent to the service relationships as described by the parties studied. Table 4.5 summarizes examples of 15 major issues around which I determined that the two parties appeared to be mutually oriented, grouped by the between-case dimensions of parental involvement as well as a general category of parental involvement. I then used the data as previously analyzed to assess what appeared to be the dominant views within each of the stakeholder groups, and uncovered what I determined to be nine areas of agreement and six areas of disagreement between the parties regarding the issues shown in Table 4.5 below.

Table 4.5. Summary of analyses of issues related to dimensions of parental involvement.

Dimension/ related issues:	Agreement between educators and parents?
Parental involvement: In general	
“Parental involvement” is likely to take multiple forms	Yes
Parental involvement is very likely to be essential to a child’s education.	No
Visible Parental Involvement	
Most parents are not likely to be visibly involved in parent organizations.	Yes
Parents are more likely to be visible in academic programs that are tailored to their child’s needs.	No
Parents are more likely to be visibly involved in events in which their children are involved).	Yes
Parents should initiate communication with educators.	Yes
Parents who are visibly involved are likely to be better educated than parents who are not visibly involved and are likely to have children who are more academically successful.	No

Table 4.5 (cont.). Summary of analyses of issues related to dimensions of parental involvement.

Behind-the-scenes parental involvement: Active	
Actively involved parents who are not visibly involved in their children's educations are likely to be proactively involved in some way behind the scenes.	Yes
Actively involved parents are likely to be responsive to behavior and non-behavior related communication from the school.	No
Actively involved parents are likely to create a supportive home environment that includes ensuring school projects are completed and limiting possible distractions such as technology and mass media.	Yes
Behind the scenes parental involvement: Passive	
Parents who are not visibly or actively involved in their child's education are generally likely to be satisfied with the schools and educational programs they choose for their children.	No
Parents who are not visibly or actively involved in their children's educations may still be likely to set academic expectations for their children.	Yes
Parents who are not visibly or actively involved in their children's educations are unlikely to understand the importance of more visible involvement.	Yes
Uninvolved	
Educators are likely to treat students of uninvolved parents in the same manner as students of involved parents.	No
Parents who are uninvolved in their children's educations are likely to be uncomfortable with the academic environment.	Yes

In summary, the case study findings allowed for the identification and explication of dimensions, or attributes, of parental involvement, that were consistent within and across two unique but similar educational contexts. The study results further revealed that there are agreements and disagreements between educators and parents regarding issues associated with these attributes that are pertinent to managing issues salient to their relationships.

This dissertation questions not only the extent to which parents and educators agree or disagree on relational issues associated with the dimensions of parental involvement, but also the extent to which each party accurately perceives agreement or disagreement, and the relationship-building strategies that may emerge from the answers to these questions. The Discussion and Conclusion chapter that follows relies on a coorientation service relationship model to finalize the answers to these questions, situates this study within the coorientation and service literature, and summarizes implications and future research.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of this dissertation was to apply a public relations coorientation theoretical framework to a service provider-service recipient relationship in its natural context, in keeping with the need for fresh approaches to addressing the complexities of customer service. This chapter discusses the conclusions to be drawn from the study results in response to the following research questions that were proposed:

1. To what extent do schools and parents agree/disagree on issues related to dimensions of parental involvement?
2. To what extent do schools and parents perceive agreement/disagreement between themselves and the other side on issues related to dimensions of parental involvement?
3. To what extent are schools and parents accurate/inaccurate in predicting the other side's views on issues related to dimensions of parental involvement?
4. What coorientation state (i.e. true consensus, dissensus, false consensus, false conflict) exists between schools and parents on issues related to dimensions of parental involvement?
5. What recommendations for relationship-building communication strategies may emerge from these coorientational analyses?

The research results presented in the previous chapter affirmed that the nature of the relationship between service-providing educators and service-recipient parents could be explicated based on the attributes, or dimensions, of parental involvement, shown to be salient aspects of their relationship. The results further revealed that these dimensions were the source of agreements and

disagreements regarding issues that were pertinent to the quality of service given and received. Using the coorientation service model (Appendix D) to measure not just agreement, but also the accuracy of perceptions and cross-perceptions of agreement as anticipated by the research questions, allows for the results of this dissertation to be analyzed based on the following coorientation relational states (Broom, 1977; Williamson, 2009a):

- True consensus or monolithic consensus – the parties agree and accurately perceive agreement.
- Dissensus – the parties disagree and accurately perceive disagreement.
- False consensus – the parties disagree but inaccurately perceive that they agree.
- False conflict or pluralistic ignorance – the parties agree but inaccurately perceive that they disagree.

The strategic implications for the parties studied, once they are aware of these different states of consensus, include 1) the ability to accurately describe and evaluate the state of the relationship, 2) the ability to correct erroneous perceptions based on communication strategies designed to accomplish this objective, 3) the ability to identify and correct communication and behaviors that are inappropriate based on the actual instead of the perceived circumstances, and 4) the ability to identify areas of true conflict and strategies for negotiation and conflict resolution (Broom, 1977). These similarities or dissimilarities in the parties' cognitive or emotional states can be determined objectively, or, as in the case studies conducted for this research, as interpreted phenomena (Newcomb, 1953) that can lead to the development and implementation of relationship-building communication strategies (e.g., Grunig & Hunt, 1984; Grunig & Stamm, 1973; Ledingham et al., 1997; Seltzer, 2006).

Accordingly, the dissertation findings can be recapped as in the sections that follow using coorientational frameworks pertaining to issues regarding dimensions of parental involvement in general, and then based on issues that emerged regarding the dimensions of visible involvement,

behind-the-scenes: active involvement, behind-the-scenes: passive involvement, and uninvolved.

Tables within each section provide a summary of the perceptions and cross-perceptions pertaining to the key parental involvement issues that emerged as most pertinent to each of these dimensions, along with examples of relationship-building strategies that could produce changes or movement in the educational coorientation system (McLeod & Chaffee, 1973).

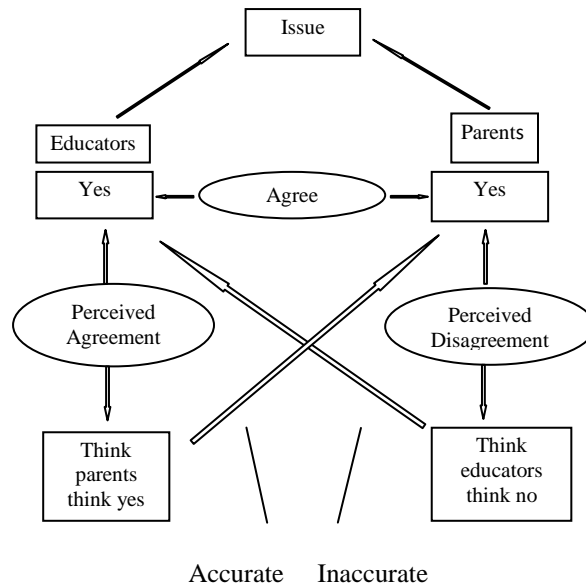
Parental Involvement in General

As explained below and summarized in Table 5.1, parents and educators seemed to agree that parental involvement could take many forms, contrary to parents' misperceptions that educators only recognize traditional out-front means of involvement. Conversely, both parties mistakenly believed that they agreed on the essential nature of parental involvement.

Forms of Parental Involvement

Study participants typically made judgments concerning the extent to which parents, including themselves, were involved in students' education. The results revealed that both educators and parents were actually discussing a wide range of activities when they used the term parental involvement. However, as depicted in Figure 5.1, parents did not think that educators shared their belief that parental involvement can take on many forms. This finding represents what coorientation scholars call false conflict, in that the parties agree but one party inaccurately perceives that they disagree (e.g., Broom, 1977).

Figure 5.1. Issue: Parental involvement is likely to take multiple forms. False conflict.

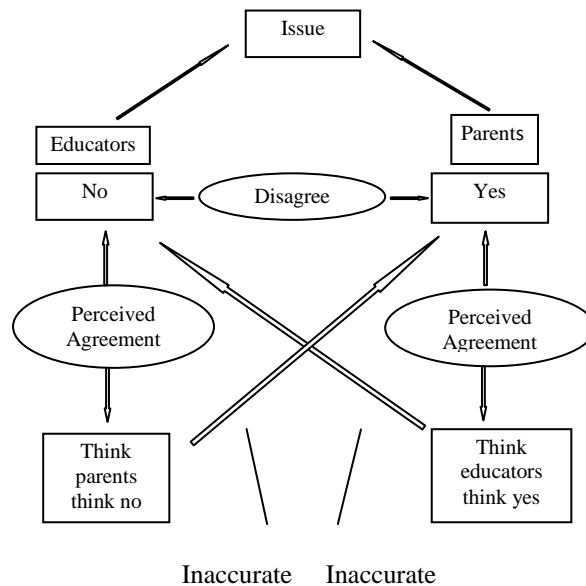


If both educators and parents were made aware of this false conflict, they could expand artificial boundaries they may have set on their association with each other. Both parties seem to have historically focused on what may have often seemed to be futile attempts to move parents from one dimension of parental involvement to higher levels. While such efforts may be effective in some situations, a shared acknowledgement that parental involvement can cover a plethora of attitudes and activities may lead to an alternative strategy of working together to maximize parents' success within their current niche. For example, Weekend Academy administrators could use part of the mandatory parent orientation time to explain Academy processes for visible and non-visible involvement. Redeemer's revitalized external marketing communication efforts could include messages that would reach behind-the-scenes current parents in addition to prospective parents. This appears to be the type of situation that McLeod and Chaffee (1973) envisioned in which a coorientation analysis could move parties from focusing solely on intrapersonal concepts such as motives and personalities to instead studying social relationships within a social system as an approach to understanding human behavior.

Is Parental Involvement Essential?

The misperceived difference of opinions regarding the broad scope of parental involvement (Figure 5.1) may have caused an actual disagreement regarding whether parental involvement is truly essential to a student's education. As shown in Figure 5.2, educators value involvement but seemed to believe it was not essential, perhaps based on a sense that they could not depend on receiving this support because of their inaccurate belief that parents do not view parental participation as essential. This finding reflects what coordination researchers refer to as false consensus, in which the parties disagree but inaccurately perceive that they agree (e.g., Broom, 1977).

Figure 5.2. Issue: Parental involvement is very likely to be essential to a student's education. False consensus.



Parents do believe participation is essential, but admittedly fall short of meeting traditional standards of parental involvement. Parents' lackluster efforts in this regard seem to have led some educators to become resigned to proceeding with or without such involvement. This type of disagreement and inaccuracy typifies the overestimation or underestimation of other parties' responses that can be illuminated through coordinational analyses (Shin & Cameron, 2003). Parents would be well-advised to find areas of collaboration and negotiation with educators (Grunig & Hunt,

1984), in light of their tendency to fall short of their own expectations for the type of parental service they believe is most effective in encouraging educators to foster reciprocal service.

Table 5.1 provides a summary of the general parental involvement issues just discussed. The table is followed by a subsection presenting coorientational analyses of issues that emerged between educators and parents whose activities were deemed to constitute out-front, visible parental involvement.

Table 5.1. Summary of coorientational analyses of issues related to parental involvement in general.

Dimension/ related issues:	Agreement between two sides?	Agreement perceived by educators?	Agreement perceived by parents?	State of Coorientation?	Recommended relationship-building communication strategies
Parental involvement: In general					
“Parental involvement” is likely to take multiple forms (Fig. 5.1).	Yes	Yes	No*	False conflict	Educators and parents should work together to maximize parental involvement within each of the dimensions rather than focusing solely on how to move parents across dimensions.
Parental involvement is very likely to be essential to a child’s education (Fig. 5.2).	No	Yes*	Yes*	False consensus	Parents should negotiate and collaborate with educators to demonstrate their belief that some form of involvement is essential.

*Reflects the party that is inaccurate in predicting the other side’s views on this issue related to the stated dimension associated with parental involvement.

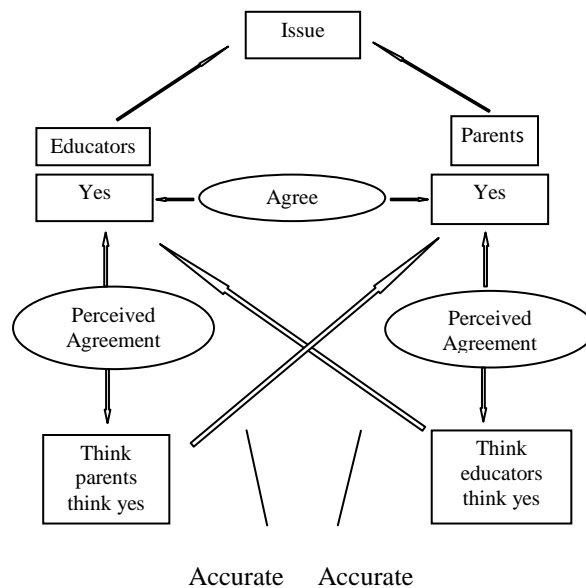
Visible Parental Involvement

Coorientation analyses revealed areas of misperceptions even between educators and parents who are involved in their children’s education in a visible, out-front manner. Examples of these types of issues are explained in the following subsections and summarized in Table 5.2.

Parent Organizations

Educators and parents agreed that most parents are not likely to be visibly involved in parent organizations, and both sides acknowledge this agreement (Figure 5.3). Despite the existence of this true consensus in which the parties agree and accurately perceive agreement (e.g., Broom, 1977), participation in parent organizations appears to continue to incorrectly be the litmus test of parental involvement. Altering the mindsets of the two parties away from this dated notion of organizational membership as being the sole equivalent of parental involvement could allow them to capture the benefits of their current balanced or symmetrical state (Heider, 1946; Newcomb, 1953). According to Newcomb, symmetry is not required in a coorientational relationship, but there may be rewards for achieving this state. In the cases studied, the rewards may take the form of easing tension in the relationships by acknowledging that other forms of participation are valued.

Figure 5.3. Issue: Most parents are not likely to be visibly involved in parent organizations. True consensus.



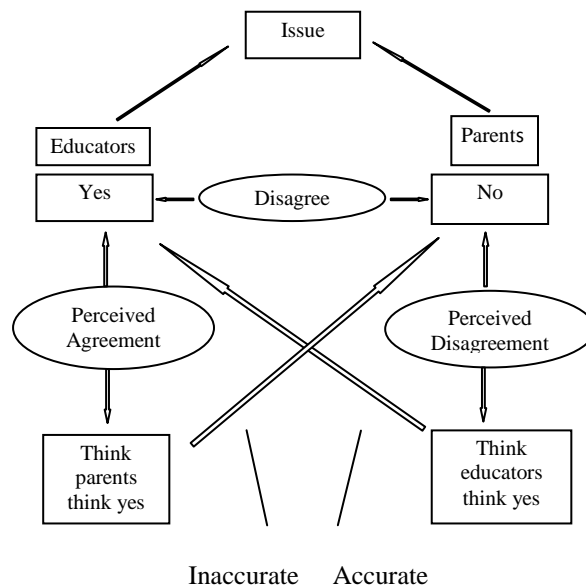
Tailored Programs

The belief that parents are more likely to be visible in academic programs that are tailored to their children's needs appears to reflect educators inaccurately orienting parents' values to match their own values (Shin & Cameron, 2003). This inaccuracy resulted in a state of false consensus, in which

the parties disagree but inaccurately perceive that they agree (e.g., Broom, 1977). Both Weekend Academy administrators and counselors and Redeemer administrators inaccurately assumed that the unique nature of their programs might attract parents' visible involvement to a greater extent than did alternative educational choices such as public schools. Parents accurately predicted this overestimation of their predicted intentions and behaviors, as shown in Figure 5.4. The parents apologetically explained that these expectations were too lofty given their typical depictions of themselves as too busy to be regularly visibly involved with any school or program.

Instead, parents seemed to perceive that evaluating and enrolling their students in uniquely tailored programs such as Weekend Academy and Redeemer served as surrogate forms of involvement. Both programs would be well-advised to cultivate parent relationships (Waters, 2009) by leveraging the potential for increased involvement inherent in their programs, such as enhancing the agenda for the Academy mandatory orientation, better orchestrating Academy drop-offs and pick-ups, and smoothing out Redeemer's rocky transition to technology.

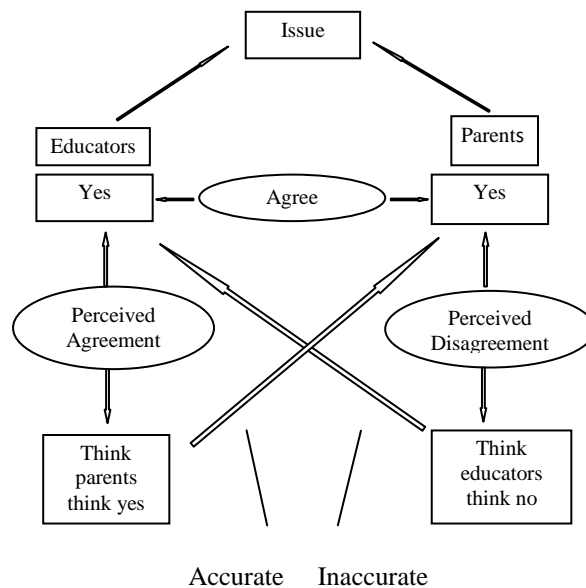
Figure 5.4. Issue: Parents are more likely to be visible in academic programs that are best tailored to their children's needs. False consensus.



Event Participation

Educators and parents agreed that events in which their children are involved represent rare, but unique, opportunities for visible parental involvement (Figure 5.5). Parents, however, tended to misperceive that educators assumed that parental participation in events would be relegated to just sporting events, resulting in a false conflict in which the parties agreed but inaccurately perceived that they disagreed (e.g., Broom, 1977). Educators did speculate to a lesser degree than parents as to whether parents may be more inclined to be active participants in sporting events, but they were not deterred from planning other types of academic and social events as venues for parental participation. Being aware of the tendencies of the other party in a relationship can lead to opportunities to structure relationship-building programming around what would otherwise appear to be conflicts in the relationship (Shin & Cameron, 2005).

Figure 5.5. Issue: Parents are more likely to be visibly involved in events in which their children are involved. False conflict.

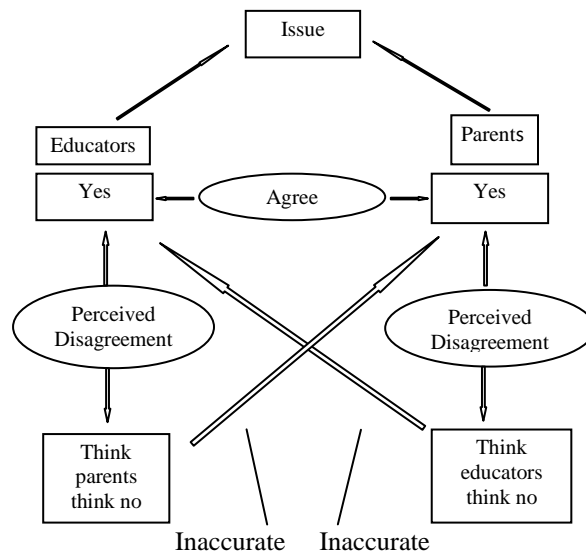


Initiating Communication

Both educators and parents inaccurately predicted that the other party disagreed with the premise that a key form of out-front parental involvement was for parents to be proactive versus reactive in initiating school communication (Figure 5.6). Some parents thought that educators might

view them as rabble rousers or unwelcome intrusions. Educators misperceived parents' reluctance to initiate communication as an unwillingness to do so. The misperceived absence of a true conflict, known by coorientation scholars as false conflict (e.g., Broom, 1977), infers that both parties have the same mindset and should focus on making the other party feel welcome to the relationship. Diversity issues such as race and family structure may have an impact on attitudes toward initiating communication and should be discussed candidly when necessary.

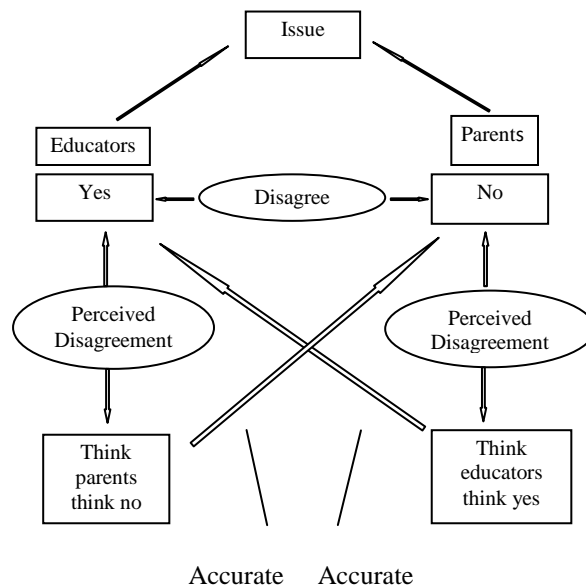
Figure 5.6. Issue: Parents should initiate communication with educators. False conflict.



Profile of Visibly Involved Parents

Educators and parents disagree and accurately know they disagree regarding whether visibly involved parents are better educated than lesser involved parents and have children who are more academically successful (Figure 5.7). This state of dissensus (e.g., Broom, 1977) surrounding the profile of visibly involved parents demonstrates the extent to which educators and parents are misperceiving matters critical to the very nature of their relationship.

Figure 5.7. Issue: Parents who are visibly involved are likely to be better educated than parents who are not visibly involved and are likely to have children who are more academically successful. Dissensus.



Multiple environmental (Newcomb, 1953) reasons were given by seemingly well-educated parents of successful students for their lack of visible parental involvement. For example, parents may have been disgruntled or distracted. Their students may or may not be performing satisfactorily, but may prefer that their parents stay behind the scenes. Conversely, some parents who seemed less fluent or educated prioritized visible involvement, contrary to educators' more sophisticated images of the parents of high-achieving students.

Educators at times appeared sheepish about their admittedly stereotypical views of involved parents. A process of getting to know individual families may take extra work, especially in light of research showing that communication strategies are more likely to affect accuracy than to alter agreement regarding long-held attitudes about important issues (Grunig, 2001). However, this type of effort would represent the strain toward symmetry that is best facilitated by communicative acts (Newcomb, 1953). Continued outreach efforts on the part of educators may pay off in the form of more involvement by parents in some manner. This recommitment to the relationship may extend beyond the short term coorientational rewards of additional parent involvement. Long-term secondary rewards could include additional parental support behind the Weekend Academy's

proposed new business models of continued and expanded programming, and Redeemer's quest for parent retention and a new high school, particularly in the face of environmental obstacles posed by a sluggish economy (Newcomb, 1953). The opportunity to know families better appears to be a benefit of programs like Weekend Academy and Redeemer versus larger environments that set the context for the traditional school counselors studied.

Table 5.2 provides a summary of the visible parental involvement issues just discussed. The table is followed by coorientational analyses of issues that emerged between educators and parents whose activities are deemed to constitute active involvement in a behind-the-scenes manner.

Table 5.2. Summary of coorientational analyses of issues related to visible parental involvement.

Dimension/ related issues:	Agreement between two sides?	Agreement perceived by educators?	Agreement perceived by parents?	State of Coorientation?	Recommended relationship-building communication strategies
Visible Parental Involvement					
Most parents are not likely to be visibly involved in parent organizations. (Fig. 5.3)	Yes	Yes	Yes	True consensus	Acknowledge other forms of parental involvement to the same extent as membership in parental organizations.
Parents are more likely to be visible in academic programs that are tailored to their child's needs. (Fig. 5.4)	No	Yes*	No	False consensus	Better leverage the potential for increased involvement inherent in the tailored programs (i.e. mandatory programs, drop-offs and pick-ups, technology).
Parents are more likely to be visibly involved in events in which their children are involved. (Fig. 5.5)	Yes	Yes	No*	False conflict	Continue to plan events of varying types to encourage visible involvement.

Table 5.2 (cont.). Summary of coorientational analyses of issues related to visible parental involvement.

Dimension/ related issues:	Agreement between two sides?	Agreement perceived by educators?	Agreement perceived by parents?	State of Coorientation?	Recommended relationship-building communication strategies
Visible Parental Involvement					
Parents should initiate communication with educators. (Fig. 5.6)	Yes	No*	No*	False conflict	Both parties should ensure other party feels welcome to the relationship.
Parents who are visibly involved are likely to be better educated than parents who are not visibly involved and are likely to have children who are more academically successful. (Fig. 5.7)	No	No	No	Dissensus	Educators should make efforts to become better acquainted with individual families.

*Reflects the party that is inaccurate in predicting the other side's views on this issue related to the stated dimension associated with parental involvement.

Behind The Scenes Parental Involvement: Active

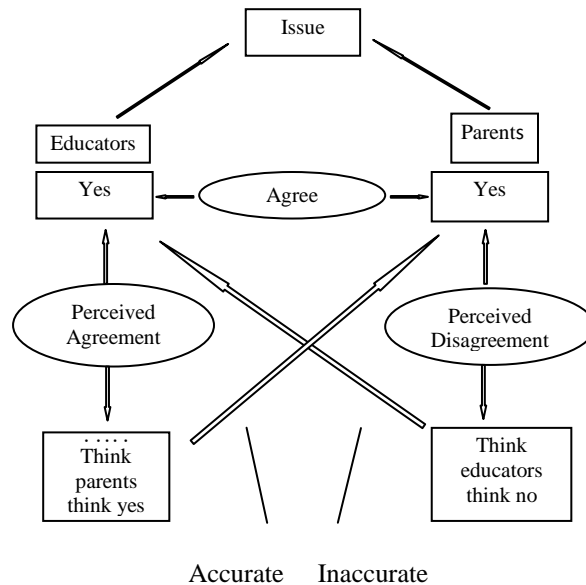
Educators and parents deemed to be actively involved in behind-the-scenes types of involvement agreed on two of the three relationship issues identified, but did not perceive this agreement. Coorientational analyses are presented in the following subsections and summarized in Table 5.3.

Proactive Involvement

Educators' and parents' agreement that parents who are not visibly involved in their children's education are likely to be proactively involved in some way behind the scenes is consistent with their shared acknowledgement that parental participation can take many forms. Parents, however, inaccurately sensed that educators may not see behind-the-scenes efforts and therefore may not believe they exist (Figure 5.8). This lingering parental misperception results in a false conflict

(e.g., Broom, 1977), and again points to the need for parents, within their own involvement styles, to increase their outreach efforts to connect with educators and foster the personal familiarity shown to be important in striving toward coorientational symmetry (Jeffers, 1977).

Figure 5.8. Issue: Actively involved parents who are not visibly involved in their children's education are likely to be proactively involved in some way behind the scenes. False conflict.

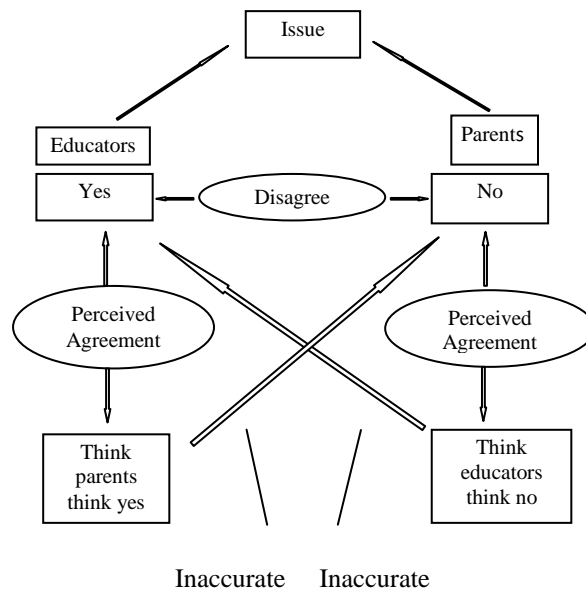


Communication Responsiveness

Educators prided themselves on their tenacity in developing alternative types of written parental communication, particularly their transition to technology-based forms of content such as e-mail, websites, parent portals, and social networking sites. However, the educators inaccurately perceived the extent to which even actively involved parents engaged in reading and responding to this type of communication. These parents acknowledged that they are receptive to both behavioral and non-behavioral communication received from the school, as depicted in Figure 5.9, however, the parents inaccurately believed that educators realize the limited readership of and responsiveness to all types of information regardless of the content and how it is transmitted. The root of this false consensus, in which the parties disagree but mistakenly believe that they agree (e.g., Broom, 1977), appears to be the result of creative uses of technology that are nonetheless still in the form of one-way asymmetrical communication designed to disseminate information (Grunig & Hunt, 1984). Even

opportunities provided for parent feedback appear to be in the nature of persuasive two-way asymmetrical communication. Two-way symmetrical communication should be initiated, not with the goal of changing the orientation or attitude of parents, but rather positively affecting the joint attitudes or orientations of educators' and their diverse parent publics around issues in their common environments (Grunig, 1984).

Figure 5.9. Issue: Actively involved parents are likely to be responsive to both behavior and non-behavior related communication from the school. False consensus.



Creating At-Home Learning Environments

Educators and parents generally appeared to agree that efforts made by parents to create supportive learning environments typically do not go far enough in ensuring completion of school projects and limiting possible distractions such as technology and mass media. Educators appeared to inaccurately assume that parents may be offended if parental inadequacies in this regard were noted. This false conflict (e.g., Broom, 1977) may be blocking collaborative efforts by both parties to acknowledge the difficulties of this challenge and to work together to identify and implement mutual solutions (Kelly et al., 2006).

Figure 5.10. Issue: Actively involved parents are likely to create a supportive home environment that includes ensuring school projects are completed and limiting possible distractions such as technology and mass media. False conflict.

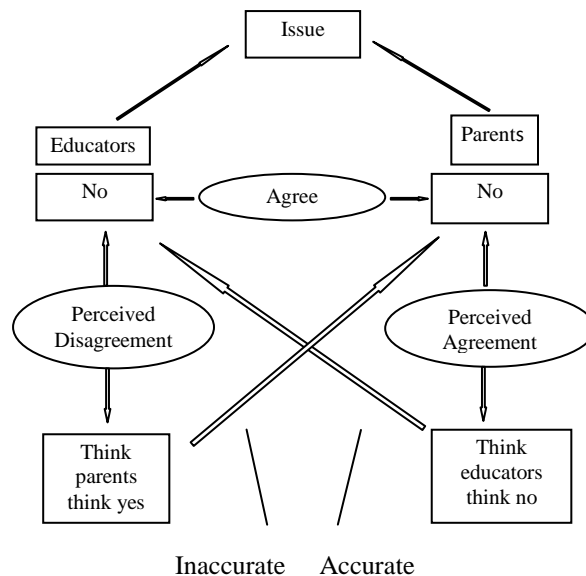


Table 5.3 provides a summary of the issues just discussed related to the parental involvement dimension of behind-the-scenes: active. The table is followed by coorientational analyses of issues that emerged between educators and parents whose activities were classified as being involved behind-the-scenes in a passive manner.

Table 5.3. Summary of coorientational analyses of issues related to behind-the-scenes parental involvement: active.

Dimensions/ related issues:	Agreement between two sides?	Agreement perceived by educators?	Agreement perceived by parents?	State of Coorientation?	Recommended relationship-building communication strategies
Behind the Scenes Parental Involvement: Active					
Actively involved parents who are not visibly involved in their children's educations are likely to be proactively involved in some way behind the scenes. (Fig. 5.8).	Yes	Yes	No*	False conflict	Parents should increase outreach effort to educators to minimize their own misperceptions of educators' beliefs.

Table 5.3 (cont.). Summary of coorientational analyses of issues related to behind-the-scenes parental involvement: active.

Dimensions/ related issues:	Agreement between two sides?	Agreement perceived by educators?	Agreement perceived by parents?	State of Coorientation?	Recommended relationship-building communication strategies
Behind the Scenes Parental Involvement: Active					
Actively involved parents are likely to be responsive to behavior and non-behavior related communication from the school (Fig. 5.9).	No	Yes*	Yes*	False consensus	Two-way symmetrical communication should take precedence over two-way communication designed to persuade and/or one-way communication to disseminate information.
Actively involved parents are likely to create a supportive home environment that includes ensuring school projects are completed and limiting possible distractions such as technology and mass media (Fig. 5.10).	Yes	No*	No*	False conflict	Parties should acknowledge their agreement to the difficulties of this challenge and collaborate on solutions.

*Reflects the party that is inaccurate in predicting the other side's views on this issue related to the stated dimension associated with parental involvement.

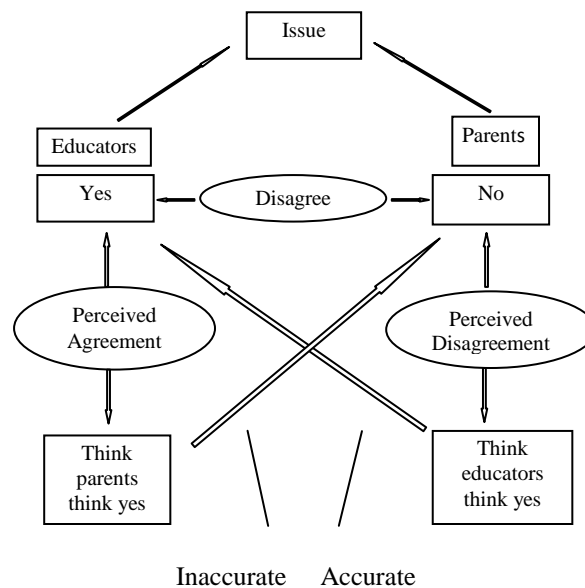
Behind The Scenes Parental Involvement: Passive

Misperceptions seemed to characterize the relationship between educators and parents who were involved in their children's education, but in a manner that was both less visible and less proactive. Coorientational analyses of the interaction between educators and parents whose involvement is behind-the-scenes in a passive manner are presented in the subsections below and summarized in Table 5.4.

Communication of Dissatisfaction

Contrary to educators' misperceptions, parents are not always forthright in communicating discontent to educators (Figure 5.11), resulting in a false consensus situation (e.g., Broom, 1977). Educators should be more aware of parental actions such as removing their children from programs without notice and serving as reputational gatekeepers of positive and negative word-of-mouth communication to other parents (Aronoff, 1975). Both Weekend Academy and Redeemer should implement ongoing feedback, particularly in light of their plans to secure funding for current programming and future plans to expand to the next level of growth.

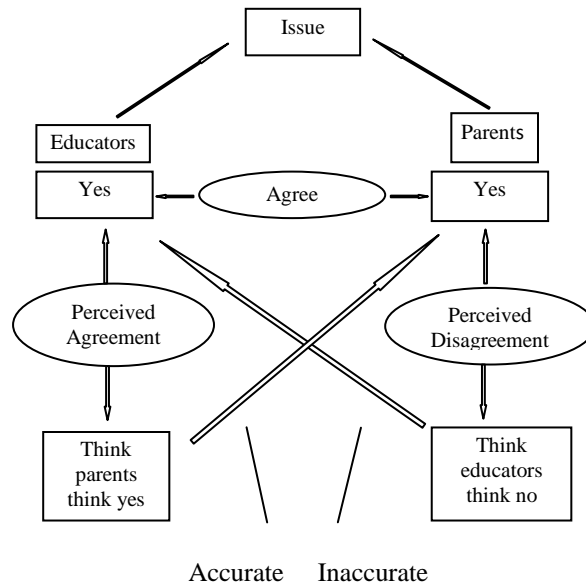
Figure 5.11. Issue: Parents who are not visibly or actively involved in their child's education are generally likely to be satisfied with the schools and educational programs they choose for their children. False consensus.



Setting Academic Expectations

As illustrated in Figure 5.12, parents underestimated educators' belief that even parents who they rarely or never saw or heard from could still be a positive force in their children's education by setting academic expectations. Communicating appreciation and tips for parents who may be assuming this role may correct this false conflict (e.g., Broom, 1977) and help these parents understand that they are more inaccurate than educators in their perceptions of disagreements within this aspect of their relationship (Kopenhaver, 1985).

Figure 5.12. Issue: Parents who are not visibly or actively involved in their children's educations may still be likely to set academic expectations for their children. False conflict.



Understanding The Importance Of More-Visible Involvement

Educators are inclined to inaccurately think that parents would take offense to educators' perception that other parents who are not visibly or actively involved may be missing opportunities to support their children. Contrary to this false conflict (e.g., Broom, 1977), visibly and actively involved parents agree with this perception, and their frustration with their less-involved peers may motivate them to partner with educators in problem resolution and negotiation strategies between educational organizations and their marginally involved parent publics (Christen, 2005; Dozier & Ehling, 1992; Shin & Cameron, 2005).

Figure 5.13. Issue: Parents who are not visibly or actively involved in their children’s educations may not fully understand the importance of more visible or active involvement. False conflict.

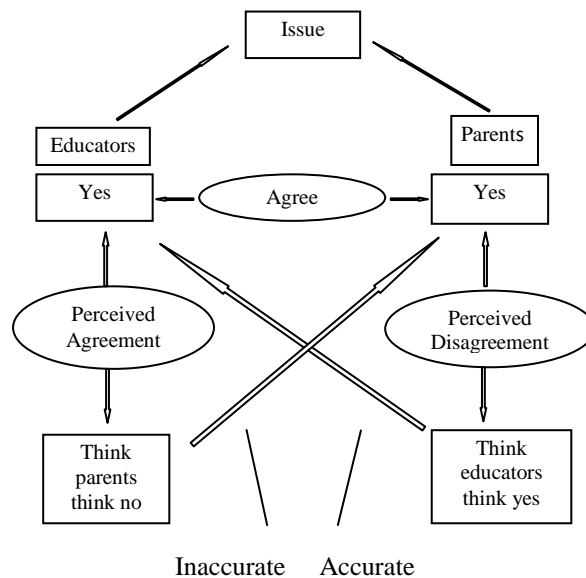


Table 5.4 provides a recap of issues just presented as related to the parental involvement dimension of behind-the-scenes: passive. The table is followed by a subsection presenting coorientational analyses of issues that emerged between educators and parents who reflected on the actions or inactions of parents who they believed demonstrated a lack of involvement in their children’s education.

Table 5.4. Summary of coorientational analyses of issues related to behind the scenes parental involvement: passive.

Dimensions/ related issues	Agreement between two sides?	Agreement perceived by educators?	Agreement perceived by parents?	State of Coorientation?	Recommendations for relationship-building communication strategies
Behind the scenes parental involvement: Passive					
Parents who are not visibly or actively involved in their child’s education are generally likely to be satisfied with the schools and educational programs they choose for their children (Fig. 5.11)	No	Yes*	Yes	False consensus	Educators should implement on-going feedback mechanisms to encourage parental retention and solicit parent feedback.

Table 5.4 (cont.). Summary of coorientational analyses of issues related to behind the scenes parental involvement: passive.

Dimensions/ related issues	Agreement between two sides?	Agreement perceived by educators?	Agreement perceived by parents?	State of Coorientation?	Recommendations for relationship-building communication strategies
Behind the scenes parental involvement: Passive					
Parents who are not visibly or actively involved in their children's educations may still be likely to set academic expectations for their children (Fig. 5.12).	Yes	Yes	No*	False conflict	Educators can communicate appreciation and tips for parents assuming this role.
Parents who are not visibly or actively involved in their children's educations are unlikely to understand the importance of more visible involvement (Fig. 5.13).	Yes	No*	Yes	False conflict	Educators and visibly and actively involved parents could partner to resolve problems and negotiate strategies to motivate less-involved parents.

*Reflects the party that is inaccurate in predicting the other side's views on this issue related to the stated dimension associated with parental involvement.

Uninvolved

Educators and parents reflected on issues regarding parents who they believed to be uninvolved in their children's educations. The related coorientation analyses are discussed below and summarized in Table 5.5.

Educators and parents correctly perceive that they hold opposing views, and therefore are in a coorientation state of true conflict (e.g., Broom, 1977), regarding educators' treatment of students whose parents have no discernible involvement in their students' educations (Figure 5.14). Parents assume that these children's needs are not well served in school environments by educators who, intentionally or unintentionally, have to make choices regarding where their attention is focused. Parents accurately anticipated educators' contention that all students are treated the same, and educators accurately perceived that parents would disagree.

However, this true conflict exists in tandem with an area of true consensus (e.g., Broom, 1977). Parents and educators agree and accurately perceive that they agree that uninvolved parents may need to feel more comfortable in becoming involved (Figure 5.15). The passion with which involved parents speak out against uninvolved parents could demonstrate their willingness to serve as mentors to their less-involved peers. In this way, communication may serve as the type of social technology envisioned by Vercic, et al. (2006) that helps lessen conflicts and advance cooperation between parties.

Fig. 5.14. Issue: Educators are likely to treat students of uninvolved parents in the same manner as students of involved parents. True conflict.

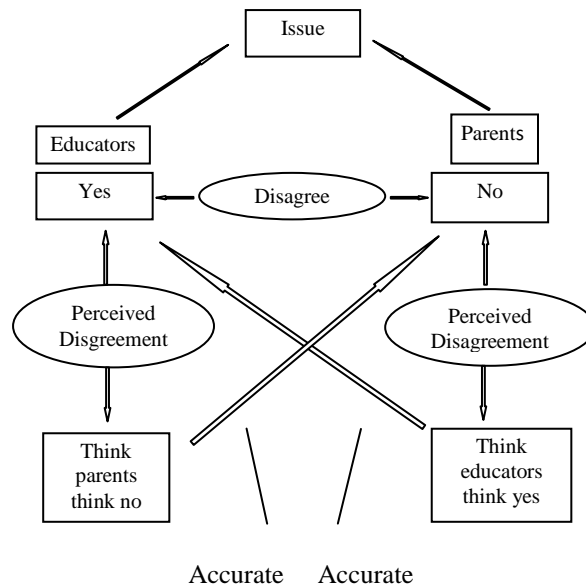


Figure 5.15. Issue: Parents who are uninvolved in their children’s educations are likely to be uncomfortable with the academic environment. True consensus.

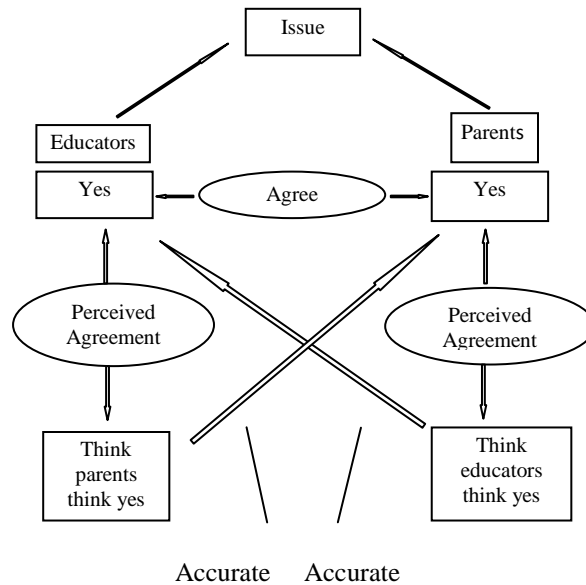


Table 5.5 provides a summary of the coorientational analyses related to parents who appear to be uninvolved in their children’s educations. This is followed by a synopsis of the issues associated with each dimension of parental involvement as analyzed by applying the coorientation model of customer service relationships (Appendix D), and the resulting conclusions and implications.

Table 5.5. Summary of coorientational analyses of issues related to uninvolved parents.

Dimensions/ related issues	Agreement between two sides?	Agreement perceived by educators?	Agreement perceived by parents?	State of Coorientation?	Recommendations for relationship-building communication strategies
Uninvolved					
Educators are likely to treat students of uninvolved parents in the same manner as students of involved parents (Fig. 5.14).	No	No	No	True conflict	Visibly and actively involved parents could serve as mentors to uninvolved parents.

Table 5.5 (cont.). Summary of coorientational analyses of issues related to uninvolved parents.

Dimensions/ related issues	Agreement between two sides?	Agreement perceived by educators?	Agreement perceived by parents?	State of Coorientation?	Recommendations for relationship-building communication strategies
Uninvolved					
Parents who are uninvolved in their children's educations are likely to be uncomfortable with the academic environment (Fig. 5.15).	Yes	Yes	Yes	True consensus	Visibly and actively involved parents could serve as mentors to uninvolved parents.

*Reflects the party that is inaccurate in predicting the other side's views on this issue related to the stated dimension associated with parental involvement.

Summary of Coorientational Analysis of Issues Associated with the Dimensions of Parental Involvement

Pursuant to the dissertation research questions, Appendix M displays the study results by summarizing the preceding coorientational analyses of agreements, disagreements, perceptions, and cross-perceptions of issues related to dimensions associated with parental involvement, allowing for an overview of the heterogeneity of communication states of false conflict, true conflict, true consensus, and dissensus interpreted as characterizing the relationship between the educational service providers and service recipients. Appendix M also demonstrates that it is possible for these diagnoses to drive practical relationship-building strategies (Vercic et al, 2005). The following final section of this dissertation situates this study within the coorientation and service literature, and summarizes implications and future research.

Conclusion and Implications

This dissertation integrated relationship dimensions into a model of coorientation, an interdependent system of interaction that allows for the measurement of perceptions and cross-perceptions of two entities that are mutually oriented toward each other and toward some shared issue (e.g., Grunig & Stamm, 1973; McLeod & Chaffee, 1973; Newcomb, 1953). The results demonstrated that the impact of interaction strategies between two parties can be the quality of the relationship

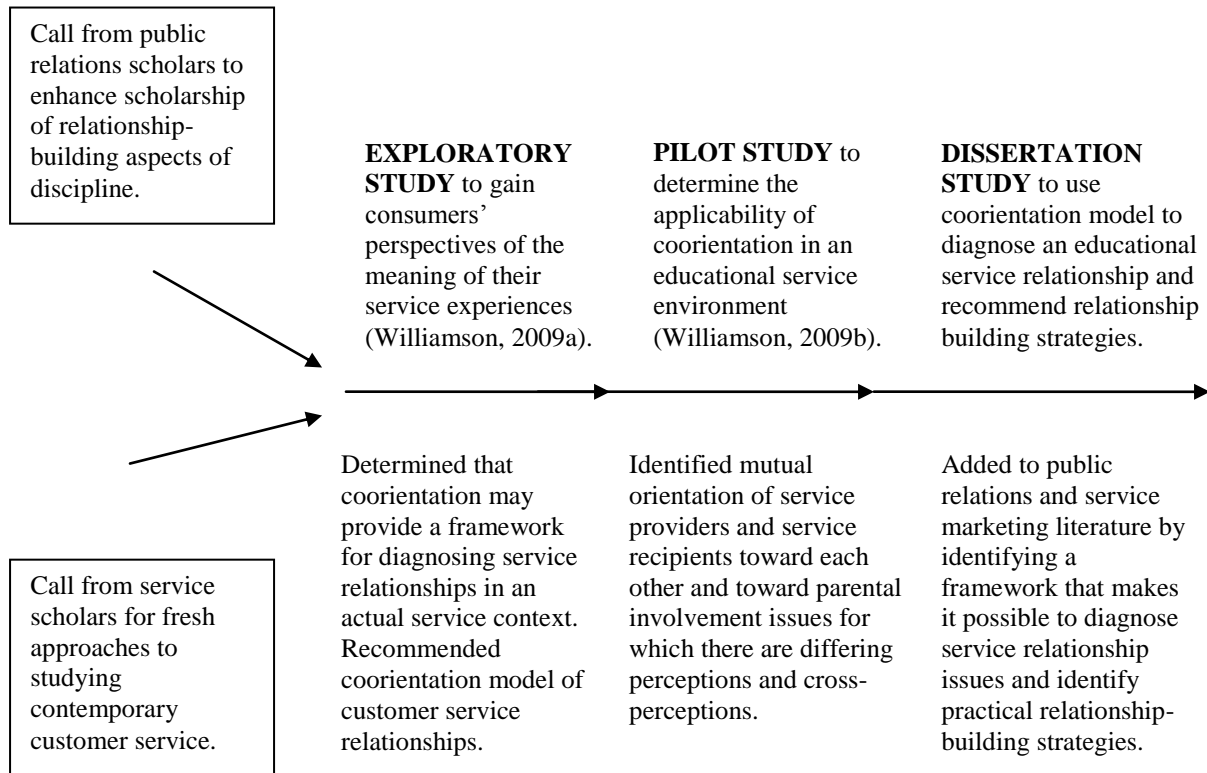
itself (Seltzer, 2006). This conceptualization refined the meaning of service and established parameters of specific gaps in the relational paradigm studied by using parental involvement as a proxy for the relationship between educators (A) and parents (B), which thus became the X in the ABX measurement model of coorientation (Seltzer).

My dissertation thus illustrates how the educational service paradigm studied can be conceptualized in a manner similar to how public relations scholars Grunig and Hunt (1984) envisioned the difference between an orientational approach and a coorientational approach to the setting of public relations objectives. Instead of promulgating current practices of educators attempting to affect parents in a way that persuades them to become more involved, the coorientation theoretical framework informed the development of strategies to help change the relationship between the educators and the parents. The coorientational analyses of these relationships demonstrate how two-way symmetrical research can produce findings that may be overlooked using traditional asymmetrical public relations models (Kelly et al., 2006).

Applying the coorientation framework in a service environment is consistent with the coorientation model of customer service relationships shown in Appendix D (Williamson, 2009a). Established marketing models of service quality (Parasuraman et al., 1985, 1988) would measure the perceived differences between service as expected and delivered, but would not systematically provide awareness of the perceptions and cross perceptions that illuminate the attitudinal insights motivating these behaviors.

This dissertation demonstrates that a coorientation model can be used to diagnose a customer service relationship in its natural setting, and that this diagnostic information can be used to recommend enhancements to the interactions between service providers and service recipients. As shown in Figure 5.16, this study and the research stream leading to it further suggest that merging the study of relationships with publics from a public relations perspective with the study of service from other consumer-driven disciplines can add to the depth of knowledge in each of these areas (e.g., Botan & Taylor, 2004; Broom et al., 1997; Ferguson, 1984; Hon & Grunig, 1999).

Figure 5.16. Summary of research stream culminating in dissertation study.



Further, the educational environments that provided the context for this case study extends the reach of public relations scholarship and practice into pressing social issues (Kelly et al., 2006; Waters, 2009). Although the scope of the research was limited to two educational organizations, it nonetheless provided insights into a sector of the U.S. service economy that has been deemed to be a critical national priority (Remarks, 2009). The research settings also involved present-day issues such as technology, diversity, and the current economic climate, which allowed for the interpretive examination of contemporary service issues as called for by marketing scholars (e.g., Parasuraman & Zinkhan, 2002).

Extensions of this research can apply the coorientation model of customer service relationships to commercial settings in which two parties are mutually attracted to each other and mutually oriented toward some object or issue. As suggested by the exploratory research leading to the dissertation (Williamson, 2009a), applying what is learned from a non-commercial service setting may provide fresh perspectives on service relationships in what Hon and Grunig (1999) previously

referred to as exchange relationships. In an exchange relationship, one party is presumed to be willing to provide benefits to another party only in anticipation of receiving comparable benefits in return. Hon and Grunig distinguished this type of relationship as being akin to marketing relationships between organizations and customers. Conversely, communal relationships were those that exist between stakeholders and organizations that have reciprocal relationships due to their concerns for each other, even without receiving comparable benefits in return. Stakeholders in communal relationships were said to constitute a public, which has long been characterized as a group of individuals who share or act on a common interest with respect to a specific organization (Botan & Soto, 1998; Dewey, 1927; Grunig & Hunt, 1984).

The findings of the exploratory study leading to this dissertation (Williamson, 2009a), however, support the notion that the delineation between communal and exchange relationships can become blurred in the long term (Hon & Grunig, 1999). The participants' descriptions of service provided in a non-commercial context could be said to resemble the description of a communal relationship, but the participants inferred that commercial providers could demonstrate the same type of service spirit as those in communal relationships. Future research that applies the coorientation model of customer service relationships in commercial customer settings may demonstrate that customers who are mutually oriented toward service providers and issues of mutual concern to both parties can indeed be classified as publics.

Additional research may also explore use of the coorientation model to diagnose relationships between service providers and their employees. The Gaps Model of service quality identified employees of service-providing organizations as being critical to closing at least two of the four gaps that ultimately determined the direction and degree of the perceived customer gap between service as expected and service as delivered (Parasuraman et al., 1985, 1988). Public relations research also supports the view of employees as an important public (e.g., Mishra, 2007). Service providers may benefit by conducting problem resolution assessments using a service coorientation model in which their own employees, or internal publics, are the second party with whom

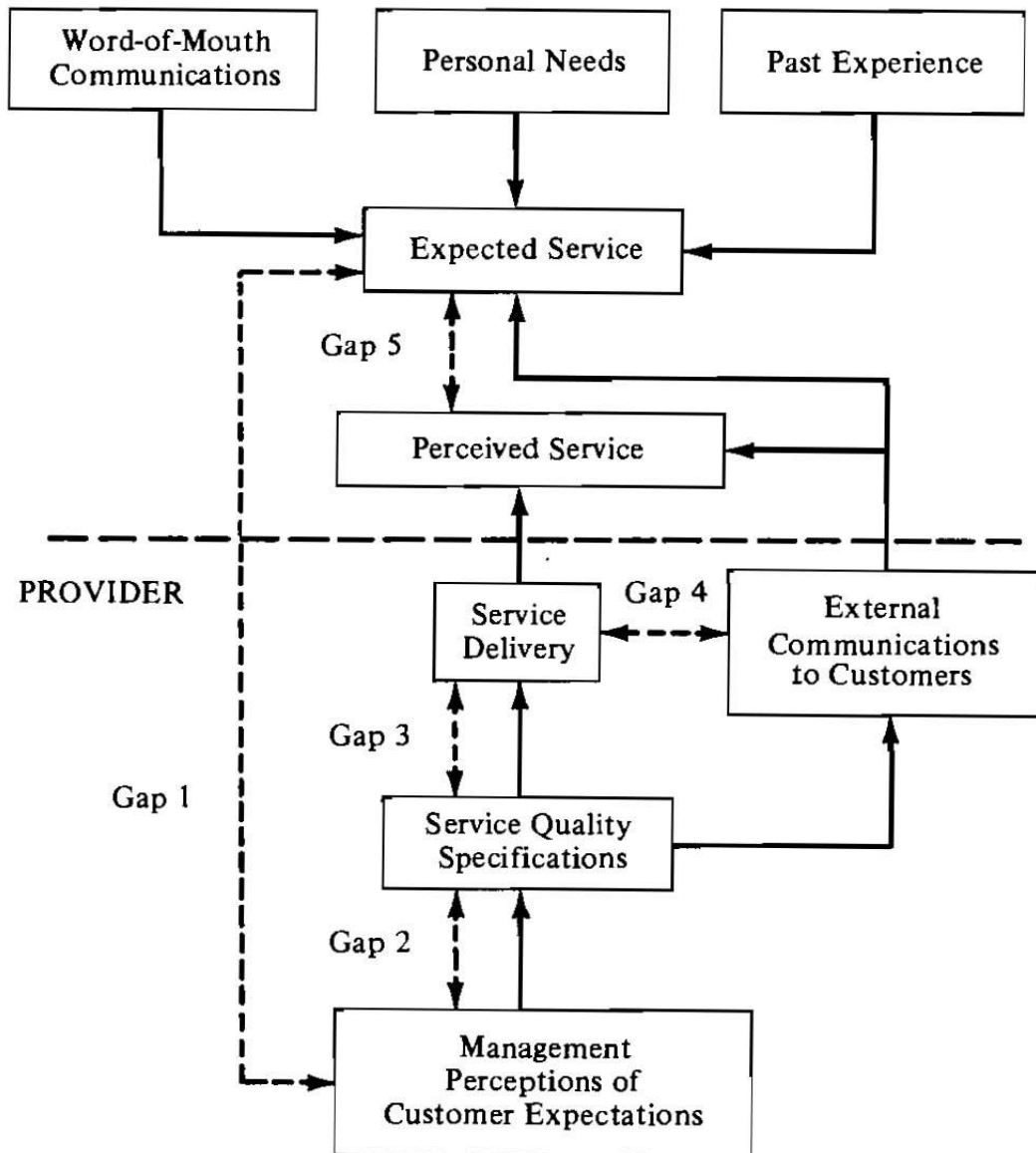
coorientation is sought regarding the service provided. The current research utilized a variation of this approach by including input not only from administrators of the programs studied, but also from teachers, instructors, and counselors who would be the equivalent of middle-management employees of service-providing organizations in a commercial setting.

Finally, quantitative measurements of coorientation variables can be utilized in future research in which objective measurements such as the degree and extent of similarities and dissimilarities between the parties are relevant to the research questions posed. The current study used a qualitative approach to interpret complex service meanings (Parasuraman et al., 2005; Zeithaml et al., 2002; Parasuraman & Zinkhan, 2002; Schembri & Sanderg, 2002) in order to extend service and public relations scholarship and practice by applying a coorientation model of customer service relationships to the study of contemporary service.

APPENDIX A

Gaps Model of Service Quality

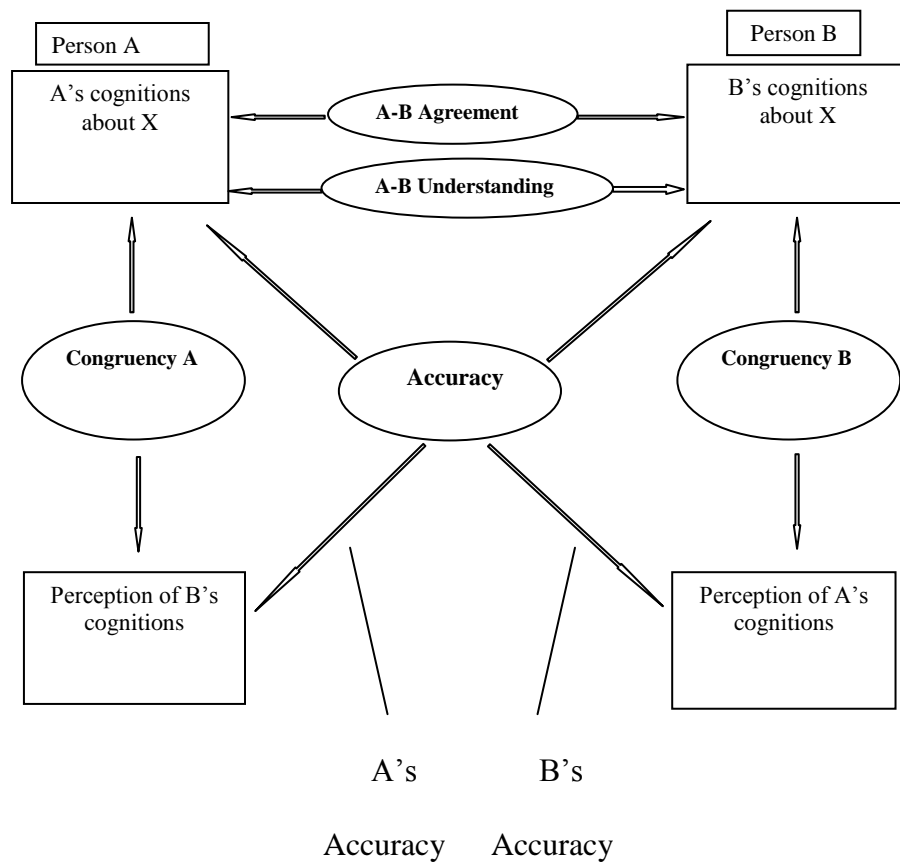
Zeithaml, Parasuraman, & Berry, 1990, p.46.



APPENDIX B

The Coorientation Measurement Model

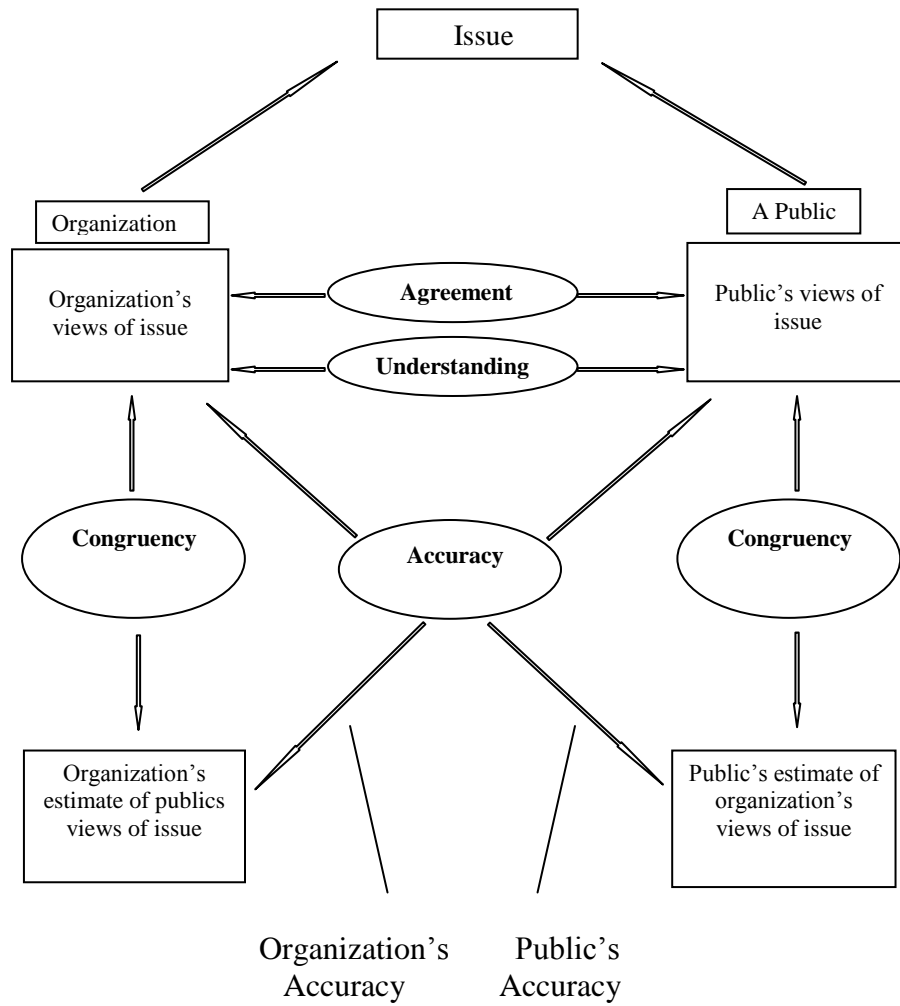
McLeod & Chaffee, 1973, p. 484.



APPENDIX C

Coorientational Model of Organization-Public Relationships

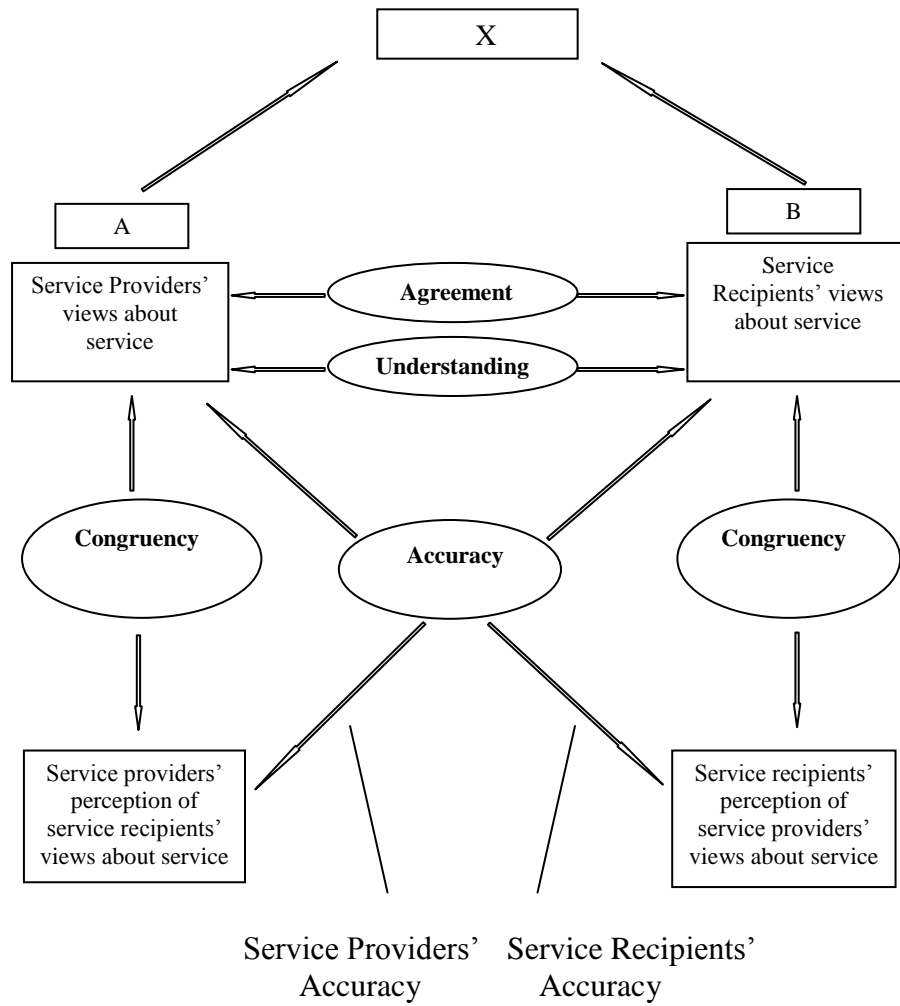
Adapted by Cutlip, Center, and Broom (1994, p. 249) from McLeod & Chaffee (1973).



APPENDIX D

Coorientation Model of Customer Service Relationships

Williamson (2009a), adapted from McLeod & Chaffee (1973)



APPENDIX E

IRB Approval Form



THE UNIVERSITY
of NORTH CAROLINA
at CHAPEL HILL

OFFICE OF HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS
Medical School Building 52
Mason Farm Road
CB #7097
Chapel Hill, NC 27599-7097
(919) 966-3113
Web site: ohre.unc.edu
<https://my.research.unc.edu> for IRB status
Federalwide Assurance (FWA) #4801

To: Joanna Williamson
Journalism and Mass Communication
CB: 3365

From: Behavioral IRB

A handwritten signature in black ink, likely of a representative of the Behavioral IRB.

Authorized signature on behalf of IRB

Approval Date: 1/13/2010

Expiration Date of Approval: 1/12/2011

RE: Notice of IRB Approval by Expedited Review (under 45 CFR 46.110)

Submission Type: Initial

Expedited Category: 7.Surveys/interviews/focus groups,6.Voice/image research recordings

Study #: 09-2357

Study Title: A Case Study Exploration Adapting Co-orientation to Educational Research

This submission has been approved by the above IRB for the period indicated. It has been determined that the risk involved in this research is no more than minimal.

Study Description:

Purpose: To determine if public relations theory can be integrated into the scholarly study of contemporary customer service.

Participants: 30 educators and 15 parents involved with (1) Covenant Christian Day School, a small private elementary and middle school in Greensboro, NC; and (2) Visionary Leaders Institutes Saturday Academy for African American Boys, a Columbus, OH weekend academic enrichment program for academically promising 8th and 9th grade African American males nominated by their school counselors.

Procedures: Case study, including interviews and focus groups.

Investigator's Responsibilities:

Federal regulations require that all research be reviewed at least annually. It is the Principal Investigator's responsibility to submit for renewal and obtain approval before the expiration date. You may not continue any research activity beyond the expiration date without IRB approval. Failure to receive approval for continuation before the expiration date will result in automatic termination of the approval for this study on the expiration date.

When applicable, enclosed are stamped copies of approved consent documents and other

F

page 1 of 2

recruitment materials. You must copy the stamped consent forms for use with subjects unless you have approval to do otherwise.

You are required to obtain IRB approval for any changes to any aspect of this study before they can be implemented (use the modification form at ohre.unc.edu/forms). Any unanticipated problem involving risks to subjects or others (including adverse events reportable under UNC-Chapel Hill policy) should be reported to the IRB using the web portal at <https://irbis.unc.edu/irb>.

Researchers are reminded that additional approvals may be needed from relevant "gatekeepers" to access subjects (e.g., principals, facility directors, healthcare system).

This study was reviewed in accordance with federal regulations governing human subjects research, including those found at 45 CFR 46 (Common Rule), 45 CFR 164 (HIPAA), 21 CFR 50 & 56 (FDA), and 40 CFR 26 (EPA), where applicable.

Good luck with your research, JoAnna.



Lawrence B. Rosenfeld, Ph.D.
Office of Human Research Ethics
Co-Chair, Behavioral Institutional Review Board
aa-irb-chair@unc.edu

CC: Lois Boynton, Journalism and Mass Communication
Francesca Carpentier (School of Journalism and Mass Communication), Non-IRB Review Contact

APPENDIX F

Redeemer Christian Day School Council Board Focus Group Facilitator Guide

Please tell me about Redeemer Christian Day School.

(Probe with parental involvement questions as needed):

What does the term “parental involvement” mean to you?

What are your thoughts about the parental involvement of middle school parents at Redeemer Christian Day School?

What do you think middle school parents would say about parental involvement at Redeemer Christian Day School?

APPENDIX G

Sample In-depth Interview Guide

Weekend Academy for African American Boys/Redeemer Christian Day School

- Please tell me about (Weekend Academy/Redeemer Christian Day School).
- (Probe with parental involvement questions as needed):

What does the term “parental involvement” mean to you?

(For Weekend Academy interviewees)

What are your thoughts about the involvement of Academy parents with the Academy?

What are your thoughts about the involvement of Academy parents with their sons’ schools?

What do you think (the other party) would say about parental involvement?

(For Redeemer interviewees)

What are your thoughts about the parental involvement of middle school parents at Redeemer Christian Day School?

What do you think (the other party) would say about parental involvement?

APPENDIX H

Sample Recruitment Message - Weekend Academy for African American Boys

(date)

Dear xxx:

Future Leaders Institute (FLI) is proud that your son is one of nearly 100 8th- and 9th-grade students who participated in the first year of the Weekend Academy for African American Boys. I am an independent researcher who will be conducting research during the next few months to obtain feedback from parents whose sons have been involved in the Academy.

I am currently recruiting parents to be part of this research, which will explore issues such as your perceptions of parents' relationships with educational providers such as schools and programs like the Weekend Academy. If you agree to participate, you will be scheduled for a one-on-one interview with me at the FLI offices where the Weekend Academy was held.

Please reply to this message by no later than (date) if you are willing to participate in this study. You may sign up for the study by sending me a reply e-mail message (joannaw@email.unc.edu) that includes the information requested below.

Your participation is voluntary and will not affect your son's standing with his school or with FLI. I truly appreciate your assistance. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

JoAnna Williamson
Ph.D. Candidate
The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

APPENDIX H (cont.)

**Weekend Academy for African American Boys
PARENT RESEARCH SIGN-UP INFORMATION**

Your name:

Your son's name:

Your e-mail address:

Your phone number:

When did your son participate in the Weekend Academy?

____ Winter 2009 ____ Spring 2009 ____ Fall 2009

What school did your son attend at that time?

Please indicate your preferred research interview date and time:

____ (date) OR ____ (date) OR ____ Either date

Indicate the time(s) you would be available for a 1-hour confidential interview on the date you indicated above. Please check all that apply – you will be contacted to confirm the exact date and time of your interview:

____ 9 – 10 a.m.

____ 10 – 11 a.m.

____ 11 a.m. – noon

____ noon – 1 p.m.

____ 1 – 2 p.m.

____ 2 – 3 p.m.

____ 3 – 4 p.m.

____ 4-5 p.m.

____ any of the above times

Please e-mail your response by *no later than (date)*, to joannaw@email.unc.edu, or call 614-313-0782.

Thank you!

APPENDIX I

Weekend Academy for African American Boys Counselor-Parent Research Match-Up

School Description	Parent Description	Counselor Description
Historical urban middle school – soon to close	Married mother/father interviewed separately	Caucasian female
Suburban Junior High	Married mother/formerly employed as school tutor	Caucasian female
Private Christian K-12 School	Single-parent mother	African American female
Urban Middle School	Married mother of Nigerian descent/also employed as school district substitute teacher	African American female
Suburban High School	Married mother/father interviewed together	Caucasian female
Suburban Middle School	Married father	Caucasian female
Private Catholic High School	Single-parent mother	Caucasian male
Urban Middle School	Single-parent mother	Caucasian male; declined interview

APPENDIX J
Sample In-depth Interview Consent Form

University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill
Consent to Participate in a Research Study
Adult Participants: Future Leaders Institute – Counselor Interviews
Social Behavioral Form

IRB Study # 09-2357

Consent Form Version Date: January 4, 2010

Title of Study: A case study exploration adapting coorientation to educational research

Principal Investigator: JoAnna Williamson

UNC-Chapel Hill Department: JOMC

UNC-Chapel Hill Phone number: 614-313-0782

Email Address: joannaw@email.unc.edu

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Lois Boynton

Study Contact telephone number: 614-313-0782

Study Contact email: joannaw@email.unc.edu

What are some general things you should know about research studies?

You are being asked to take part in a research study. To join the study is voluntary. You may refuse to join, or you may withdraw your consent to be in the study, for any reason, without penalty.

Research studies are designed to obtain new knowledge. This new information may help people in the future. You may not receive any direct benefit from being in the research study. There also may be risks to being in research studies.

Details about this study are discussed below. It is important that you understand this information so that you can make an informed choice about being in this research study. You will be given a copy of this consent form. You should ask the researcher named above any questions you have about this study at any time.

What is the purpose of this study?

The purpose of this research study is to learn more about your perceptions of the relationship between educators and parents of African American males.

How many people will take part in this study?

If you decide to be in this study, you will be one of approximately 5-10 school counselors in this research study who have recommended students to participate in the Weekend Academy for African American Boys sponsored by Future Leaders Institute (FLI).

How long will your part in this study last?

You will be asked to participate in a one-on-one interview that will last approximately one hour.

What will happen if you take part in the study?

During your interview, you will be asked to share your thoughts regarding a variety of issues pertaining to your perceptions of the relationship between educators and the parents of African American males. You may choose not to answer any question for any reason.

Depending on the research findings, you may also be asked to participate in future research, such as a survey. Your participation in any future related studies will be voluntary, and you will receive separate information regarding that study at the time it is conducted.

What are the possible benefits from being in this study?

Research is designed to benefit society by gaining new knowledge. You may also expect to benefit by participating in this study by learning more about parents' perceptions of their relationships with educators.

What are the possible risks or discomforts involved from being in this study?

There are no known risks involved with your participation in this study.

How will your privacy be protected?

Participants will not be identified in any report or publication about this study. Direct quotes will be attributed only to "a counselor." The nature of a quote may lead to deductive disclosure of the participant.

Although every effort will be made to keep research records private, there may be times when federal or state law requires the disclosure of such records, including personal information. This is very unlikely, but if disclosure is ever required, UNC-Chapel Hill will take steps allowable by law to protect the privacy of personal information. In some cases, your information in this research study could be reviewed by representatives of the University, research sponsors, or government agencies for purposes such as quality control or safety.

In-depth interviews are usually audio recorded to allow the interviewer to more fully participate and review the tape-recorded responses after the interview. Audiotapes will be kept in the sole possession of the interviewer, and will be kept only for as long as needed to conduct the research analysis. You may ask that the tape be turned off at any time during the interview. Please check the line below that best matches your choice:

- ☐ OK to record me during the study
☐ Not OK to record me during the study

What if you want to stop before your part in the study is complete?

You can withdraw from this study at any time, without any consequences.

Will you receive anything for being in this study?

Your participation in this study will help FLI determine what types of support are most useful to parents.

Will it cost you anything to be in this study?

There will be no cost for being in the study.

What if you have questions about this study?

You have the right to ask, and have answered, any questions you may have about this research. If you have questions, complaints, concerns, or if a research-related injury occurs, you should contact the researchers listed on the first page of this form.

What if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

All research on human volunteers is reviewed by a committee that works to protect your rights and welfare. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject, or if you would like to obtain information or offer input, you may contact the Institutional Review Board at 919-966-3113 or by email to IRB_subjects@unc.edu.

Title of Study: A case study exploration adapting coorientation to educational research

Principal Investigator: JoAnna Williamson

Participant's Agreement:

I have read the information provided above. I have asked all the questions I have at this time. I voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

Signature of Research Participant

Date

Printed Name of Research Participant

Signature of Research Team Member Obtaining Consent

Date

Printed Name of Research Team Member Obtaining Consent

APPENDIX K

Sample Coorientation Interview Guide

Based on your personal experiences, thoughts, attitudes, observations, and beliefs regarding the nature of relationships between parents of African American male students and the schools their sons attend, please choose the number from 1 to 7, with one (1) representing Very Unlikely and seven (7) representing Very Likely, that best represents your general perception.

	Very Unlikely						Very Likely
Generally speaking , how likely are parents of African American males to:							
1. Respond to school requests for parent volunteers.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. Attend school events in which their sons are involved (e.g., concerts, plays, sporting events).	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. Initiate communication with the school.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. Participate in home activities that reinforce the school's student expectations (e.g., ensure homework is completed).	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. Respond to student behavior-related communication from the school.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. Respond to non-behavior-related communication from the school.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. Attend specific parent-teacher activities initiated by the school (e.g., parent-teacher conferences, Open House, etc.).	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. Initiate home activities that support a learning environment (e.g., limiting distractions such as television time)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. Other _____	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. Other _____	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

APPENDIX L

Focus Group Consent Form

University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill

Consent to Participate in a Research Study

**Adult Participants – Redeemer Christian Day School Council Board Focus Group
Social Behavioral Form**

IRB Study # 09-2357

Consent Form Version Date: January 4, 2010

Title of Study: A case study exploration adapting coorientation to educational research

Principal Investigator: JoAnna Williamson

UNC-Chapel Hill Department: JOMC

UNC-Chapel Hill Phone number: 614-313-0782

Email Address: joannaw@email.unc.edu

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Lois Boynton

Study Contact telephone number: 614-313-0782

Study Contact email: joannaw@email.unc.edu

What are some general things you should know about research studies?

You are being asked to take part in a research study. To join the study is voluntary.

You may refuse to join, or you may withdraw your consent to be in the study, for any reason, without penalty.

Research studies are designed to obtain new knowledge. This new information may help people in the future. You may not receive any direct benefit from being in the research study. There also may be risks to being in research studies.

Details about this study are discussed below. It is important that you understand this information so that you can make an informed choice about being in this research study. You will be given a copy of this consent form. You should ask the researcher named above any questions you have about this study at any time.

What is the purpose of this study?

The purpose of this research study is to learn more about the relationship between parents and Redeemer Christian Day School.

How many people will take part in this study?

If you decide to be in this study, you will be one of approximately 7 Council Board members and 15 parents involved in the study.

How long will your part in this study last?

If you decide to be in this study, you will be asked to participate in a group interview known as a focus group. The focus group is expected to last for approximately 60-90 minutes.

What will happen if you take part in the study?

During your focus group interview, you will be asked to share your thoughts regarding a variety of issues pertaining to your perceptions of the relationship between parents and Redeemer Christian Day School. You may choose not to answer any question for any reason.

You will be asked if you will voluntarily share your contact information with the interviewer, in case she has further questions or needs clarification of issues you discuss during this interview. Any such follow-up will last no longer than 30 minutes. Depending on the research findings, you may also be asked to participate in future research, such as a survey. Your participation in any future related studies will be voluntary, and you will receive separate information regarding that study at the time it is conducted.

What are the possible benefits from being in this study?

Research is designed to benefit society by gaining new knowledge. You may not benefit personally from being in this research study.

What are the possible risks or discomforts involved from being in this study?

Some participants may feel embarrassed about comments they would like to make. It is important to the research process for you to know that there are no right or wrong answers and that all viewpoints will be respected. Some participants may be concerned about the confidentiality of their comments. The researcher will stress to all group participants the importance of confidentiality. The researcher cannot guarantee that all group participants will maintain confidentiality.

How will your privacy be protected?

Individual participants will not be identified by name in any report or publication about this study. Direct quotes will be attributed only to “a council board member.” The nature of a quote may lead to deductive disclosure of the participant.

Although every effort will be made to keep research records private, there may be times when federal or state law requires the disclosure of such records, including personal information. This is very unlikely, but if disclosure is ever required, UNC-Chapel Hill will take steps allowable by law to protect the privacy of personal information. In some cases, your information in this research study could be reviewed by representatives of the University, research sponsors, or government agencies for purposes such as quality control or safety.

Focus group interviews are usually audio recorded to allow the interviewer to more fully participate in the group and review the tape-recorded responses after the interview.

Audiotapes will be kept in the sole possession of the interviewer, and will be kept only for as long as needed to conduct the research analysis. You may choose not to reveal your name during the taping, and/or you may use a fictitious name. Please check the line below that best matches your choice:

_____ OK to record me during the study

_____ Not OK to record me during the study. Please note that choosing this option will likely prevent you from being involved in the focus group.

Redeemer Christian Day School is not the sponsor of this study, and any information shared with the school will not associate comments made with the individuals who made them. Your participation in this study will not affect your child's standing with the school. To protect the privacy of others, you are asked not to share comments made by other participants in the group with anyone outside of the group. The researcher cannot ensure that all group members will honor this request for confidentiality.

What if you want to stop before your part in the study is complete?

You can withdraw from this study at any time, with no consequences.

Will you receive anything for being in this study?

Your participation in this study will help Redeemer Christian Day School determine what types of support and communication are most effective for the school's parents.

Will it cost you anything to be in this study?

There will be no costs for being in the study.

What if you have questions about this study?

You have the right to ask, and have answered, any questions you may have about this research. If you have questions, complaints, concerns, or if a research-related injury occurs, you should contact the researchers listed on the first page of this form.

What if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

All research on human volunteers is reviewed by a committee that works to protect your rights and welfare. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject, or if you would like to obtain information or offer input, you may contact the Institutional Review Board at 919-966-3113 or by email to IRB_subjects@unc.edu.

Title of Study: A case study exploration adapting coorientation to educational research

Principal Investigator: JoAnna Williamson

Participant's Agreement:

I have read the information provided above. I have asked all the questions I have at this time.
I voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

Signature of Research Participant

Date

Printed Name of Research Participant

Signature of Research Team Member Obtaining Consent

Date

Printed Name of Research Team Member Obtaining Consent

APPENDIX M

Summary of Coorientational Analyses Related to Dimensions of Parental Involvement

Dimension/ related issues:	Agreement between two sides?	Agreement perceived by educators?	Agreement perceived by parents?	State of Coorientation?	Recommended relationship-building communication strategies
Parental Involvement: In General					
“Parental involvement” is likely to take multiple forms (Fig. 5.1).	Yes	Yes	No*	False conflict	Educators and parents should work together to maximize parental involvement within each of the dimensions rather than focusing solely on how to move parents across dimensions.
Parental involvement is very likely to be essential to a child’s education (Fig. 5.2).	No	Yes*	Yes*	False consensus	Parents should negotiate and collaborate with educators to demonstrate their belief that some form of involvement is essential.
Visible Parental Involvement					
Most parents are not likely to be visibly involved in parent organizations (Fig. 5.3).	Yes	Yes	Yes	True consensus	Acknowledge other forms of parental involvement to the same extent as membership in parental organizations.
Parents are more likely to be visible in academic programs that are tailored to their child’s needs (Fig. 5.4).	No	Yes*	No	False consensus	Better leverage the potential for increased involvement inherent in the tailored programs (i.e. mandatory programs, drop-offs and pick-ups, technology)
Parents are more likely to be visibly involved in events in which their children are involved (Fig. 5.5).	Yes	Yes	No*	False conflict	Continue to plan events of varying types to encourage visible involvement.
Parents should initiate communication with educators (Fig. 5.6).	Yes	No*	No*	False conflict	Both parties should ensure other party feels welcome to the relationship.

APPENDIX M (cont.)

Summary of Coorientational Analyses Related to Dimensions of Parental Involvement

Dimension/ related issues:	Agreement between two sides?	Agreement perceived by educators?	Agreement perceived by parents?	State of Coorientation?	Recommended relationship-building communication strategies
Visible Parental Involvement (cont.):					
Parents who are visibly involved are likely to be better educated than parents who are not visibly involved and are likely to have children who are more academically successful (Fig. 5.7).	No	No	No	Dissensus	Educators should make efforts to become better acquainted with individual families.
Behind the Scenes Parental Involvement: Active					
Actively involved parents who are not visibly involved in their children's educations are likely to be proactively involved in some way behind the scenes (Fig. 5.8).	Yes	Yes	No*	False conflict	Parents should increase outreach effort to educators to minimize their own misperceptions of educators' beliefs.
Actively involved parents are likely to be responsive to behavior and non-behavior related communication from the school (Fig. 5.9)	No	Yes*	Yes*	False consensus	Two-way symmetrical communication should take precedence over two-way communication designed to persuade and/or one-way communication to disseminate information.

APPENDIX M (cont.)

Summary of Coorientational Analyses Related to Dimensions of Parental Involvement

Dimension/ related issues:	Agreement between two sides?	Agreement perceived by educators?	Agreement perceived by parents?	State of Coorientation?	Recommended relationship-building communication strategies
Behind the Scenes Parental Involvement: Active (cont.)					
Actively involved parents are likely to create a supportive home environment that includes ensuring school projects are completed and limiting possible distractions such as technology and mass media (Fig. 5.10).	Yes	No*	No*	False conflict	Parties should acknowledge their agreement to the difficulties of this challenge and collaborate on solutions.
Behind the Scenes Parental Involvement: Passive					
Parents who are not visibly or actively involved in their child's education are generally likely to be satisfied with the schools and educational programs they choose for their children (Fig. 5.11).	No	Yes*	Yes	False consensus	Educators should implement on-going feedback mechanisms to encourage parental retention and solicit parent feedback.
Parents who are not visibly or actively involved in their children's educations may still be likely to set academic expectations for their children (Fig. 5.12).	Yes	Yes	No*	False conflict	Educators can communicate appreciation and tips for parents assuming this role.

APPENDIX M (cont.)

Summary of Coorientational Analyses Related to Dimensions of Parental Involvement

Behind the Scenes Parental Involvement: Passive (cont.)					
Parents who are not visibly or actively involved in their children's educations are unlikely to understand the importance of more visible involvement (Fig. 5.13).	Yes	No*	Yes	False conflict	Educators and visibly and actively involved parents could partner to resolve problems and negotiate strategies to motivate less-involved parents.
Uninvolved					
Educators are likely to treat students of uninvolved parents in the same manner as students of involved parents (Fig. 5.14).	No	No	No	True conflict	Visibly and actively involved parents could serve as mentors to uninvolved parents.
Parents who are uninvolved in their children's educations are likely to be uncomfortable with the academic environment (Fig. 5.15).	Yes	Yes	Yes	True consensus	Visibly and actively involved parents could serve as mentors to uninvolved parents.

*Reflects the party that is inaccurate in predicting the other side's views on this issue related to the stated dimension associated with parental involvement.

REFERENCES

- Abdullah, F. (2006). The development of HEDPERF: a new measuring instrument of service quality for the higher education sector. *International Journal of Consumer Studies* 30(6), 569-581.
- Appleton-Knapp, S. (2006). Measuring student expectations and their effects on satisfaction: The importance of managing student expectations. *Journal of Marketing Education*, 28, 254-264.
- American Airlines CEO apologizes to passengers (2008, April 11). *CNN.com*. Retrieved April 26, 2008, from <http://www.cnn.com/2008/TRAVEL/04/10/american.cancellations/>.
- American Airlines customer service plan. (2009). *American Airlines*. Retrieved December 1, 2009, from <http://www.aa.com/i18nForward.do?p=/customerService/customerCommitment/customerServicePlan.jsp>
- Armstrong, G., & Kotler P. (2007). *Marketing: An introduction*. Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Aronoff, C. (1975). Newspapermen and practitioners differ widely on PR role. *Public Relations Journal*, August, 24-25.
- ATA Airlines files for bankruptcy (2008, April 3). *CNNMoney.com*. Retrieved April 26, 2008, from <http://money.cnn.com/2008/0404/news/companies/ata?bankruptcy>.
- Babakus, E., & Boller, G. (1992). An empirical assessment of the SERVQUAL scale. *Journal of Business Research*, 24(3), 253-268.
- Bang, H., & Moon, Y. (2002). A comparison of services advertising strategies used in U.S. and Korean magazine ads: A content analysis. *Journal of Services Marketing*, 16(3), 443-459.
- Barr, M. (2008, April 4). Skybus is third airline to close in week. *AOL Money & Finance*. Retrieved April 6, 2008, from http://money.aol.com/news/articles/_a/skybus-is-third-airline-to-close-in-week/2008050510.
- Belk, R., Bahn, K., & Mayer, R. (1982). Developmental recognition of consumption symbolism. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 9(1), 4-17.
- Bitner, M. J. (1995). Building service relationships: It's all about promises. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 23(4), 246-251.
- Bitner, M. J., Faranda, W., Hubbert, A., & Zeithaml, V. (1997). Customer contributions and roles in service delivery. *International Journal of Service Industry Management*, 8(3), 193-205.
- Bitner, M.J., and Hubbert, A. (1994). An. encounter satisfaction versus overall satisfaction versus quality: the customer's voice. In Rust, R. & Oliver, R. (Eds.), *Research in Organizational Behavior*. Greenwich, CT.: JAI Press.
- Blumer, H. (1969). *Symbolic interactionism*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

- Botan, C., & Soto, F. (1998). A semiotic approach to the internal functioning of publics: Implications for strategic communication and public relations. *Public Relations Review*, 24, 21-44.
- Botan, C., & Taylor, M. (2006). Public relations: State of the field. *Journal of Communications*, 54(4), 645-661.
- Boulding, W., Kalra, A., Staelin, R., & Zeithaml, V. (1993). A dynamic process model of service quality: From expectations to behavioral intentions. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 30(1), 7-27.
- Brooks, M. (2009, March 30). *Reforming health care will strengthen economy, Obama says*. America.gov. Retrieved November 18, 2009, from <http://www.america.gov/st/usg-english/s009/March/20090330115121hmniesua0.5621454.html>.
- Broom, G. (1977). Coorientational measurement of public issues. *Public Relations Review*, 3(4), 110-119.
- Broom, G., Casey, S., & Ritchey, J. (1997). Toward a concept and theory of organization-public relationships. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 9(2), 83-98.
- Broom, G., & Dozier, D. (1990). *Using research in public relations: Applications to program management*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall.
- Brown, T., Churchill, G., & Peter, J. (1993). Improving the measurement of service quality. *Journal of Retailing*, 69(1), 127-139.
- Bush, M. (2008). JetBlue seeks PR shop to help it out of toilet. *Adage.com*. Retrieved May 19, 2008 from http://adage.com/article_id=127170.
- Cameron, G., & McCollum, T. (1993). Competing corporate cultures: A multi-method, cultural analysis of the role of internal communication. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 5(4), 217-250.
- Chaffee, S., & McLeod, J. (1968). Sensitization in panel design: A coorientational experiment. *Journalism Quarterly* 42, 661-669.
- Christen, C. (2005). The utility of coorientational variables as predictors of willingness to negotiate. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 82(1), 7-24.
- Clow, K., Kurtz, D., Ozment, J., & Ong B. (1997). The antecedents of consumer expectations of services: An empirical study across four industries. *The Journal of Services Marketing* 11(4), 230-248.
- Cope, J. (2005). Researching entrepreneurship through phenomenological inquiry: Philosophical and methodological issues. *International Small Business Journal*, 23(2), 163-187.
- Cover stories. (1987). *TIME*. Retrieved December 1, 2007, from <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,963437,00.html>.

- Cramer, J. (2007). Bloody and bloodier. Retrieved February 5, 2009, from <http://www.nymag.com/news/businessfinance/bottomline/35813>.
- Creswell, J. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry and research design*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Cronin, J., & Taylor, S. (1992). Measuring service quality: A reexamination and extension. *Journal of Marketing*, 56(3), 55-68.
- Cruz, G. (2010, November 8). To help the kids, parents go back to school. *TIME*. Retrieved March 3, 2010 from <http://time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,1931170,00.html>.
- Cutlip, Center, & Broom (1994). *Effective public relations*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall.
- Davis, J. (2003). Early schooling and academic achievement of African American males. *Urban Education*, 38, 515-537.
- Deetz, S. (2001). Conceptual foundations. In Jablin, F. & Putman, L. (Eds.) *The new handbook of organizational communication: Advances in theory, research, and methods*. (pp. 3-46). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Denzin, N., & Lincoln, Y. (2005). The discipline and practice of qualitative research. In Denzin, N. & Lincoln, Y., (Eds.) *The Sage handbook of qualitative research*. (pp. 1-33). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Detroit to close 44 schools in June. (2010, March 17). *Msnbcnews.com*. Retrieved March 21, 2010, from http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/35910733/ns/us_news-educatuin/?GT1=43001/from/ET.
- Dewey, J. (1927). *The public and its problems*. Chicago, IL: Swallow Press.
- Dewey, J. (1958). *Experience and nature*. NY: Dover.
- DOT fines airlines for six-hour tarmac delay. (2009, November 4). *msnbc.com news services*, Retrieved November 24, 2009, from http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/34127317/ns/travel-business_travel/.
- Dozier D., & Ehling, W. (1992). Evaluation of public relations programs: What the literature tells us about their effects. In J. Grunig (Ed.) *Excellence in public relations and communication management*. (pp. 159-184). Hillsdale: NJ: Erlbaum.
- Edvardsson, B. (1992). Service breakdowns: A study of critical incidents in an airline. *International Journal of Service Industry Management*, 3(4), 17-29.
- Elliott, K. (1995). A comparison of alternative measures of service quality. *Journal of Customer Service in Marketing & Management*, 1(1), 33-44.
- Fat baby can get coverage after all, insurer says. (2009, October 12). *msnbc.com*. Retrieved October 21, 2009, from http://www.msnbc.com/id/33283839/ns/health-kids_and_parenting/ns/health-kids_and_parenting.
- Ferguson, A. (2000). *Bad boys: Public schools in the making of black masculinity*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

- Ferguson, M. (1984). *Building theory in public relations: Interorganizational relationships as public relations paradigm*. Paper presented to the annual conference of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Gainesville, FL.
- Flint, D.J. (2006). Innovation, symbolic interaction and customer valuing: Thoughts stemming from a service-dominant logic of marketing. *Marketing Theory* 6(3), 349-362.
- Fox, S. (2001). Wired seniors: A fervent few, inspired by family ties. *Pew Internet & American Life Project*, Washington, D.C.
- Fox, S. (2005). The future of the Internet as Baby Boomers age. *Aging by Design*, Bentley College: Waltham, MA.
- Garfinkel, H. (1964). Studies of the routine grounds of everyday activities. *Social Problems*, 11, 224-250.
- Gordon, J. (2002). *The black male in white America*. NY: Nova Science.
- Gronroos, C. (1984). A service quality model and its marketing implications. *European Journal of Marketing*. 18(4), 36-44.
- Gronroos, C. (1990). *Service management and marketing: Managing the moments of truth in service competition*. Lexington, MA: Lexington Books.
- Grunig, J. (2001). Two-way symmetrical public relations: Past, present, and future. In R.L. Heath (Ed.), *Handbook of public relations*. (pp. 11-30). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Grunig, J., & Hunt, T. (1984). *Managing public relations*. Orlando, FL: Harcourt Brace Javanovich.
- Grunig, J., & Stamm, K. (1973). Communication and coorientation of collectivities. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 16(4), 567-591.
- Hansemark, O., & Albinsson, M. (2004). Customer satisfaction and retention: The experiences of individual employees. *Managing Service Quality*, 14(1), 40-57.
- Heider, F. (1946). Attitudes and cognitive organization. *Journal of Psychology*, 21, 107-112.
- Hernon P. & Altman E. (1996). *Service quality in academic libraries*. Norwood, N.J.: Ablex.
- Hill, F. (1995). Managing service quality in higher education: The role of the student as primary consumer, *Quality Assurance in Education*, 3(3), 10-21.
- Holstein, W. (2006, December 3). And now a syllabus for the service economy. *The New York Times*, Retrieved December 2, 2007, from <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/12/03/jobs/>.
- Hon, L., & Grunig, J. (1999). *Guidelines for measuring relationships in public relations*. Gainesville, FL: Institute for Public Relations.
- How we got into the subprime lending mess. (2007). Retrieved February 5, 2009, from <http://knowledge.wharton.upenn.edu/article.cfm?articleid=1812>.

- Jeffers, D. (1977). Performance expectations as a measure of relative status of news and pr people. *Journalism Quarterly*, 5(42), 299-306.
- Kang, H. (2008). South Korean public relations practitioners' and journalists' perceptions on their relationships: A gap analysis. Paper presented to the annual conference of the International Communication Association, Chicago, IL.
- Kellerman, A. (1985). The evolution of service economies: A geographical perspective. *The Professional Geographer*, 37(2), 133-142.
- Kelly, K., Thompson, M., & Waters, R. (2006). Improving the way we die: A cororientation study assessing agreement/disagreement in the organization-public relationship of hospices and physicians. *Journal of Health Communication*, 11, 607-627.
- Kendall, S. (2006). Customer service from the customer's perspective. In Fogli, L. & Salas, E. (Eds.), *Customer service delivery: research and best practices*. (pp. 3-21). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Kiviat, B. (2008, March 24). The end of customer service. *TIME*, 171, 42.
- Koepp, S. (1987, February 2). Cover Stories: Pul-eeze! Will somebody help me? *TIME*, Retrieved March 3, 2008 from <http://www.time.com/printout/0,8816,963438,00.html>.
- Kopenhagen, L. (1985). Aligning values of practitioners and journalists. *Public Relations Review* 11, 34-42.
- Krueger, R. (1994). *Focus groups: A practical guide for applied research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Ledingham, J., & Bruning, S. (2007). The media audit: A tool for managing media relationships. *Journal of Promotion Management*, 13(3-4), 189-202.
- Ledingham, J., Bruning, S., Thomlison, T.D., & Lesko, C. (1997). The applicability of interpersonal relationship dimensions to an organizational context: Toward a theory of relational loyalty (a qualitative approach). *Academy of Managerial Communications Journal*, 1(1), 27-48.
- Levitt, T. (1972). Production-line approach to service. *Harvard Business Review*, (September/October), 41-74.
- Levitt, T. (1976). The industrialization of service. *Harvard Business Review* (September-October), 65-76.
- Mandara, J. (2006). The impact of family functioning on African American males' academic achievement: A review and clarification of the empirical literature, *Teachers College Record*. 108(2), 206-223.
- McAvoy, A. (2008, March 30). Aloha Airlines halting passenger service. *businessweek.com*. Retrieved April 26, 2008, from <http://www.businessweek.com/ap/financialnews/D8VO2HT80.htm>.

- McConnell, R. (2007, November 28). Study: Consumers reach boiling point over customer service. *Advertising Age*. Retrieved December 2, 2007 from <http://entrepreneur.com/tradejournals/article/print/64912149.html>.
- McCracken, G. (1988). *The long interview*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- McGregor, J. (2008, February 21). The 2008 winners. *BusinessWeek*. Retrieved October 21, 2009, from http://www.businessweek.com/magazine/content/08_09/b4073047439146.htm.
- McLeod, J., & Chaffee, S. (1973). Interpersonal approaches to communication research. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 16(4), 469-499.
- McQuail, D. & Windahl, S. (1993). Newcomb's ABX model, other balance models and co-orientation. *Communication models for the study of mass communication*. (pp. 27-37). New York: Longman.
- Mead, G. (1934). *Mind, self, and society*. Chicago, IL.: University of Chicago Press.
- Merriam, S. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Merton, R., Riske, M., & Kendall, P. (1956). *The focused interview*. New York: Free Press.
- Michaels, D., & Maxon, T. (2008, March 13). Southwest Airlines grounds dozens of jets after safety probe. *The Dallas Morning News*. Retrieved Thursday, March 13, 2008, from <http://www.dallasnews.com/sharedcontent/dws/bus/industries/airlines/stories/031308dnbus>.
- Miles, M., & Huberman, M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Mishra, K. (2007). Internal communication: Building trust, commitment, and a positive reputation through relationship management with employees. *Dissertation Abstracts International*. (UMI No. 3257559).
- Newcomb, T. (1953). An approach to the study of communicative acts. *Psychological Review*, 60(6), 393-404.
- Obama: Overhaul "No child left behind." (2010, March 13). Retrieved March 21, 2010, from http://www.msnbc.com/id/35852205/ns/us_news-education/from/ET/.
- Official site of Future Leaders Institute (n.d.). Retrieved March 1, 2009, from <http://www.vli123.com/>.
- Ogbu, J. (2003). *Black American students in an affluent suburb: A study of academic disengagement*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Oliver, R. (1977). Effect of expectation and disconfirmation on postexposure product evaluations: An alternative interpretation. *Journal of applied psychology*, 62(4), 480-486.

- Oliver, R. (1993). A conceptual model of service quality and service satisfaction: Compatible goals, different concepts. *Advances in Services Marketing and Management*, 2, 65-85.
- Origins of the subprime lending crisis. (2007). *Report and Recommendations by the U.S. Majority Staff of the Joint Economic Committee*. Retrieved February 4, 2009, from http://jec.senate.gov/index.cfm?FuseAction=Reports.Reports&ContentRecord_id=c6627bb2-7e9c-9af9-7ac7-32b94d398d27&Region_id=&Issue_id=.
- Parasuraman, A., & Zeithaml, V. (2002). Understanding and improving service quality: A literature review and research agenda. In Weitz., B. & Wensley, R. (Eds.), *Handbook of Marketing*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Parasuraman, A., Zeithaml, V., & Berry, L. (1985). A conceptual model of service quality and its implications for future research. *Journal of Marketing*, 49, 41-50.
- Parasuraman, A., Zeithaml, V., & Berry, L. (1988). SERVQUAL: A multiple-item scale for measuring customer perceptions of service quality. *Journal of Retailing*, 64(1), 12-40.
- Parasuraman, A., Zeithaml, Z.A., & Malhotra, A. (2005). E-S-QUAL: A multiple-item scale for assessing electronic service quality. *Journal of Service Research*, 7, 213-233.
- Parasuraman, A. & Zinkhan, G. (2002). Marketing to and serving customers through the Internet: An overview and research agenda. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 30(4), 286-295.
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Pearson, R. (1989). Beyond ethical relativism in public relations: Coorientation, rules, and the idea of communication symmetry. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 1(1), 67-86.
- Prater, C. (2009). Regulators finalize sweeping credit card rule reforms. *CreditCards.com*. Retrieved November 17, 2009, from <http://www.creditcards.com/credit-card-news/fed-enacts-new-credit-card-regulations-1282.php>.
- Reavy, M. (1996). *Use of the coorientation model in studying group communication on Internet communication*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Communication Theory & Methodology Division of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication.
- Reber, B., Cropp, F., & Cameron, G. (2001). Mythic battles: Examining the lawyer-public relations counselor dynamic. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 13(3), 187-218.
- Remarks of President Barack Obama as prepared for delivery: Address to joint session of Congress (2009, February 24). Retrieved March 1, 2009, from http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Remarks-of-President-Barack-Obama-Address-to-Joint-Session-of-Congress/.
- Rust, R.T., & Chung, T. S. (2006). Marketing models of service and relationships. *Marketing Science* 23(6), 560-580.
- Scheff, T. (1967). Toward a sociological model of consensus. *American Sociological Review*, 32(1), 32-46.

- Schelling, T. (1963). *The strategy of conflict*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Schembri, S., & Sandberg, J. (2002). Service quality and the consumer's experience: Towards an interpretive approach. *Marketing Theory* 2(2), 189-205.
- Seltzer, T. (2006). Measuring the impact of public relations: Using a coorientational approach to analyze the organization-public relationship. Gainesville, FL: Institute for Public Relations.
- Service. (n.d.). *Dictionary.com Unabridged (v 1.1)*. Retrieved October 7, 2007, from <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/service>.
- Shaw, D. (2009, November 8). House passes historic health care bill. *OpenCongress*. Retrieved November 8, 2009, from <http://www.opencongress.org/articles/view/1347-House-Passes-Historic-Health-Care-Bill>.
- Shaw, T., & White, C. (2004). Public relations and journalism educators' perceptions of media relations. *Public Relations Review*, 30, 493-502.
- Shin, J., & Cameron, G. (2003). The potential of online media: A coorientational analysis of conflict between PR professionals and journalists in South Korea. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 80(3), 583-602.
- Shin, J., & Cameron, G. (2005). Different sides of the same coin: Mixed views of public relations practitioners and journalists for strategic conflict management. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 82(2), 318-338.
- Stake, R. (1995). *The art of case study research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Stegall, S., & Sanders, K. (1986). Coorientation of PR practitioners and news personnel in education news. *Journalism Quarterly*, 63(2), 341-347, 393.
- Sullivan, B. (2009). Confessions of a credit card telemarketer. *The Red Tape Chronicles*. Retrieved November 17, 2009, from <http://redtape.msnbc.com/2009/11/what-if-there-were-a-way-to-have-your-credit-card-debt-erased-if-you-lost-your-job-or-became-disabled-thats-the-pitch-behind.html>.
- Suh, J., & Janda, S. (2006). Exploring the role of culture in trust development with service providers. *Journal of Services Marketing*, 20(4), 265-273.
- Svensson, P. (2007). Producing marketing: Towards a social-phenomenology of marketing work. *Marketing Theory*, 7(3), 271-290.
- Swan, J., & Bowers, M.R. (1998). Services quality and satisfaction: The process of people doing things together. *Journal of Services Marketing*, 12(1), 59-72.
- Swartz, J. (2009, June 25). Businesses use Twitter to communicate with customers. *usatoday.com*. Retrieved October 17, 2009, from http://www.usatoday.com/tech/news/2009-06-25-twitter-business-consumers_N.htm.

- Szmigin, I., & Foxall, G. (2000). Interpretive consumer research: How far have we come? *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal*, 3(4), 187-197.
- Thomlison, T. (2000). An interpersonal primer with implications for public relations. In J. Ledingham & S. Bruning (Eds.), *Public relations as relationship management: A relational approach to the study and practice of public relations*. (pp. 177-204). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Thompson, C., Locander, W., & Pollio, H. (1989). Putting consumer experience back into consumer research: The philosophy and method of existential-phenomenology. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 16, 133-146.
- Toddler denied insurance for being too small. (2009, October 21). *msnbc.com*. Retrieved October 21, 2009, from <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/33411196/>.
- Trocchia, P., & Janda, S. (2000). A phenomenological investigation of Internet usage among older individuals. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 17(7), 605-616.
- United temporarily grounds 11% of fleet. (2008, April 2). *CNNMoney.com*. Retrieved April 26, 2008, from http://money.cnn.com/2008/04/02/news/companies/united_delays.ap/index.htm?postversion=2008040213.
- Watkins, W., Lewis, J., & Chou, V. (2001). *Race and education: The roles of history and society in educating African American students*. Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.
- What's new at JetBlue (2008). *USA TODAY.com*. Retrieved June 11, 2008, from: http://www.usatoday.com/travel/columnist/grossman/2008-04-14-new-at-jetblue_N.htm.
- Wimmer R., & Dominick, J. (2006). *Mass media research: An introduction*. Belmont, CA: Thomson.
- Vercic, D., Tkalac Vercic, A., & Laco, K. (2005). *Questioning the dialogue between Slovenia and Croatia: Coorientation theory and communication problems in international relations*. Paper presented at the annual conference of the International Communication Association, New York.
- Waters, R. (2009). Comparing the two sides of the nonprofit organization-donor relationship: Applying coorientation methodology to relationship management. *Public Relations Review* 35, 144-146.
- Williamson, J. (1991). Productivity and American leadership: A review article. *Journal of Economic Literature*, 29, 51-68.
- Williamson, J. (2009a, May). *Customer coorientation: Toward a public relations approach to the study of contemporary customer service*. Manuscript in preparation.
- Williamson, J. (2009b, May). *Customers as publics: Contemporary service research from a public relations perspective*. Paper presented at the annual conference of the Academy of Marketing Science, Baltimore, MD.

- Wojnar, D. M., & Swanson, K. M. (2007). Phenomenology: An exploration. *Journal of Holistic Nursing*, 25, 172-180.
- Yin, R. (2009). *Case study research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Zeithaml, V. A. (2000). Service quality, profitability, and the economic worth of customers: What we know and what we need to learn. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 28(1), 67-85.
- Zeithaml, V., Bitner, M., & Gremler, D. (2006). *Services marketing: Integrating customer focus across the firm*. Boston MA: McGraw-Hill/Irwin.
- Zeithaml, V., Berry, L., & Parasuraman, A. (1996). The behavioral consequences of service quality. *Journal of Marketing*, 60, 31-46.
- Zeithaml, V., Parasuraman, A. & Berry, L. (1990). *Delivering quality service: Balancing customer perceptions and expectations*. NY: Free Press.
- Zeithaml, V., Parasuraman, A., & Malhotra, A. (2002). Service quality delivery through web sites: A critical review of extant knowledge. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 30(4), 358-371.