THE EFFECT OF COMMUNITY TYPE, PARENT TRUST AND PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN SCHOOLS ON ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

The nature and characteristics of a community in which a school resides influences what happens in the school (Brown & Sake, 1986; Bernstein, 1992). Often, schools in poor communities or schools that serve poor communities are poor schools (Firestone, 1989). Schools in poor communities often are not able to maintain safe buildings, supply quality learning materials, or offer an adequate curriculum and the level of education suffers tremendously.

In the literature, we find several variables that may overcome negative effects of community characteristics on the academic achievement of the students. Poor schools require additional support that cannot be measured only in dollars. For example, lower socioeconomic schools should have administrators who will implement programs that will bring success to the school (Capper, 1994). Poor schools should also employ teachers who have a genuine concern for students and who are experienced in various teaching methods (Firestone, 1989). Another avenue that is important in these schools is keeping parents informed about activities and involved in all aspects of the school. Parents should be involved in decisions making within the school, curriculum development, policy changes, and monetary expenditures. Most importantly parents should be involved in the education of the children in the school. If the parents are involved in the school in a positive manner, trust between the parents and school personnel will develop. Trust coupled with involvement will facilitate student academic

success. Progressive administrators, caring teachers, and involved parents should be active in all schools; however, the effects of dynamic leadership, hard-working teachers, and an involved community are greater felt in schools that have a greater chance of failure.

There is research evidence of the positive effects of parent involvement. However, there is little inquiry into the relationship between parent trust of school and parent involvement in the school. And, there is no research on the direct effects of parent trust in school on student academic performance.

Problem Statement

Schools serving low socioeconomic, diverse, and densely populated communities tend to have a higher percentage of low performing students than those schools serving higher socioeconomic status, predominately white, and more moderately populated communities (Brookover, Schweitzer, Schneider, Broody, Flood, & Wisenbaker, 1978; Tompkins, 2003; Eigenbrood, 2003). Low-SES communities do not have the funds to implement quality learning programs and quite often lack basic materials that contribute to student success. Low-SES schools often have high teacher and student turnover rates resulting in low cohesiveness and consistency, both important in schools (Young, 1998). Densely populated communities seem to have more students who get lost in the system (Gewertz, 2001) and feel no sense of belonging to the school. When these students need extra help or guidance, they feel they have no one to turn to because of the overwhelming size of the school and school system (Gewertz, 2001).

One variable that has been found to minimize these obstacles is parent involvement in school. Parent involvement has been shown to have a positive effect on

student academic performance. However, there is little theory or empirical evidence to indicate what influences the level of parent involvement in the school. One factor that shows promise is the level of trust parents have in the school. However, little is known about the effects of parent trust on parent involvement (Adams & Christenson, 2000). Also, little is known about the direct effects of parent trust in school on student academic achievement. This research will explore the relationship of community characteristics, parent trust and involvement in schools, and the consequences of these community characteristics and trust for student academic performance.

Purpose of the Study

There is some evidence that parent involvement can effectively overcome some obstacles to academic achievement like low-socioeconomic status, ethnic diversity, and population density. The review of literature will explore the importance of parent involvement. It will also examine the importance of parent trust in schools, building on existing trust literature, especially what is known about the relationship between parent trust in school and student academic performance.

Definition of Terms

Community characteristics are conceptualized and defined as the socioeconomic status, ethnic makeup, and population density of the community in which a school is located.

Trust, in this study, involves the level of trust between parents and the school in which these parents have children. Trust is defined as "…one party's willingness to be vulnerable to another party based on the confidence that the latter party is (a) benevolent, (b) reliable, (c) competent, (d) honest, and (e) open" (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999).

Parent involvement at school will be defined as: attending school functions, contacting the school, volunteering in the school, and assisting the student at school. Parent involvement at home will be defined as: proving educational experiences outside the school day, assisting the student with homework, and discussing the school day with the student.

Academic performance is defined as the aggregate performance of the students in the school as reported on the Academic Performance Index, an index of performance developed and reported by the state department of education in the sample's state of origin.

Conceptual Framework

This study is based on the "Relational Trust Theory" developed by Anthony Bryk and Barbara Schneider and based on their research on schools in Chicago Public Schools. This theory describes how participants in schools enact an "interrelated set of mutual obligations with one another" (Bryk & Schneider, 2003, p. 34). For example, parents have certain behavioral expectations for school personnel. When these school representatives act consistently with these expectations, trust is developed. The same discernment process is involved as teacher trust forms as teachers see parents meet or fail to meet teacher expectations for parent behavior. Bryk and Schneider (2003) identify four key criteria for "discernment" that form the foundation of relational trust: respect, personal regard, competence and integrity. Respect is shown through interaction "marked by a genuine sense of listening to what each person has to say and in some fashion, taking this into account subsequent actions or conversation" (Bryk & Schneider,

2003, p. 23). When social inequalities are evident, respect is especially important. Plainly put, social respect is having respect for others no matter their class or status.

The second criterion for discernment in the foundation of relational trust is personal regard, which involves behaving in ways that reduce another person's feelings of dependency and vulnerability. In any situation involving parents and other adults interacting in the interests of children, any of the adults may be dependent on others for information, support, and other resources. Bryk and Schneider (2003) note that anything one participant may do to offset another's feelings of dependency and vulnerability will affect the level of trust. Plainly put, individuals will avoid confrontation because they feel the other person will make matters bad or worse for them.

The third discernment criterion, competence, is a reciprocal feeling that both parties attempting to build trust are competent to do what is expected of them (Bryk & Schneider, 2003).

The final discernment criterion is integrity, the reciprocal feeling that both parties will keep their word and will be honest in their actions (Bryk & Schneider, 2003).

These four discernments must be present for relational trust to be present in schools (Bryk & Schneider, 2003) and for organizations/ schools to operate efficiently and effectively. The definition of trust used in this study is consistent with the Bryk and Schneider model of Relational Trust.

CHAPTER II

Review of Literature

Parent trust is important for schools to thrive (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000; Young, 1998). Coupled with parent trust is parent involvement in the schools. If these two conditions are present in a school, it will be successful (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000; Fan, 2001). The purpose of this study is to explore the effects of community characteristics on trust and parent involvement and the effects of parent trust and involvement on academic achievement.

Community Characteristics

Community characteristics affect many aspects of schools. For instance, the amount of money and the way that money is spent in a school are influenced by the community the school serves (Brown & Saks, 1985). Also, the number of policy changes that take place in a school is driven by the characteristics of the community that surrounds the school (Bernstein, 1992). These facets of schools in turn affect academic performance.

The characteristics of the community a school is serving will influence what goes on in the school. There are many characteristics of communities that have been shown to have an affect on academic achievement. Some of these characteristics are ethnic composition, population density, and socioeconomic status of the community. This section will discuss the affect these three characteristics have on academic achievement.

Community Characteristics: Direct Effects on Academic Performance

The first community characteristic to be discussed is the ethnicity of a community. The ethnic composition of a community can be conceptualized as the percent of non-white (non-Euro-Americans). Ethnicity plays a part in the academic achievement of students in the public school system. (Brookover et al, 1978). Hanushek (2004) found that having a high percentage of black students in a school adversely affects the achievement of black students. Low socioeconomic status and poor housing conditions, often associated with ethnic populations, will also have negative affects on achievement (Glaser, 2004).

Brookover et al (1978) found that ethnic minority students have to deal with the feeling of academic futility. High academic futility is the term used to describe situations when students "feel they have no control over their success or failure in the school social system, the teachers do not care if they succeed or not, and their fellow students punish them is they do succeed" (Brookover et al, 1994, p. 314). They do not feel they have control over their learning. Dornbusch, Ritter, and Steinberg (1991) also contend that

> . . . whites can take advantage of their advantages. African American parents who have preserved their family stability and attained a high level of education must fight a second battle: they must overcome the influence of general patterns of societal discrimination. (p. 565)

Achievement differences between black and white students have been narrowing since the 1980s (Hanushek, 2001). Family background changes hold the most potential for closing achievement gaps. As the education of each generation increases, the

achievement gap between black and white students has narrowed and remained relatively constant (Hanushek, 2001).

The second community characteristic likely to have effects on academic performance is population density. Very little research has been done on the effects of population density on schools. However, there has been ample research on the effects of the setting (rural, suburban, and urban) of a school. School setting is used as a proxy for population density because of the logical and empirical similarities between these ideas.

Although the setting of schools in suburban, urban, and rural communities has been studied, there seems to be no definitive finding about how population density affects academic performance. However, much has been written about the settings coupled with school size and the effects the setting and size have on the school. Research findings do seem to favor smaller rural schools (Tompkins, 2003). Tompkins (2003) points out that rural communities have smaller schools and that smaller schools generally have positive qualities that larger schools do not, including: better attendance rates, higher academic achievement, lower dropout rates, higher grades, fewer failed courses, greater participation in activities, less vandalism and violence, fewer behavioral incidents, and especially strong academic results for low-income children and children who are from an ethnically diverse background. These smaller rural schools also have a tendency to work collaboratively with the community to ensure a quality education for the students (Holland, 2002). Some rural schools are just as impoverished as inner city schools, yet the schools often have the benefit of a supporting community and the students have a better sense of belonging in the rural schools (O'Neal & Cox, 2002). This sense of

belonging translates into greater school activity and ultimately greater chances of school success.

Contrasted with some positive characteristics of small rural schools, urban schools may harbor some especially problematic characteristics. Gewertz (2001) suggests that large urban and suburban high schools tend to have students who are disengaged, violent, and likely to drop out of school.

School setting has an independent effect on the achievement of students; however, the socioeconomic status of the community coupled with setting will have a greater effect on the academic achievement of the students (Edmonds, 1979). Edmonds (1979) found that urban schools can be effective even if they serve high poverty communities. The differences that will make the school effective are: strong administrative leadership, a climate of high expectations, an orderly but not rigid climate, student acquisition of basic skills takes precedent over other school functions, the school energy and resources can be diverted from other business to further the fundamental objectives, and there is a means to monitoring student progress (Edmonds, 1979). Unfortunately, urban schools often do not have the elements Edmonds found that promote academic success.

Finally, the effects of socioeconomic status (SES) on academic performance are considered. The effects of SES on students and their families have been explored extensively with respect to academic achievement. Generally, scholars have found that the socioeconomic status of a community has powerful consequences for the academic achievement.

The most prevalent threat to normal academic achievement for individual students is poverty (Johnson, 2002). High-SES students usually attend schools that have more

resources, more money, and better learning environments. In contrast, students who attend low-SES schools are provided an education with fewer learning experiences and a lower quality because of the monetary deficiency (Metz, 1998). The inferior schooling of low-SES students results in lower achievement at a lower level than that of their high-SES counterparts (Metz, 1998).

Abbott (2002) also found that the effect of socioeconomic status on student achievement depends on several factors, including the size of the school and the size of the district in which the school functions (Abbott, 2002). There is a strong relationship between school size and district poverty when accounting for student academic achievement (Eigenbrood, 2003). When socioeconomic status is held constant, Alspaugh (2003) found that small schools appear to have an academic achievement advantage. If the socioeconomic status of the community is low, the size of the school has a greater influence on academic achievement. Findings in a study conducted by the Rural School and Community Trust (2002) support this notion, indicating that the higher the poverty level of a community, the more damage larger schools and school districts inflicted on student achievement.

Schools serving low-income and minority students are also less likely to offer extensive remedial program, advanced courses, or instruction that promotes active or higher-order learning (Heller, 2003). The absence of these support programs means there is no safety net that should be in place to ensure that students do not "fall through the cracks."

The National Center for Education Statistics reports that the number of children in high poverty schools is disproportionately composed of ethnic and racial minorities. This

same study cited evidence that students with the lowest levels of academic achievement are more likely to be found in high poverty schools (Tighe, 2002).

In a case study, Capper (1994) also found that student achievement is hampered in low-SES schools because parents in the community raise barriers to actions taken by the principal that could possibly help the school. Often

> . . . principals in low-SES schools were minimally involved and held low or ambiguous expectations for student progress. The complexity of community socioeconomic class and culture resulted in diffused school goals, difficulty in staff recruitment and supervision, and lack of teacher collaboration on curriculum decisions (Capper, 1994, p. 446).

These principals in low-SES schools are unwilling or unable (because of community influence) to bring about effective change in the school (Capper, 1994).

Firestone and Wilson (1989) argue that in schools where socioeconomic status is low, "family socioeconomic status is not only independent of school factors, but it also contributes to the very internal conditions of the school that mitigate against academic achievement" (p. 19). Firestone and Wilson (1989) also found that teachers often recognize the difficulties of working with low income students in schools and seek to transfer out of the school or the district. It is then difficult to keep experienced, effective teachers in these low socioeconomic schools.

Researchers recommend that larger schools and districts should be divided into smaller schools, especially where lower income students are served in urban areas (Rural and Community Trust, 2002). The primary purpose for advocating for smaller school and class size is to increase the academic performance of students in these low

socioeconomic districts (Brown, 2003). As mentioned earlier, Alspaugh (2003) found that academic achievement was related to school size and to socioeconomic status; such that, the larger the elementary school, the lower the performance of low socioeconomic students (Alspaugh, 2003). Howley (2000) also found that the less affluent the community, the smaller the school should be to maximize the school's performance. "The consensus is that students learn less and have fewer academic gains in larger schools if they are economically disadvantaged or the school they attend has students who are predominately economically disadvantaged" (Texas Education Agency, 1999). Low socioeconomic students who attend these large schools tend to get lost in the system. They feel no sense of belonging. Whereas, a smaller school will develop more personal relationships with the students and continue to keep the students engaged and interested in school (Gewertz, 2001).

Not all low-socioeconomic status schools are low-achieving solely because they are a low- socioeconomic status school. Edmonds (1979) contends that if a low socioeconomic status school is not a high achieving school, the fault lies with the leadership of the school. The hurdle of helping low-socioeconomic status students become academic successes can be overcome with proper leadership, setting high expectations of the students, and maintaining an orderly atmosphere within the school (Edmonds, 1979). He also maintains that it is not the socioeconomic background of a family that is to blame if a low-socioeconomic status student does not achieve well in school, but rather the school's response to the socioeconomic status of the family. The school does not have high achievement expectations for these students; therefore, they are not set up for success (Edmonds, 1979).

As seen in previous research, the characteristics of a community have direct effects on the how a school operates and functions. These characteristics also affect how well a student achieves in school. Schools in poor communities often lack even the basic essentials needed to operate effectively (Metz, 1998). If students are not provided with the basic materials needed in school, it is very likely they will not receive an adequate education. Also, student ethnicity can provide cultural barriers that constrain success. Often ethnic minority students have poor living arrangements and school may not seem important to them (Glaser, 2004). Population density diminishes the effectiveness of school. Areas with high population density have schools that are larger and less effective because the students often do not connect with the school (Gewertz. 2001). Lower population density areas tend to connect the community with the school in an effective manner (Holland, 2002).

Community Characteristics: Parent Involvement and Trust

The ethnic makeup, population density, and socioeconomic status of a community have an effect on the amount of parent involvement in the schools. Sui-Chu and Willms (1996) claim that the effects of ethnic makeup of a community on the amount of parental involvement seem to be minimal (Sui-Chu & Willms, 1996). However, they also found that the type of involvement varies by ethnic subgroup (Sui-Chu & Willms, 1996; Desimone, 1999). The three ethnic subgroups that are primarily discussed in research are: African-American, Hispanic, and Asian-American. African-American parents tend to be more involved with their children within the home (Watkins, 1997; Sui-Chu & Willms, 1996), but these families very rarely are involved in school functions and events (Sui-Chu & Willms, 1996). Hispanic parents are also very involved in the supervision of

their children in the home, but are not active in attending school events (Sui-Chu & Willms, 1996). Desimone (1999) hypothesizes that if parents of African-American and Hispanic students were to attend parent-teacher organization meeting, their children would be more successful in school. Asian-American parents are also involved in the supervision of their children at home, but rarely attend school events or communicate with the school (Sui-Chu & Willms, 1996). Thus, parents in the three most studied ethnic groups tend to restrict their educational involvement to home activities.

The effects of population density on parent involvement have also been studied with mixed results, largely due to the use of nonstandard definitions and measures of parent involvement. Some research findings show that rural schools have a higher level of parent involvement in schools than do suburban and urban schools (Yongmin, Hobbs, & Williams, 1994). However, this research defines parent involvement in terms of attending various school functions and noting that parents living in rural communities have few alternatives for social participation outside of the school (Prater, Bermudez, & Owens, 1997).

Prater et al (1997) found that parents in suburban, urban, and rural communities are basically equally involved but that the parents in the different communities are involved in different aspects of the school. Their research concurs with previously mentioned findings that parents in rural communities attend more school events, whereas parents in suburban and urban school stay involved in school by talking about school programs with children, attending school meeting, and interacting with teachers.

Lastly, research on the effects of the socioeconomic status of a community on parent involvement in the school and the home will be examined. It has been believed

that higher socioeconomic status communities have parents who are more involved in the schools (Hallinger & Murphy, 1986; Griffith, 1996). Hallinger and Murphy claim that parents of children in high SES school are heavily involved in most aspects of their children's schools. These high SES parents are able to offer more material resources at home and are able to supply their children with manipulatives and experiences that can not be offered by the lower SES parents (Hallinger & Murphy, 1986). Parents in high socioeconomic status communities tend to be more involved with their children by simply talking to them about their school experiences. Thus, these parents demonstrate the importance they attach to education and (Bauch & Goldring, 1995) convey their expectations of high achievement (Hallinger & Murphy, 1986). High socioeconomic status parents also benefit their children's education by transferring their expectations of high achievement to the school (Hallinger & Murphy, 1986). Some private schools, available only to high-socioeconomic status communities, require a high level of parent involvement. Catholic schools, for example, have a tradition of high parental involvement in almost all aspects of the school (Bauch & Goldring, 1995). In these schools, the tradition of parent involvement is institutionalized and has been perpetuated in the schools' culture.

Hallinger and Murphy (1986) found that parents of students in low-socioeconomic status communities are not as involved in schools as parents in high-SES communities. Low involvement often stems from low academic expectations by the parents in these communities (Hallinger & Murphy, 1986). Another reason that some low-socioeconomic status parents are not involved in their children's schools is that the

schools do not expect them to be involved and therefore do not offer opportunities to involve them (Hallinger & Murphy, 1986).

Although low-socioeconomic status parents traditionally are not directly involved in schools in some ways, low involvement does not necessarily mean that these parents do not care about their children's education. Quite often they are concerned, but because of a lack of initiative or invitation, they do not become involved in their children's schools (Bracey, 1996). This lack of initiative on the part of parents places the responsibility to involve parents on the school. Schools must work to get parents involved in the school. Much of the absence of parent involvement is due to the lack of programs to draw parents into the school (Epstein & Dauber, 1991).

Parent involvement is important for school success, especially in the arena of academic performance. Unfortunately, there are many barriers to parents being involved in schools. The characteristics of the community in which the school is situated may predispose it to failure. The ethnicity, population density, and socioeconomic status of a community sometimes constrain the school's efforts to involve parents.

Community characteristics and trust

Bryk and Schneider (2003) found that school size and level have a direct effect on the levels of relational trust within the school. Specifically, they learned "that relational trust is more likely to flourish in small elementary schools with 350 or fewer students. Larger schools tend to have more limited face-to-face interactions and more bureaucratic relations across the organization" (Bryk and Schneider, 2003, p.44). The stability of the community has an affect on the level of trust within the school. When the students and parents within a school are constantly moving, the level of trust in the school will

decrease or not be able to form because the social interactions of the teachers, students, and parents will not occur often enough for trust to be established (Bryk and Schneider, 2003).

Trust

High ethnic, high population density, and low socioeconomic status communities tend to have lower academic achievement. However, as some scholars have suggested, there may be ways to overcome the constraints of community characteristics and setting.

The empirical investigation of trust in organizations, and by extension, schools, has been somewhat hampered by the lack of consensus on a conceptual definition and consequent non-convergent, non-comparable research findings about trust (Barber, 1983). Mishra's (1996, p. 265) review of the extant trust literature revealed that empirical studies of trust suffered from their adoption of a unidiminsional conceptualization of trust. Several recent sources have urged the conceptualization of trust as multidimensional (Swan, Trowick, Rink, and Roberts, 1988; Butler, 1991). Efforts at construct validation by Swan et. Al. (1988) and Bromiley & Cummings (1993) have supported empirically a multidimensional trust construct (Mishra, 1996, p. 269).

Capturing the dimensions of trust inherent in the literature, and in his own interview data, Mishra (1996) defined trust as "one party's willingness to be vulnerable to another party based on the belief that the latter party is (a) competent, (b) open, (c) concerned, and (d) reliable" (p. 265). These multifaceted perceptions of the trustor (s) although distinct, converge to shape overall trust (p. 269).

Clearly, the notion of vulnerability is key in definitions of trust (Coleman, 1991; Deutsch, 1958; Mishra, 1996). The constituency of the other four perceptual dimensions

included by Mishra in his trust definition (competence, openness, concern, and reliability) is well documented in his review. Based on an even more recent examination of empirical trust literature, Tschannen-Moran and Hoy argue for an additional dimension, "honesty" (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 1999, p. 7; Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999). In their argument for including honesty, they cite the work of Butler & Cantrell (1984), Baier (1986), and Bromiley & Cummings (1993).

For the purpose of this study, trust will be defined as one party's willingness to be vulnerable to another party based on the belief that the latter party is benevolent, reliable, competent, honest, and open (Hoy, 1999). Benevolence refers to an individual's confidence that the trusted person will act to protect the trustor's well-being (Hoy, 1999). Reliability is the extent to which one can count on another to come through with what is needed to accomplish a particular task or objective (Hoy, 1999). Competence refers to the perception of the trusted party as having the skill level required to complete tasks or obligations (Hoy, 1999). Honesty refers to the perception of the other as accepting responsibility for actions and avoiding distortion of the truth in order to shift blame to others (Hoy, 1999). Openness is the perception of the other as willing to provide rather than withhold information. Trusted individuals make themselves vulnerable by offering personal information about themselves (Hoy, 1999).

Importance of Trust

Trust is present and necessary in all organizations. Like all organizations, schools need trust to operate efficiently and effectively (Bryk and Schneider, 2003). Hoy, Tarter, and Witkoskie (1992) relate and discuss the need for principals in schools to develop a climate of trust among faculty members in order to maintain and create effective schools.

In addition to the importance of trust among and between faculty, there is a need for trust to be developed between faculty and the students within the school (Hoy, 2002). Adams and Christenson (2000) show that trust is a vital element in establishing the relationship between home and school. Tschannen-Moran (2001) argues that trust developed within schools establishes a climate of collaboration. In turn, collaboration requires a sense of trust from parents, students, administrators, and teachers for positive outcomes in terms of academic achievement (Tshannen-Moran, 2001). Collaboration and trust must be present for positive school reform to occur (Kratzer, 1997). In order to make positive changes, schools need trust among and between faculty, clients, and community (Kratzer, 1997). It is the principal's responsibility to initiate trusting relationships through trustworthy behavior (Tschannen-Moran and Hoy, 2000). "Trust in the principal comes directly from the principal's collegial behavior, a climate of teacher professionalism that supports trust in general. Teacher professionalism combines with collegial leadership to generate a strong trust in the leader" (Tschannen-Moran and Hoy, 1998, p.348).

When parents trust the school and are involved with student learning in the home, Barnes, Mitchell, Forsyth, and Adams (2005) predict that these parents will also be involved in the school. Parent trust, when coupled with home involvement is important to keep parents active in the schools.

Trust and Academic Performance

The level of trust within schools has been shown to predict student outcomes (Goddard, Tschannen-Moran, Hoy, 2001). There are several ways that trust in the school organization can and will affect academic performance. One way is through collective teacher efficacy. There is a strong correlation between the trust indicators and collective

teacher efficacy and a strong correlation between collective teacher efficacy and academic performance (Forsyth, Adams, & Barnes, 2004). Also, faculty trust in clients (parents) facilitates collaboration between teachers and parents (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999). Collaboration will ensure positive communication between the school and home which will help to ensure student success.

Trust within schools can be affected by several factors. One factor that affects faculty trust is teacher morale (Smith, Hoy, & Sweetland, 2000). If faculty morale is low, trust among the faculty and principal will be low. Also, socioeconomic status has an effect on trust in schools (Goddard, Tschannen-Moran, & Hoy, 2001). The lower the socioeconomic status of a community, the lower will be the level of community trust.

Parent Involvement

Parent involvement is important to the academic success of children (Caplan, Hall, Lubin, & Fleming, 1997; Peressini, 1998). Although traditionally parents are more involved in the education of the children through the early school years, the benefits of parental involvement go through the entirety of the student's school years (Morrow & Wilson, 1961, Manitoba Dept. of Education and Training, 1994). For example, when parents are involved in the education of their children, they are less likely to drop out of school, more likely to have higher academic performance, and are more motivated to work in school (Manitoba Dept. of Education and Training, 1994).

Parent involvement can take on many forms. One primary form of parent involvement consists in setting and communicating high expectations to children (Morrow & Wilson, 1961). Parents who have high expectations have positive effects on their children's academic achievement (Morrow & Wilson, 1961).

Parents can also be involved by helping within the school system. There is evidence that parent involvement in the school helps students to be successful (Drake, 2000; Machem, Wilson, & Notar, 2005). Parents can be involved by volunteering at the school, communicating with teachers and administrators (Drake, 2000), and serving on committees. All these forms of involvement show children that parents care about their education and achievement.

Peresinni (1998) discusses the importance of parent involvement in the development of mathematics programs. This involvement removes misgivings parents have about the curriculum. Including parents in major decisions and reform activities within the school increases the likelihood of student success (Peresinni, 1998).

Parent involvement must also extend outside the school (Drake, 2000; Morrow & Wilson, 1961). It is important for parents to be involved in the home by communicating with their children about school activities and the work the children are doing at school and offering intellectual activities to enhance the children's learning (Xitao, 2001; Morrow & Wilson, 1961).

The consequences of parent involvement are quite broad, including enhanced achievement in subject areas such as: mathematics (Peresinni, 1998), reading, science and social studies (Xitao, 2001; Morrow & Wilson, 1961). Other positive outcomes include "better attendance, improved behavior, a higher quality of education, and a safe, disciplined learning environment (Drake,2000).

Machem, Wilson, and Notar (2005) found that parent involvement can make the effectiveness of schools increase. They also found that the amount of involvement can

be influenced by the school system. Schools need to be proactive in communicating the importance of involvement to the parents. Schools can also ensure parent involvement by

> . . . creating opportunities for positive communication among the school, parent, and community; reducing barriers that prevent parental involvement; and providing formal educational workshops for parents that will serve to increase the parent's ability to be more aware of their children's academic potential and aspirations (Machem, Wilson, & Notar, 2005).

In sum there are varied effects of community characteristics on parent trust and collaboration in schools. Lower parent involvement and parent trust can have an adverse affect on academic performance. When parents do not trust the school they tend not be active in the school. Academic performance may be reduced because parents do not attend school functions and consequently miss opportunities to communicate with teachers and administrators concerning progress of their children.

This paper investigates empirically the characteristics of a community that may have direct effects on academic achievement and indirect effects on academic achievement through parent involvement and parent trust in schools.

CHAPTER III

Rationale and Hypotheses

A Theoretical and Empirical Rationale

Although the effects of parent involvement and parent trust in schools on student academic achievement (when taking into account community characteristics) have not been studied together, current literature provides a rationale for exploring and predicting this relationship. The characteristics of the community a school serves has an effect on academic performance (Brookover et al, 1978; Glaser, 2004). Poor urban schools have a history of having less successful students than schools situated in higher socioeconomic communities and suburbs (Metz, 1998; Eigenbrood, 2003). Community characteristics also have an effect on the amount of parent involvement in a school. Poor schools with a high ethnic makeup will generally have less parent involvement than predominately white, upper-class schools (Hallinger & Murphy, 1986).

The amount of parent involvement in the schools has been shown to have a positive effect on the academic performance of students (Caplan, Hall, Lubin, & Fleming, 1997; Peressini, 1998). Students whose parents are involved in their education have a higher chance of being successful in school. The type of involvement is varied but includes: helping students with homework, volunteering in the school, attending school functions, and stressing the importance of education.

This study was designed to ascertain the effects of community characteristics on academic performance both directly and through parent involvement and parent trust of the school. The particular community characteristics that influence school trust will also be studied.

Rationale and Hypotheses

Because of the nature of the study, a path model was used to examine the relationships among the variables in this study. The path model allows the direct effects of community characteristics on academic achievement to be examined and also allows the effects of the community characteristics variables on academic achievement to be examined indirectly through parent trust and parent involvement.

This section contains a rationale for the first three hypotheses, which explore the relationship between the first community characteristic, ethnicity, and parent involvement in schools, parent trust in schools, and academic performance of students.

Ethnically diverse schools are faced with many challenges present in all schools, but seemingly magnified in these schools. Some of these exaggerated challenges are: keeping parents involved in the school, keeping attendance levels high, maintaining a safe learning environment for the students, and offering a satisfactory curriculum that will ensure academic success for the students.

Often parents are not involved in these schools because the schools do not offer sufficient planned opportunities that will draw the parents into the schools (Epstein & Dauber, 1991). The responsibility of keeping parents involved falls on the school. Developing and maintaining these involvement opportunities will keep the school and the home in constant communication and keep the parents informed and in touch with the

school. However, offering involvement opportunities to parents does not ensure parent involvement. Ethnic subgroups often face language barriers that widen the gap between school and home (Young, 1998; Siu, 1992). This language barrier is very difficult for parents who have a true concern for the education of their children. These parents feel left out in parent teacher meetings because of their inability to discuss their concerns with the school and school/home communication is often left up to the students.

Parent involvement is also hampered in these schools because of a sense of futility on the part of the parents. Ethnic sub-group parents often believe it does not matter what they do; there will be little or no success on the part of their children (Dornbusch, Ritter, & Steinberg, 1991). Sometimes, minority culture does not place great importance on academic achievement; therefore, the parents do not take the time to become involved in the children's schooling.

Schools that have a high percentage of non-white students also tend to have less academic success (Brookever et al, 1978). Glaser (2004) broadens this research finding that low SES is often associated with high ethnic populations, in turn often connected to academic achievement. Although these parents often are not involved in the school, they seem to stay involved in their children's education in the home (Sui-Chu & Willms, 1996). Sui-Chu and Wills (1996) show that ethnic minority parents work to assist and supervise their children in the home but tend to not be involved at the school.

Ethnic diversity in schools also produces a low level of parent trust, especially when a language barrier hampers communication (Young, 1998). Trust is destroyed or never develops because decisions are made that parents do not know about or understand even if they are informed of them. Also, trust is low in schools with high ethnic diversity

because of a lack of social interactions among and between parents, students, and the school. Social capital is low because transience among families prohibits the development of ties with the school. The absence of social ties causes the levels of trust between the school and home to be very low (Adams& Forsyth, 2006). Based on existing evidence and the rationale provided:

H1: As the proportion of non Euro-Americans increases, parent involvement at school decreases;
H2: As the proportion of non Euro-Americans increases, academic performance decreases;
H3: As the proportion of non Euro-Americans increases, parent trust decreases.

This section presents a rationale for hypotheses four through six. These hypotheses probe the consequences of population density for parent involvement in schools, academic performance of students, and parent trust in schools.

The setting of a school (urban, suburban, or rural) has an effect on many aspects of the school. One of the factors that is affected is the amount and type of parent involvement in the school. Rural and smaller suburban school parents are more involved than parents in urban schools (Sun, Hobbs, & Elder, 1994). The connectedness of parents and school is developed over time; suburban and rural schools' parents are rooted in the community and are less likely to relocate (Sun, Hobbs, & Elder, 1994). This high level of social capital will not only keep parents involved, but it will also maintain high levels of parent trust in the school. The parents get to know the teachers and administrators in the schools and communicate with them on a personal basis and frequently. However, in very large urban schools, parents can perceive teachers and administrators as out of

reach. The systems become so large that the connection between school and home is never made and trust is never established (Gewertz, 2001).

The setting of the school not only affects the level of parent involvement and parent trust in schools but it also affects academic performance. Smaller rural schools produce students who work more collaboratively and, consequently, they are more successful because they will work together to solve problems and to complete assignment (Holland, 2002). Furthermore, rural schools have more flexibility. Because of the smaller size, they are able to adapt more readily to student needs (Tompkins, 2003). These schools can adjust the curriculum, programs, or academic focus to produce academically successful students. Also, smaller rural and suburban schools have lower student-to-teacher ratios and lower enrollment. These two factors play a very important role in keeping students connected to the school and actively engaged (Gewertz, 2001).

Larger urban districts are not as able to adjust these variables to meet the needs of the students. Part of the problem is the mere size of the schools; also, urban schools are situated in communities that may not be supportive of schools and education. Furthermore, larger urban schools have students who are less connected to the schools (Gewertz, 2001). Many do not participate in extracurricular activities nor are they successful in academics. Often in smaller schools the students will feel connected to the school because the teachers know the students on a personal basis. However, in larger schools students may get lost in crowd. Students who are not connected to the school tend not to be as successful academically, and are at higher risk of dropping out of school (Alspaugh, 1998). Thus:

H4: As population density increases parent involvement at home and in schools decreases;

H5: As population density increases student academic performance decreases;
H6: As population density increases parent trust in schools decreases.

This section presents a rationale for hypotheses seven through nine. These hypotheses address the effects of community socioeconomic status and parent involvement in schools, academic performance of students, and parent trust in schools. The effects of the socioeconomic status (SES) are widespread. Schools with a high SES generally have students who will achieve academically (Dornbusch, Ritter, & Steinberg, 1991). Often in low SES schools, students are not expected to achieve and they are often criticized if they do attempt to work hard to succeed. Often, these students are not encouraged to be successful by their community and school personnel (Hallinger & Murphy, 1986). In high SES schools, the expectation to achieve and excel coupled with various other factors such as high faculty retention rates, have a tremendous positive affect on student achievement.

The socioeconomic status of a community will also have a systematic effect on the level of parent involvement in the schools. Parents in high SES schools volunteer more at the school and attend school functions; whereas, parents in low SES communities are minimally involved in the schools and in their children's education (Hallinger & Murphy, 1986; Bracey, 1996). McNeal (2001) also found that SES has a negative affect on parent involvement. He also notes that "when comparing comparable levels of involvement, those of lower SES simply get less for their involvement".

Trust is developed through positive social exchanges (Bryk & Schneider, 2003). When parents attend various functions at the school, social exchange occurs. It is through these social exchanges that trust can develop. Trust is less likely to develop among low SES parents because they attend school functions less frequently. Thus:

H7: As the socioeconomic status of a school decreases parent involvement at school and home decreases;
H8: As the socioeconomic status of a school decreases student academic performance decreases;
H9: As the socioeconomic status of a school decreases parent trust in schools decreases.

This section presents a rationale for hypothesis ten, predicting the interaction of parent involvement and student academic performance. Academic success of students is the ultimate goal of school. Parent involvement in schools assists students in their endeavors toward success (Drake, 2000). Parental involvement includes attending school functions, parent teacher conferences, school programs and engaging in activities at home. Not only is parent involvement in the school important, but parent involvement outside the school is also important for academic success. Parents should involve their children in intellectual endeavors, discuss school with the children at home, and set aside time for children to do homework (Morrow & Wilson, 1961).

Parent involvement is beneficial for several reasons. For example, parents who are involved are generally more open to new programs and changes that occur within the school and tend not to put up barriers that could prevent success (Combs & Baily, 1992). These parents are open to new ideas because they feel they have a partnership with the school and that they are working together for the success of their children (Drake, 2000). Parent involvement also shows students that parents are interested in their education and put a high emphasis on education (Fan, 2001). Thus:

H10: As parent involvement at school and home increases academic performance increases.

This section presents a rationale for hypothesis eleven predicting the interaction of parent trust in schools and student academic performance in schools.

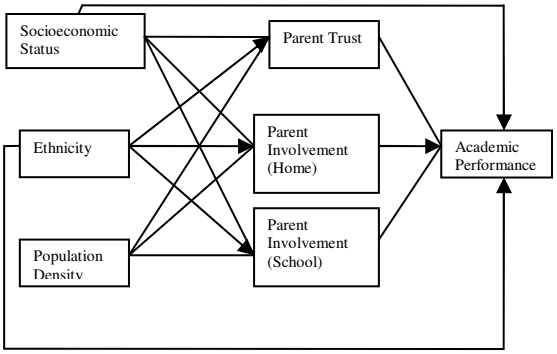
To maintain a school that is effective, stakeholders must work collaboratively. Collaboration requires, trust (Tschannen-Moran, 2001). If the various stakeholders in the school and community do not have a high level of trust in each other they will not be willing to work together. "At all levels of an organization trust facilitates productivity, and its absence impedes learning" (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000).

As noted earlier, parent involvement in schools increases student academic performance (Drake, 2000; Combs & Baily, 1992). If the parents in a school do not have a high level of trust in the school they will not actively participate in functions of the school. Trust is necessary for collaboration to occur and collaboration will increase the effectiveness of the school (Tschannen-Moran, 2001).

Also, parents who trust the school are more willing to embrace reform that takes place in the school (Bryk & Schneider, 2003). With parents supporting the school and the changes that need to be made in the school, the school will be able to operate more effectively and more efficiently. Thus:

H11: As parent trust increases academic performance increases.

Figure1: Proposed Causal Model



Method

In order to test the path model involving community characteristics, parent trust in schools, parent involvement in schools, and academic performance, the author and eight other researchers collected data from a random sample of schools in the northeast quadrant of Oklahoma. The participants in the study were principals, teachers, student, and parents of students in the schools. From the 836 schools in the northeast quadrant of Oklahoma stratified by level, 180 schools were randomly selected. Sixty of the schools were elementary, 60 of the schools were middle level, and 60 of the school were high schools. These 180 schools were located in 101 school districts within the 25 contiguous counties in northeastern Oklahoma. A team of nine researchers sent packets of information to the superintendents of each district. The packet explained the purpose and process of the research and included a copy of the OSU Internal Review Board approval, sample copies of surveys, and a district consent form. Before collecting data within a district, permission was obtained from the superintendent. The number of nonparticipating school districts totaled 34, leaving 67 participating school districts and a pool of 91 participating schools. After permission was obtained from the district superintendent, the principals of the schools were contacted. Despite district permission, not all principals agreed to participate in the study. Twelve of the principals from the 91

schools declined to participate in the study leaving a total of 79 participating schools. The sample of 79 schools consisted of 22 elementary, 30 middle level, and 27 high schools. The final sample of schools paralleled the Oklahoma state averages with respect to ethnic percentages and free or reduced lunch eligibility or SES.

Lists of students and teachers were obtained from the schools. The grade levels used for this study were 5^{th}, 7^{th}, and 11^{th}. These grade levels were chosen because in most traditional school settings, the students would have been in the school for at least one year. After a year in the school, the parents and students would have had a chance to form an perceptions and beliefs about the school The parent information was gathered from parents of students in these same grades. However, the teachers chosen to participate in the study could have been from any grade level in the school site that was chosen for the study.

From the list of regular teachers, 10 names were randomly selected using a table of random numbers to participate in the study. From the list of students in the selected grade, 15 individuals were randomly selected using a table of random numbers to participate in the study. It was possible, but unlikely, because of the random sampling procedure used, for students and parents of the same family, to be selected to participate in the study. The principal from each selected school was asked to participate in the study.

In summary, there were 41 subjects selected to represent each participating school. Ten of the 41 sampled subjects were full-time certified teachers, 15 were parents of students in the designated grade, 15 were students also selected from the designated grade, and the final participant was the principal of the school.

Conceptual and Operational Definitions of Variables

Ethnicity

The level of ethnicity in a school has been determined to have an affect on the level of achievement of a school. For this study, ethnicity is defined as the proportion of non Euro-Americans in a given school. These data were available from the State Department of Education using the 2002 School Report Card. All categories of ethnic minorities (non Euro-American) were combined to determine the level of ethnicity of a school.

Socioeconomic Status

In school research, socioeconomic status has been defined as the level of poverty that exists in a school (Eigenbrood, 2004). The socioeconomic status of a school has been shown to have an affect on the academic performance of students at all grade levels. Socioeconomic status was operationalized as the percent of students at a school site ineligible for free and reduced lunches. By using the number of students who are not qualified for free and reduced lunches we are able to derive a direct proxy for socioeconomic status (i.e. high level of SES equals high level of ineligible for free and reduced lunch). This information was obtained from the Oklahoma State Department of Education using the 2002 Oklahoma School Report Card (www.schoolreportcards.org).

Population Density

The population density of a district has been shown to have an affect on the academic performance of a school. For the schools in this study the information for population density was obtained from the National Center for Educational Statistics'

Common Core of Data. The Common Core of Data divides cities and towns into eight categories:

1) Central city of a consolidated metropolitan statistical area (CMSA) or metropolitan statistical area (MSA) with the city having a population greater than or equal to 250,000.
2) Central city of a CMSA or an MSA with the city having a population of less than 250,000.
3) Any incorporated place, census designated place, or non-place territory within a CMSA or an MSA of a large city and defined as urban by the Census Bureau.
4) Any incorporated place, census designated place, or non-place territory within a CMSA or an MSA of a mid-size city and defined as urban by the Census Bureau.
5) Place not within an MSA but with population of 25,000 or more.
6) Place not within an MSA with a population of at least 2,500, but less than 25,000.
7) Place with a population of less than 2,500 outside a CMSA or an MSA, and designated as rural by the Census Bureau.
8) Place with a population of less than 2,500 within a CMSA or an MSA and designated as rural by the Census Bureau.

For this study, the ranking order of the identifiers was reversed to represent larger cities with a larger number and smaller cities with smaller numbers thus, the larger the value, the greater the population density.

Academic Performance

The academic performance of a school is affected by a myriad of variables both inside and outside the school setting. For this study, academic performance was

operationalized as each school's Academic Performance Index (API) from the 2000-2001 school year (API Overview, 2002). The API score is derived by combining several factors. These factors include criterion referenced test scores, school attendance rates, and academic excellence indicators. For elementary and middle schools, 90 percent of the criterion-reference test scores from the 3rd, 5th, and 8th grades. The remaining 10 percent is based on school attendance rates. For high schools, 80 percent is based on end of instruction examinations for United States History and English II. Ten percent of the high school API is made up from graduation rates, school attendance rates, and dropout rates. The final 10 percent is based on average ACT scores, ACT participation, college remediation rates, and Advanced Placement scores. Each school's API ranges from 0-1500. The Oklahoma state average is 1000, and a perfect score is 1500.

Parent Trust

The parents who were randomly selected to participate in the survey at each site completed the Parent Trust of School Scale (Forsyth, Adams, and Barnes, 2002). For this instrument trust is defined as an "individual's or group's willingness to be vulnerable to another party based on the confidence that the latter party is benevolent, reliable, competent, honest, and open" (Hoy and Tschannen-Moran, 1999). The Parent Trust of School Scale is a 10-item survey. Each item is scored from 1 to 8 depending on the intensity of agreement or disagreement with the item. The higher the score the greater the amount of trust the parents have in the school. The scores can range from 10 to 80. Sample items for each of the facets of trust include: "This school keeps me well informed," "Kids at this school are well cared for," "This school is always honest with

me," "This school has high standards for all kids," "I never worry about my child when he/she is there."

The internal consistency coefficient alpha for the Parent Trust of School Scale is .95. The validity claim is enhanced by the fact that items were written from a parent's perspective and addressing the conceptual subtests validated by other recent trust studies. Results from this study showed this instrument's reliability alpha level at .97.

Parent Involvement

For this study, parent involvement was measured in two parts, namely parent involvement at home and parent involvement at school. The instruments used in this study consist of 12 items each with a Likert response set ranging from "Never" (coded as 1) to "Always" (coded as 4). For each subscale, individual parent scores range from 12 to 48 with a larger value representing a greater level of parent involvement. Sample items for parent involvement in school include:

- Do you contact your child's teacher?
- Do you chaperone for field trips?
- Do you volunteer to help with classroom activities?

Sample items for parent involvement in the home include:

- Do you listen to your child read?
- Do you help your child with homework?
- Do you study with your child for upcoming test/quizzes?

The parent involvement in school and home instruments were scored separately

Data Collection

The data collection process for this study was embedded in a larger study. Nine individuals were involved in data collection for the original study, which began in the spring of 2002 and was completed in the 2003 winter. Each individual collecting data for the study began with 16 target schools. The initial data collection began in the spring 2002 semester and was conducted in order to assess the data collection process. The return instruments gave information to the researchers that early contact with principals and consistent follow-up with non-responding individuals were necessary to improve the return rate for all surveys.

Formal principal consent was obtained by sending packets, which included the following: sample instruments, a project description, a copy of the approval, and contact information in relation to the study. Phone calls were made to the principals for further discussion regarding the research project and to gain consent of the principals to conduct the study in their schools. These principals were then asked to provide a list of students for the needed grade level and a list of all certified, full-time teachers in their building. The researcher, using a random table of numbers, selected ten teachers, fifteen students, and fifteen parents of students to participate in the study in the school. In some cases, where schools were uncomfortable providing whole lists of parents and students, a liaison at the school was instructed how to draw the required random samples and forwarded them to the researchers.

After individuals were randomly selected, the researchers either mailed or hand delivered the survey instruments to the participants according the preference of the principal at each site. Each participant packet included a survey instrument, an

explanation of the study, and directions for completing and returning the survey instruments. Student survey packets also included informed ascent forms for the parents to complete for the minor child, giving permission to participate in the study.

If the survey was not returned within 10 days, the research team then delivered follow-up instruments to the non-respondents. Follow-up instruments were delivered until there was a fifty percent return rate for each group in each school.

Additional school level data used in the study (school socioeconomic status, school level, and prior academic performance) were obtained from the state department of education. Specifically, the Oklahoma School Report Card within the Office of Accountability was used to identify the percentage of students qualifying for the federal free or reduced lunch program (the identifier in this study for socioeconomic status), the grade level configuration of the schools (school level), and the 2001 school Academic Performance Index (the school performance for the prior year number).

Data Analysis

The school was used as the unit analysis in this study. Data were first entered into an Excel database and then transferred into an SPSS data file in order to delete cases with missing values and to aggregate individual scores to the school level. The missing values were replaced with a series mean as long as less than 15 percent of data were missing. There were 18 parent instruments that were returned with no responses. Those cases were taken out of the sample. Once the unusable cases were taken out, the total scores were aggregated to the school level for each individual case in order to determine a school mean and standard deviation for the intervening variable of Parent Trust in

schools. School socioeconomic status was collected as a school level variable in this study and did not need to be aggregated.

SPSS was used to calculate bivariate correlations among all of the variables in this study. Next, multiple regression procedures were used to produce standardized partial correlations or path coefficients for each of the predicted causal paths in the model. Separate regressions for each endogenous variable and the dependent variable were necessary to produce the needed path coefficients to test the model. Ultimately the model permitted the researcher to test the direct effects of the three exogenous (community characteristics) variables on school academic performance as well as their indirect effects through endogenous variables (parent trust of school, parent involvement at home, and parent involvement at school) on academic performance.

CHAPTER IV

Results

The purpose of the results section is to report the specific statistical values that permit the researcher to determine the utility of the predicted causal model. This section contains not only the findings, but also a discussion of the underlying ideas that the variables represent. There are several questions that will be addressed:

- How do community characteristics affect the academic performance of students?
- Do community characteristics affect parents' beliefs and behaviors toward the school?
- What role do parents play in the academic achievement of the students in the school?
- Do parents' beliefs and behaviors have an effect on academic achievement?

The variables, questions and relationships will be examined in the context of the hypotheses presented earlier.

School Level Statistics

Table 1 includes the number of cases (schools), the means, and the standard deviations for each variable. For this study, parent involvement had two subsets: parent involvement at home (PIHome) and parent involvement at school (PISchool). The parent involvement at home variable includes such parent activities as helping students with homework, purchasing educational material for the home, etc. and the parent involvement

at school variable includes activities as attending school functions such as parent teacher conference, volunteering in the classroom, etc. If values were missing because of individual parent non-response, the case was not averaged in the school level aggregate.

Table 1: School Level Descriptive Statistics

	N	Mean	SD	Range
Parent Involvement (Home)	79	21.56	2.64	8-32
Parent Involvement (School)	79	15.43	2.07	7-28
Academic Performance	78	998.56	208.84	0-1500
Population Density	79	4.86	2.70	1-8
Parent Trust in Schools	79	57.64	9.81	10-80
Ethnicity (% non-white)	79	37.05	19.06	0-100
Socioeconomic Status (100-% eligible for free/reduced lunch)	79	53.27	23.57	0-100

Correlation Matrix

First, the bivariate correlations were examined to determine the strength of the relationships among all variables in this study. Pearson correlation coefficients allowed the researcher to examine both the sign and strength of relationships between all variable pairs.

The relationship between parent involvement at home and parent involvement at school had not been previously discussed. However, the study revealed a strong positive correlation between the two variables ($r = .69$, $p < .01$), as might not have been anticipated.

There was a positive correlation between parent trust in schools and academic performance ($r = .35$, $p < .01$). Also, the often demonstrated strong positive relationship between socioeconomic status and academic performance was reinforced ($r = .63$, $p < .01$). Also, Hanushek, (2001), and Brookover et al, (1994) earlier findings of the

relationship between ethnicity and academic performance were reinforced. There is a negative correlation between ethnicity (percent non-white) and academic performance ($r = .50$, $p < .01$). The expected negative correlation between socioeconomic status and ethnicity ($r = .74$, $p < .01$) was confirmed.

Table 2: Correlations among the school variables.

	PIHome	PISchool	AP	PopDen	PTS	Eth	SES
PIHome	1.00	0.69**	0.07	0.05	0.14	0.06	0.00
PISchool		1.00	0.09	0.01	0.03	0.07	-0.05
AP			1.00	0.18	0.35**	-0.50**	0.63**
PopDen				1.00	0.17	0.10	0.23*
PTS					1.00	-0.12	0.22
Eth						1.00	-0.67**
SES							1.00

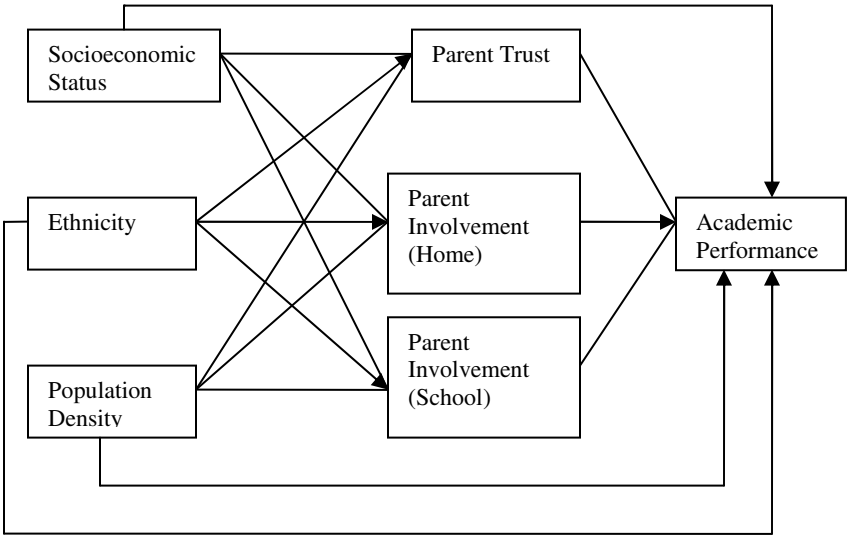
** Correlation is significant at the .01 level
* Correlation is significant at the .05 level
Key: PIHome = Parent involvement at home
PISchool = Parent involvement at school
AP = Academic Performance
PopDen = Population Density
PTS = Parent Trust in School
Eth = Ethnicity (Percent of non-white students)
SES = Socioeconomic Status

Path Analysis

Path analysis was used to test relationships among the variables. The Beta weights were used to explain the direct effect of each independent variable on the dependent variable. If a Beta weight is statistically significant, there is a direct effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable. Variables may not only have a direct effect on a dependent variable but may also have indirect effects on variables through mediating variable. These indirect relationships are known as indirect effects. Indirect effects are the product of the path coefficients for each indirect path linking two variables (Maruyama, 1998). If present, direct and indirect effects will be reported and interpreted.

This method of data analysis is especially appropriate for these data because the researcher examined the effects of the exogenous variables (community characteristics) on the endogenous variables (parent trust and parent involvement) and on the final dependent variable (student academic performance). Also, the direct effects of endogenous variables on the final dependent variable were observed.

Figure 2: Causal Model



In this section, the interactions of the path model are discussed and the findings are compared to the hypotheses stated earlier in this paper. First, the effects of the exogenous variable (community characteristics) on parent trust and parent involvement and on student academic performance will be observed and discussed. Next, the effects of the trust and involvement variables on academic performance will be discussed. Finally, all statistically significant relationships will be discussed. Hypotheses are grouped and discussed in sections related to the logic of the path model.

First, the direct effects of community characteristics on parent involvement in the home are examined. This discussion will address the following hypotheses presented earlier in the paper:

> H4: As population density increases parent involvement in schools decreases.
> H7: As the socioeconomic status of a school decreases, parent involvement decreases.

Findings related to these three hypotheses are included in table three.

Parent involvement in the home was regressed on the community characteristics: socioeconomic status, ethnicity, and population density. Beta weights for socioeconomic status, ethnicity, and population density and parent involvement in the home were not statistically significant.

These results imply that parent involvement in the home is not affected by the characteristics of the community the student lives in. These findings support previous research. In these data there is no systematic relationship between community characteristics and parent involvement in the home.

Table 3: Parent involvement in the home regressed on Socioeconomic Status, Ethnicity, and Population Density.

	β	T	Significance	
SES	0.17	0.94	p = .35	NS
Eth	0.18	1.03	p = .31	NS
Popden	0.00	-0.03	p = .98	NS
R Square	.017	NS		

Second, findings about the direct effects of community characteristics on parent involvement at school are reported. This discussion will address the following hypotheses presented earlier in the paper:

H1: As non Euro-Americans increases parent involvement at school decreases.
H4: As population density increases parent involvement in schools decreases.
H7: As the socioeconomic status of a school increases parent involvement increases.

The results are presented in table four.

Parent involvement at school was regressed on socioeconomic status, ethnicity, and population density. Contrary to previous research there were no statistical significant beta weights for the effects of socioeconomic status, ethnicity, and population density on parent involvement in the school. In these data, the characteristics of the community a student lives in has no systematic effect on parent involvement in the school.

Table 4: Parent involvement in the school regressed on Socioeconomic Status, Ethnicity, and Population Density.

	β	T	Significance	
SES	0.08	0.42	p = .68	NS
Eth	0.12	0.69	p = .50	NS
Popden	-0.02	-0.13	p = .90	NS
R Square	.007	NS		

Next, findings about the direct effects of community characteristics on parent trust in schools are reported. This discussion will address the following hypotheses presented earlier in the paper:

H3: As proportion of non Euro-Americans increases, parent trust in schools decreases.
H6: As population density increases parent trust in schools decreases.
H9: As the socioeconomic status of a school decreases parental trust in schools decreases.

The results are presented in table five.

Parent trust in schools was regressed on socioeconomic status, population density, and ethnicity. This regression shows no direct, statistically significant effect of socioeconomic status, population density, and ethnicity on parent trust in schools.

These findings contradict the hypotheses of this paper. This study predicted that communities with low socioeconomic status, high population density, and a high level of ethnic minorities would have low parent trust in schools. In this sample, parent trust in schools appears unaffected by the community characteristics.

Table 5: Parent trust in schools regressed on Socioeconomic Status, Ethnicity, and Population Density.

	β	T	Significance	
SES	0.15	0.84	p = .41	NS
Eth	-0.03	-0.15	p = .88	NS
Popden	0.15	1.19	p = .24	NS
R Square	.057	NS		

This section discusses the effects of community characteristics and parent involvement on academic performance including the following hypotheses presented earlier in this paper:

H10: As parent involvement increases academic performance increases.

The results are presented in table six.

Academic performance was regressed on parent involvement in the home, parent involvement in the school, socioeconomic status, population density, and ethnicity. As seen in Table 6, socioeconomic status has a direct positive effect ($r = .67$, $p < .01$) on academic performance. This finding supports previous research involving socioeconomic status and academic performance.

Contrary to this paper's hypotheses, there is no systematic direct effect of parent involvement in the home, parent involvement in the school, ethnicity and population density on academic performance. The school's ethnic proportion and population density do not have an affect on the academic performance of students. These are factors that were previously believed to have an affect on academic performance (Brookover et al, 1978; Tompkins, 2003).

Table 6: Academic Performance regressed on Parent Involvement at Home, Parent Involvement at School, Socioeconomic Status, Ethnicity, and Population Density.

	β	T	Significance	
PIHome	0.13	1.16	p = .25	NS
PISchool	-0.05	-0.42	p = .68	NS
SES	0.67	5.15	p < .01	
Eth	-0.03	-0.21	p = .83	NS
Popden	0.04	0.47	p = .64	NS
R Square	.501			

In this section the direct and indirect effects of community characteristics and parent trust on academic performance are examined using hypothesis eleven presented earlier in the paper.

H11: As parent trust increases academic performance increases.

The results are presented in table seven.

Academic performance was regressed on parent involvement in the home, parent involvement in the school, socioeconomic status, population density, ethnicity, and parent trust of schools. This is the same regression that was examined earlier with the exception of adding parent trust as a predictor. As seen in Table 7, parent trust in schools has a direct positive effect ($r = .23$, $p < .01$) on academic performance. Parent trust in schools

and socioeconomic status are the only predictors that carry statistical significance for the dependent variable.

Table 8 shows the indirect effects of SES on academic performance. SES is the only community characteristic to show a statistically significant effect on academic performance. SES not only has a direct effect, but also has an indirect effect on academic performance. The total indirect effect is relative small (.06). However, the indirect effect combined with the direct effect strengthens the significance of SES on academic performance from .67 to .73.

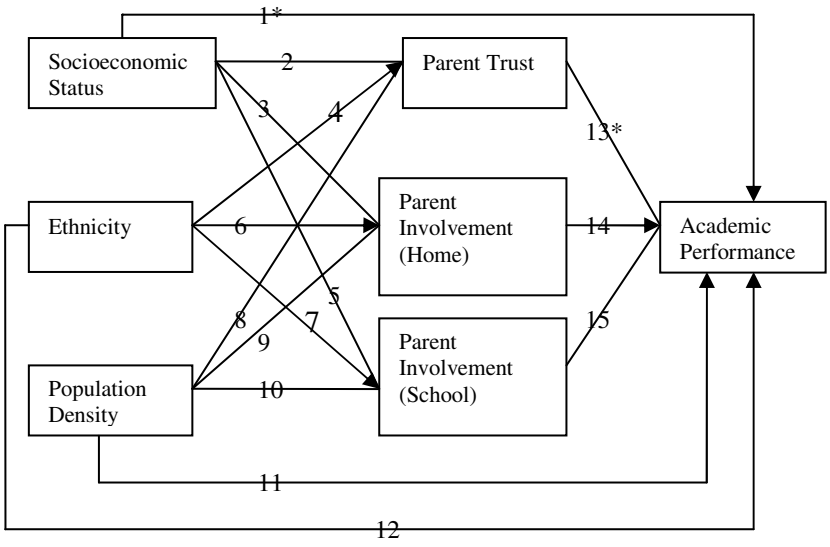
Table 7: Academic Performance regressed on PIHome, PISchool, SES, Eth, Popden, and PTS.

	β	T	Significance	
PIHome	0.13	1.16	p = .25	NS
PISchool	-0.05	-0.42	p = .68	NS
SES	0.67	5.15	p < .01	
Eth	-0.03	-0.21	p = 0.83	NS
Popden	0.04	0.47	p = 0.64	NS
PTS	0.23	2.28	p < .01	
R Square	.550			

Table 8: Indirect effects of SES on AP

DE	IE		TE
.67	via PT	.04	.71
	via PI Home	.01	.68
	via PI School	.01	.68
	Total	.06	.73

Figure 2: Causal Model with Beta Weights



Key:

1) .67 p < .01	6) .18	11) .04
2) .15	7) .12	12) -.03
3) .08	8) .15	13) .23 p<.01
4) -.03	9) .00	14) -.05
5) .08	10) -.02	15) .13

As was predicted earlier, these findings show that socioeconomic status has an effect on academic performance ($r = .68$, $p < .01$). Also, parent trust in school has an effect on academic performance ($r = .23$, $p < .05$). However, contrary to earlier research, these findings show that socioeconomic status, ethnicity, and population density do not have an effect on parent involvement in the home or parent involvement in the school. Socioeconomic status, ethnicity, and population density also do not have an effect on parent trust in schools. Also, these findings indicate that academic performance is not affected by parent involvement in school or parent involvement in the home.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to pose and test a causal model for academic achievement, focusing especially on community characteristics, parent involvement and trust. Past researchers have found that the characteristics of the community that a school is located in affect academic performance. For this research, community characteristics has been operationalized as the socioeconomic status, ethnic composition, and the population density of the community. While there is prior evidence that these characteristics play a part in whether students will be successful in school, these results suggest that community characteristics may not be as critical as previously thought. That is, of the three characteristics examined, only socioeconomic status of the community was a significant predictor of a school's academic performance.

Community Characteristics and Academic Achievement

The finding that socioeconomic status had an effect on academic performance was anticipated. Students from families with low SES often are low achievers in schools. This occurs for various reasons. One reason is that schools serving low-income students are less likely to offer extensive remedial programs, advanced courses, or instruction that promotes active or higher-order learning (Heller, 2003). These schools simply do not have the resources to provide the same quality education as higher SES schools. However, socioeconomic status is not a death sentence for schools. Edmonds (1979) states that the effects of low socioeconomic status can be overcome with proper leadership, setting high expectations of the students, and maintaining an orderly atmosphere within the school. The results of this research suggest that working to

develop the trust of parents in the school could also help to overcome negative effects of socioeconomic status on the school.

However, the finding that population density and ethnicity do not have an effect on academic achievement contradicts some previous research. Glaser (2004) found that ethnic populations, low socioeconomic status and poor housing conditions will have negative effects academic achievement. However, Glaser (2004) closely associates ethnicity with socioeconomic status. The research relates ethnicity to socioeconomic status and the two combined variables with academic performance. The research in this paper separates ethnicity and socioeconomic status. Therefore, socioeconomic status is controlled for in observing the effects of ethnicity on academic performance. Hanushek (2001) also found that the achievement gap between ethnic and white students has been narrowing. This closing gap could also account for ethnicity not having an effect on academic performance.

The zero order correlations show that population density and socioeconomic status and are correlated ($r = .23$, $p < .05$) and that socioeconomic status and ethnicity are negatively correlated ($r = -.67$, $p < .01$); however, population density and ethnicity are unrelated in this sample. When academic performance is regressed on the community characteristics, SES may be suppressing the effects of ethnicity and population density.

The diversity that is experienced by schools has long been used as an excuse to not having academic excellence. The results in this study show that although schools experience diverse populations and dwell in communities with various characteristics, they can be successful.

Community Characteristics and Parent Involvement

Previous research suggested that the ethnic composition would have an effect on the level of parent involvement in the school but not the home. Ethnicity was not predicted to affect home involvement; however, ethnicity was predicted to affect school involvement. These assertions of the negative affects of ethnicity on parent involvement in the home were not supported in the results of this study. The ethnic composition of a community had no effect on parent involvement in the home or at school.

The finding in this paper that population density does not effect parent involvement contradicts some previous research and agrees with some previous research. Yongmin, Hobbs, and Williams (1994) state that schools in a rural setting tend to have higher levels of parent involvement than schools in suburban and urban settings. However, Prater et al (1997) found that parents in suburban, urban and rural communities are basically equally involved in schools but that the parents in the different communities are involved in different aspects of the school. One difference in the previous research and this research is that previous research identifies community as three categories: urban, suburban and rural. However, this paper discusses community as population density by way of a more discriminating eight point continuum. The change in the scale of the variable could change the outcome of the findings. Although the finding that population density does not have a direct effect on parent involvement contradicts the previously stated hypothesis, it is consistent with some previous research.

Also, socioeconomic status was shown to have no effect on parent involvement at school or in the home. This contradicts previous research. Hallinger and Murphy (1986) found that parents of students in low- socioeconomic status communities are not as

involved in schools as parents in high-SES communities. This finding is unexpected because of previous research and the strong effect socioeconomic status has on academic performance. However, this finding does show that the effect of SES on academic achievement does not occur through parent involvement.

Community Characteristics and Parent Trust

Community characteristics also have no statistically significant effect on parent trust of school. This paper hypothesized that the characteristics of a community would have an effect on the amount of parent trust in the schools. This hypothesis was based partly on the findings of Bryk and Schneider (2003). However, the focus of the research done by Bryk and Schneider was on the size and type of the school and not the community. Since the focus of this study is on the characteristics of the community and not the school, the findings of this paper do not precisely parallel the findings of Bryk and Schneider. Bryk and Schneider (2003) found that school size has a direct effect on the amount of relational trust present in schools, however, school size does not necessarily indicate community size.

Parent Involvement

It has been previously found that if parents are involved in their children's education, they will be more successful in school (Caplan, Hall, Lubin, & Flemin, 1997: Peressini, 1998). Although this relationship may hold true for individual students; at the school level, this hypothesis is not supported.

Parents attending school functions, teacher conferences, and helping students with their homework is not related to academic performance in this sample. It can be asked why previous research has so strongly supported parent involvement and this study

shows parent involvement having no significant effect on academic performance. One explanation is that parent trust and parent involvement have not been studied together previously. The greater power of the parent trust of school variable may overshadow the significance of parent involvement. Another possibility is that the measure of parent involvement in most studies does not give adequate information concerning the attitude of the parent while being involved in the school. For example, visiting the school does not ensure a child's academic success if the parent is visiting to argue or complain to the teachers and administrators. In this instance, is more likely that the parent's presence at school is counterproductive because of his/her negative attitude, which may be passed on to the child at home. If the students do not have positive attitudes about school, then they will not strive to be successful. However, if parents are genuinely concerned about education, attend meetings, are active in the school, and have positive attitudes toward the school, their children will then be successful.

It is possible that researchers and school administrators have been overlooking the attitude of the parents in regards to involvement. The results of this study show that parent involvement without parent trust is not productive. Parent trust is the transformative ingredient for parent involvement. When trust is present with involvement, together they appear to be critical causes of high academic performance. However, without trust, parent involvement does not appear to have a beneficial effect on academic performance.

Parent involvement has different connotations for different ethnic groups. Some culture groups value visible involvement in their community's schools. These are the parents who volunteer in the schools and routinely attend school functions. Other groups

believe that the work of the school is to educate children and they do not want to interfere with the workings of the schools.

Trust

For this study, trust was defined as one party's willingness to be vulnerable to another party based on the belief that the latter party is benevolent, reliable, competent, honest, and open (Hoy, 1999). Trust is often required for organizational success. Like other organizations, schools need trust to operate efficiently and effectively (Bryk and Schneider, 2003). Previous research findings are evidence of the importance of trust in the interactions among various school constituents. For example, Hoy, Tarter, and Witkoskie (1992) emphasize the need for principals to develop a climate of trust among faculty members in order to maintain and create effective schools. Tshannen-Moran (2001) claims that collaboration requires trust of parents, students, administrators, and teachers to secure academic achievement. This study contributes to our understanding by exploring how parent trust in schools advances student academic success. This trust will lead to greater collaboration within the schools (Tshannen-Moran, 2001) and the collaboration will in turn lead to academic success.

At the inception of this project, it was shown by some previous research that the characteristics of a community had an adverse affect on the academic performance of students. However, the findings of this research show that SES is the only community characteristic that affects academic achievement. The other community variables may have an affect on academic performance but the effect is not statistically significant. Although, SES is shown to have an adverse effect on academic performance, schools with low SES are not doomed to have low-achieving students. Parent trust in schools has

a statistically significant effect on academic performance. When a positive level of trust is developed between the schools and home, the negative effects of SES are diminished.

Recommendation for Future Research

This research was designed to explore the importance of parent education related behaviors (involvement at home and school), parent beliefs (in the school's trustworthiness) and the effects of community characteristics on these behaviors and beliefs, and the effects of these same behaviors and beliefs, especially on academic success of the school. First, it is recommended that, in the future, research on community effects on schools should exclude high schools from the sample. Typical high schools are less clearly tied to specific communities. High school students are drawn, often, from a wide array of communities having varying characteristics. Additionally, high school students underreport eligibility for free and reduced lunch, frustrating an accurate measurement of SES. A second recommendation would be to replace the community variable, population density, with school size. The assumption is made that the population density and school size are somewhat synonymous; however, this is often not the case.

A third recommendation concerns the study and measure of parent involvement. In this study and many previous studies, the notion of parent involvement has been observed, surveyed, and documented. However, a critical omission has been the reasons behind the "involvement". If a parent is visiting the school to be confrontational to the teachers and administrators, that involvement will probably not be beneficial to the academic performance of the child. Future studies need to examine not only involvement frequency, but also the reasons and possibly the attitudes of parents during their times of

involvement.

The inception of this study began before the enactment of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation. A final recommendation for future research would be a comparative examination of the effects of the parent variables (trust and involvement) on academic performance before and after the NCLB legislative requirement that emphasize school involvement. It should be noted that the relative levels of parent involvement recorded in this study were low. A refined involvement measure should produce more accurate and variable aggregate school scores that are more consistent with previous research and reason.

Recommendations for Practitioners

The researcher is a building level administrator. While conducting this research, many opportunities arose that afforded the opportunity to put the ideas included in this research into action.

The facets of trust examined in this study are: openness, honesty, competence, benevolence, and reliability. These facets, developed by Tschannen-Moran, and Hoy (2000), are largely consistent with Bryk and Schneider's "Relation Trust Theory" which has four discernments of trust: respect, competence, personal regard for others, and integrity. Practicing administrators familiar with these indicators of trust and should keep them in mind when dealing with the various school stakeholders. For example, Bryk and Schneider discuss that personal regard for others is clearly important when dealing with parents. In many instances, parents who visit the school are uncomfortable because they feel that they are out of their element. Often these parents are blue collar workers and dealing with school personnel, more particularly administrators can put them in an

uncomfortable situation. This is an opportunity for school personnel to build trust. When teachers and administrators are kind, helpful, and work to assist parents, their experience can be a positive one. This positive interaction will then begin the process of building trust between the school and the home. There are other things that can be done by the school to build trust. For instance, some schools require teachers to contact parents by phone calls, letters, or post cards. These interactions can develop the ties between the school and the home that will ultimately shape trust. Various communication technologies can assist schools in the development of trust. Many school use computers and the internet for teachers to maintain their students' grades, allowing parents to monitor their children's progress from home. This exemplifies the trust indicator, openness, by showing parents that the teachers have nothing to hide. It also provides evidence of competence in that the teachers are doing their required jobs by maintaining the students' grades.

To reiterate earlier discussion, administrators should understand the facets of trust and the relational trust theory. By becoming familiar with trust research, they will be able to develop practices within their own school system that will begin the process of developing trust or will further programs and actions that are already in place. School administrators should also develop a climate that is conducive to frequent positive interactions between the school and home. Frequent positive exchanges will foster parent trust in the school and the multiple positive consequences of a trusting environment.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Letter explaining the Research Process and Directions for Participation

Dear Parent or Guardian:

Oklahoma State University is conducting research on the causes and consequences of public trust in schools, especially as related to children's success in school. This important work can help improve public schools in Oklahoma. Your child's school has been selected as one of the 836 in NE Oklahoma for study. Your school district and principal have given us permission to seek your cooperation and we genuinely need your help. Yours is one of fifteen randomly selected school households.

Participation will take only a few moments of your time. We ask that you complete this 46-item survey and mail it directly to OSU in the postage-free envelope provided. Your name will never be attached to this questionnaire and once we have received your survey, all evidence that you participated will be destroyed. No one at the school will be shown your responses.

Thank you, most sincerely, for your help. We know you share our belief that Oklahoma's schools should be the best they can be. If you complete the survey, it is important that you answer ***all*** questions. If you do not want to participate, please return the blank survey and we won't send you another mailing. Any questions you might have may be directed to the researchers below. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Patrick B. Forsyth
Williams Professor of Educational Leadership
Phone: 918-594-8192
E-mail: forsytp@okstate.edu

Laura Barnes
Associate Professor of Education

Enclosure: Return Envelope

APPENDIX B

Trust in School Survey

(Parent Survey) Scale I

The items below permit a range of response from one extreme on the left (strongly disagree) to the other extreme on the right (strongly agree). By circling one number in each row, please indicate how you feel about your child's school. Circled numbers close to the "1" or "8" suggest more intense feelings.

Think about your child's school and respond to the following items.

	Strongly Disagree							**Strongly Agree**
1. This school always does what it is suppose to.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
2. This school keeps me well informed	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
3. I really trust this school.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
4. Kids at this school are well cared for.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
5. This school is always honest with me.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
6. This school does a terrific job.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
7. This school has high standards for all kids.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
8. This school is always ready to help.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9. I never worry about my child when he/she's there..	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
10. At this school, I know I'll be listened to.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

APPENDIX C

Collaboration Scale (Not used in this study)

Scale II

Please indicate the level of influence you perceive each of the following groups has over various decision domains by circling one number for each question.

Collaboration with Parents

To what extent do parents have influence over the outcome of these decisions?

	Not at All					**Very Much**
1. Approving extracurricular activities	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. Determining areas in need of improvement.....	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. Planning school improvement	1	2	3	4	5	6
4. Fostering community relations	1	2	3	4	5	6
5. Determining how to allocate resources	1	2	3	4	5	6
6. Resolving problems with community groups	1	2	3	4	5	6
7. Determining curriculum priorities	1	2	3	4	5	6
8. Determining how to comply with mandates, legislation, etc.....	1	2	3	4	5	6
9. Determining school rules and regulations	1	2	3	4	5	6

APPENDIX D

Parent Trust of Principal Survey (Not used in this study)

Scale III

The items below permit a range of response from one extreme on the left (strongly disagree) to the other extreme on the right (strongly agree). By circling one number in each row, please indicate how you feel about your child's principal. The closer the circled number is to the "1" or "8", the more clearly and intensely you feel about the item.

Think about your principal and respond to the following items.

The principal of this school…	Strongly Disagree							Strongly Agree
1. is good at his/her job	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
2. can be counted on to do his/her job	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
3. is well intentioned	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
4. is always honest.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
5. invites both criticism and praise from parents.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
6. is very reliable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
7. has high standards for all kids.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
8. is always ready to help	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9. treats everyone with respect	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
10. keeps an open door	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
11. owns up to his/her mistakes	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
12. knows how to make learning happen	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
13. is always there when you need him/her	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
14. is trustworthy.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
15. likes to talk to parents	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

APPENDIX E

Parent Involvement Survey

Scale IV

Please circle the number that best describes how often you are involved with the following.

Never	**Occasionally**	**Frequently**	**Always**
1	**2**	**3**	**4**

1.	Do you attend the following:				
	Open House.....	1	2	3	4
	Parent/teacher Conferences.....	1	2	3	4
	Extra Curricular Events.....	1	2	3	4
	PTA Meetings	1	2	3	4
2.	Do you contact your child's teacher?.....	1	2	3	4
3.	Do you contact the school's principal?	1	2	3	4
4.	Do you chaperone for field trips?.....	1	2	3	4
5.	Do you volunteer to help with classroom activities?.....	1	2	3	4
6.	Do you go to the library with your child?	1	2	3	4
7.	Do you purchase educational materials to assist your child with school?.....	1	2	3	4
8.	Do you read with your child?.....	1	2	3	4
9.	Do you listen to your child read?	1	2	3	4
10.	Do you discuss the school day with your child?.....	1	2	3	4
11.	Do you help your child with homework?.....	1	2	3	4
12.	Do you study with your child for upcoming tests/quizzes?.....	1	2	3	4

APPENDIX F

Follow-up Letter

January/February 2003

A few weeks ago you received a research instrument from Oklahoma State University. If you still have this instrument please complete it and send it back to OSU-Tulsa via the return envelope. If you misplaced the instrument, please complete the accompanying instrument and return it to OSU-Tulsa. If you choose not to participate in the research, please return the instrument with a statement indicating that you do not desire to participate, we will stop contacting you for follow-up purposes. We thank you in advance for your time and support of this important research study over the causes, consequences, and effects of trust in schools.

Sincerely,

VITA

David Leon Wilkins, Jr.

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Dissertation: THE EFFECT OF COMMUNITY TYPE, PARENT TRUST AND PARENT INVOLVMENT IN SCHOOLS ON ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

Major Field: Education Administration

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born in Pryor, Oklahoma, on June 27, 1975, the son of David and Geneva Wilkins.

Education: Graduated from William Bradford Christian School, Pryor, Oklahoma, May 1994; received Bachelor of Science degree in Education from Northeastern State University, Tahlequah, Oklahoma in May 1998; completed requirement for the Master of Education degree in School Administration from Northeastern State University, Tahlequah, Oklahoma in May 2000.

Experience: Middle school teacher Locust Grove, Oklahoma and Terrell, Texas 1998-2005. Upper Elementary Assistant Principal at Locust Grove Public School 2005 to present.

Professional Membership:
Oklahoma Association of Elementary School Principals (OAESP)
Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD)

Completed the Requirements for the Doctor of Education degree at Oklahoma State University in December 2006.

Name: David L. Wilkins Date of Degree: December, 2006

Institution: Oklahoma State University Location: Tulsa, Oklahoma

Title of Study: THE EFFECT OF COMMUNITY TYPE, PARENT TRUST AND PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN SCHOOLS ON ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

Pages in Study: 75 Candidate for the Degree of Doctor of Education

Major Field: Education Leadership

Scope and Method of Study:
Past research on the effects of community characteristics has shown that community characteristics (SES, ethnicity, and population density) will have adverse effects on education. These characteristics were claimed to negatively affect parent involvement in schools, parent trust in school and student academic achievement. Previous research also claimed that parent involvement would have a positive affect on academic performance. There has also been a myriad a research on the various positive effects of trust within organizations, more specifically schools. However, previous research has not examined these variables together. For this reason, a causal model consisting of six variables– socio-economic status, ethnicity, population density, parent involvement, parent trust in school, and academic performance– was developed to test the direct and indirect relationship between the above variables.

Findings and Conclusions:
This paper examines the effects of specific community characteristics (SES, ethnicity, and population density) on parent trust and parent involvement (in the home and at school) and the effect of all variables on student academic achievement.

ADVISOR'S APPROVAL___Patrick Forsyth_____