PARENTAL PERCEPTIONS OF THE STUDENT ATTENDANCE REVIEW BOARD

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PARENTAL PERCEPTIONS OF THE STUDENT ATTENDANCE REVIEW BOARD

A Project

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Division of Social Work
Abstract

of

PARENTAL PERCEPTIONS OF THE STUDENT ATTENDANCE REVIEW BOARD

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Utilizing a case study approach, interviews of 4 parents who were mandated to attend a Student Attendance Review Board (California Education Code 48321, 48325) conference due to the truant behavior of their children were conducted. The data were analyzed to discover the experiences and perceptions parents had regarding SARB and relationships with school staff concerning their children’s attendance. The findings show a contrast to the intentions of SARB; parents experienced SARB as a poorly managed intervention while school staff lacked proper communication and knowledge of protocol in the utilization of district forms. Recommendations of how to improve SARB are stated.

_______________________, Committee Chair
Joyce Burris, Ph.D.

_______________________
Date
DEDICATION

In memory of my Father, Randy Allee, 1951-2009 who always encouraged me to take on a challenge, further my education, and stand up for what I believe. I know you would be so proud.
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Chapter 1

THE PROBLEM

Truancy is a social issue that plagues many public schools and families alike throughout communities across the nation. Therefore, there are many efforts made by school districts to find ways to keep students in school and to change poor attendance patterns. Administrators, teachers, and parents all try various approaches, individually and as a team. The California State Department of Education has a legal responsibility to the students which it serves, and therefore has created programs to improve student success and to combat truancy. This study focuses on one major political strategy; the implementation of the Student Attendance Review Board (SARB), as experienced by the parent of a child who has been deemed truant.

SARB is an intervention process, which became policy in 1974 that affects hundreds of California students and families every year. The general goal of SARB is to keep students in school and provide them with a meaningful educational experience by impacting these families in a way that forces the student to have near perfect attendance (SARB Handbook, 2002). An even more significant aspect is that SARB represents the last effort that a school district will make in intervening in the students’ specific situation, before sending the parents, and the students, to the District Attorney. If ruled against by the District Attorney’s office, the parents may be risking possible arrest for not adhering to mandatory education laws. Parents are held legally accountable for the attendance of
their children pursuant to Educational Code 48293. Thus, the SARB experience is a serious and emotional situation for many families.

The California Department of Education has created a State Student Attendance Review Board, which sets out sample policies for the public school districts to adopt in their SARB practices. The county offices of education or school boards have the flexibility in deciding how to mandate the policy in their district in order to best serve their communities. For this reason, each district’s SARB process manifests these procedures differently. The State has designed SARB to be a multi-disciplinary team of district administrators, the student’s teachers, principals or vice principals, law enforcement, school nurses, social services, a parent volunteer, the child and the child’s family including parents/guardians and siblings. Each of these representatives has specific information and perspectives on the student’s specific case. Once a student has been deemed truant their family may be referred to have a conference with SARB where they will review the student’s attendance history and create a set of directives for the family to follow in the next year. For various reasons, not all school districts have each of these representatives on their SARB, as they have the freedom to adapt the guidelines as they see fit for their districts.

Research on SARB across the state is nearly non-existent and the small amount of research that does exist lacks information on one vital perspective, that of the parents. The role of the parents is vital because of their relationship to the child and their legal responsibility of ensuring their child’s positive school attendance. In many cases, SARB
must focus on working with the parents and child as a family unit with the family functioning as the client for the intervention. However, because the parent has primary legal responsibility and influence over the attendance of a child, and is a separate entity from the child that influences the family system, it stands to reason that parental experiences must be studied separately. Furthermore, social work standards suggest that the client being served has a specific expertise on their situation and case, and that clients also have a responsibility for creating needed behavioral changes. For these reasons, this research focuses on the parents’ experiences and perspectives on SARB. This is in order to give parents a voice on an experience that they have in California’s public schools. This research will add to the small body of information which is used to evaluate the policy and provides school officials and administration with a better understanding of how to best serve families facing truancy issues.

For the purpose of this paper, it should be known that the focus problem is not that the SARB policy exists or the intent of the policy. Rather, the follow through and the effectiveness of the policy for the families it aims to serve, is the focus of the current research. The research questions for this study include the following: Is SARB effective from the view of the parents? Are the goals of SARB, as stated by the California Board of Education, being met from the point of view of the parents, considered an integral part of the client system for SARB? If the answer to these questions are no, then this follow through, also referred to as the SARB process is in need of improvement, according to this researcher, because the outcome creates high stakes for families’ autonomy. Family
autonomy is threatened by the risk of arrest, or removal of the child from the home.
While these outcomes may be determined to be in the best interest of a child and necessary, the process of intervening with these families should adhere to specific ethical standards.

Not all families easily adapt to the schedule of the school system. For example, a single parent who attends school, works nights, and must get all three of her children to different schools by 8:00 AM is possibly going to have more challenges in adhering to the regular school day schedule than a two parent family who has one child and a mother who stays home. In other family structures older children may stay home to take care of a younger child when the parents are working because of a lack of social capitol or ability to access or afford childcare. Some problems that make regular school attendance difficult for families may be of a more serious nature influenced by medical or mental health issues, substance abuse, or exposure to violence. Due to the diverse population served in California’s public schools, there is a large variance in the way families conduct their lives and priorities. When serving these families, the process of the intervention should address each family’s unique situation and needs, while creating relationships with parents that create a true sense of partnership so that the intervention is perceived as helpful and respectful of their right to self-determination.

With all of this in sight, the larger problem is that we do not know the answers to the questions posed here about parental perception and understanding of the process, and that there is a gaping hole in the information gathered about SARB. This hole can be partially
filled by gathering more information about how parents experience this process and how they would be best served in a process that has intense threats to the family. Once we have more information on this specific portion of SARB and truancy intervention we will have more knowledge and a better understanding of how to more effectively serve families and students who struggle with truancy. This will also benefit all of the following who are affected by SARB; 1) Public schools which receive funding for daily attendance, 2) Educators who wish to know how to better resolve a problem with a parent of a child with truant behavior, 3) SARB councils in their approach method, and 4) The child and the education of the child.

Background

Before exploring research on truancy reduction and SARB, it is important to first understand the intervention’s intentions and how SARB became policy in California. SARB (California Educational Code section 48321 and 48325) became policy in 1974 when the California legislature became concerned about the number of truant students in the juvenile justice system. SARB was designed to divert these students from the judicial system by intervening before it became a legal suit and, therefore, heading off truant behavior at the school district level. Originally the California State Department of Education would have overseen this new policy and had a direct influence in the implementation of it in all counties across the state. However, within a few months, funding was cut and therefore, the responsibility of implementation was given to the counties. Because of this change, it became the responsibility of county school boards
and offices of education to design, run, and fund the SARB programs in their counties. Nevertheless, the California State Department of Education created the Model SARB program and the SARB handbook for counties and the districts within them to follow in order to run effective SARB conferences. According to David Kopperud, State SARB Chair and Education Program Consultant at the California Department of Education, it is through the Model SARB program where county and district SARB practices are reviewed (per personal conversation October 15, 2008). Here the State can guide the individual districts to implement SARB as it was designed. Other than giving incentives such as recognition as a Model SARB, the State does not hold SARBs accountable for complying with the education codes. That is the role of the county entity running the SARBs.

The SARB Handbook is produced by the State SARB committee. This committee includes representatives from the California Teachers Association, California School Nurses Association, School Social Workers Association of America, and County Child Welfare and Attendance Offices, and is headed by David Kopperud of the California Department of Education. This handbook is designed as a tool for local county and district SARBs to use as a manual to conduct meetings, arrange, and implement SARBs for the families they serve. This handbook, the *School Attendance Review Boards Handbook, Operations and Resources (California Department of Education, 2002)* includes a brief explanation of the development of SARB, the process of an effective SARB, and operational foundations for the local SARBs. It also includes information on
enforcing compulsory attendance laws, mediation programs involving County Probation and the District Attorney, sample documents such as letters to send home to families notifying them of their child’s truant patterns, referral forms, agreement contracts, and subpoena for SARB Hearings are explained. Finally it concludes with a one-page discussion on general community resources that local SARBs should pool into a resource guide in order to better serve the family who has been deemed truant. However, it does not contain examples of the promise written in the handbook’s preface, that the handbook will provide helpful hints on how to work with students and their parents or guardians.

Statement of the Research Problem

The primary research problem is that there is a lack of knowledge on the affects of the SARB process in California, specifically on parents as partners in their child’s attendance and education, and the perspectives parents, who are required to attend SARB conferences have of the process.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to record and further understand parent’s perception of the SARB process. As previously stated, parental perception is imperative in providing services to this population in order to ensure the quality of the SARB process, and to better understand how this policy and the process of it is experienced by the parents who are mandated to participate. This study provides information on how to more effectively understand and work with parents with regards to the truant behavior of their children. It also provides information to increase understanding of the relationship between parents
and school systems. This information is compared to the intentions stated in the education codes on SARB and SARB handbook in order to measure parental understanding and experiences of the intervention.

Theoretical Framework

The SARB process brings about a team of professionals who require parents and children with truant behavior to attend conferences where the family members will be required to adhere to specific directives for the following year. If the family does not obey these directives, there can be serious consequences, as previously described. Theoretically, SARB conferences bring two realms together to work in the children’s benefit; the realms of the home and of the school. These realms compare to what is known in social theory as the private sphere and the public sphere, which is often equated to the female realm and the male realm. For these reasons, and the support to follow, this study is framed by Habermas’ idea of the Public Sphere, conjoined with the concept of inequality of relationships in Feminist Theory, and Feminist Organizational Theory.

Habermas’ theory of the Public Sphere was based on an in-depth look at how the European seventeenth and eighteenth centuries’ middle class, a class compromised mostly of educated propertied men, was constituted around critical argument which formed decisions of polity. These men conducted a discourse not only exclusive of others but prejudicial to the interests of those whom they excluded (Calhoun, 1992 p. 3). In his book *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, Habermas posses the question; at what point and in what social conditions will the public sphere allow the arguments of
mixed companies, such as women, and not their status, to influence political action and
decision (Calhoun, 1992)? Habermas eventually comes to the suggestion that the
inclusiveness of mixed companies led to the degeneration of the quality of the arguments
of the public sphere and discourse, yet he recognized that democracy requires inclusively
as does the nature of large-scale organizations, and that because society has moved from
an elitist public sphere to a democracy, going back to elite decisiveness makes progress
impossible. This researcher does not take opinion regarding whether Habermas was
correct or incorrect in his conclusion, but rather focuses on the idea that the Public Sphere
is dominated by the elite, educated, and propertied decision-making class excluding those
outside of their realm in decision making as the central theory extracted from Habermas
for this study. The theoretical framework basis for the current research utilizes this idea
of two spheres, to represent both sets of stakeholders in the decisions to be made in a
SARB conference. The idea of two realms of society forms a base for the other
theoretical thought used in this study; Feminist Theory.

The dynamics in SARB conferences and the relationship that the board develops with
parents is not specifically only a women’s issue, but a human issue, as it affects everyone,
not just women. Feminism views the assignment of the term “woman’s issues” as
problematic because the problems assigned to this category are issues viewed to be
“owned” or created by a lesser class in society, or an underrepresented group. Ashcraft
and Mumby (2004) challenge the view that “gender is a special concern limited to
women. Scholars have begun to consider gender as a deep-seated organizing principle,
Saying that an organization is gendered is to say that, “advantage and disadvantage, exploitation and coercion, action and emotion, meaning and identity are patterned in terms of distinction of male and female, masculine and feminine (Ashcraft and Mumby, 2004 quoting Acker, 1990, p. 146).” In this way, we can see the organization and follow through of the SARB process as gendered in such that it is demonstrated by masculine authority and the ‘work place’ mentality of the school district, or the Public Sphere vs. the feminine realm of the home and family participants who are seen as the lesser partner or the underrepresented group, the Private Sphere. Furthermore, because the population of this group of parents and family systems far outweighs the number of members on the Board, this under representation, and view of the population as lesser and feminine, becomes a human issue, not a women’s issue.

Although post-modern feminism may take the view that technology and modern science have dissolved boundaries between the realms (Wishermann, 2004), SARB’s structure has not. The composition of the SARB members gives additional testimony to the view that the parents and Private Sphere are secondary or of less importance and authority than the school personnel, or Public Sphere; that SARB has created a patriarchal power structure. This Board is compromised of multiple school district personnel (SARB director, principals, administrator and teachers), social services, law enforcement, and county or school nurses. All of whom are educated or “propertied” in a sense, with specified information about their field that relates to the SARB case at hand. Furthermore, each of these professionals reviews the case individually and as a team,
then, as a group confronts the parent as a legal force. This parent attends the meeting usually alone and does not necessarily have an advocate or ally. This group of educated professionals from the Public Sphere, have mandated the parent from the Private Sphere (who may or may not have the same education and experience as these professionals) to attend the meeting. The parent who, in the school district used for this study, joins the conference after the board is in the room, discussing their case. This dynamic of a group of well educated professionals confronting an individual on private issues, creates an oppressed, dominated role for that individual. When these parents are combined into a group to be studied, a dominated group is formed.

Again, the parents in this study represent the home life, or Private Sphere, explained as the woman’s realm (Wischermann, 2004, citing Bock and Duden, 1976). The school district, with many professional disciplines coming together to set directives for the family, is an example of the Public Sphere, also seen as the masculine or male role. In Habermas’ theory, Feminist Organizational theory and SARB, this relationship is hierarchical, with the public/masculine role as dominant over the private/feminine. Having one as more dominant over the other does not make for a progressive egalitarian working relationship as SARB intends (SARB Handbook, 2002). This formation of dominance of the Public Sphere over the Private Sphere exemplifies concepts in feminist organizational theory; “gender is an omnipresent defining feature of collective human activity, regardless of whether such activity appears to be about gender” and “gender is inextricably linked with power” (Ashcraft and Mumby, 2004, p. xv), as well as
Habermas’ theory of the Public Sphere; that organizations are gendered and oppressive by design (Calhoun, 1992).

The understanding of the home environment being viewed and treated as a lesser partner evidenced by its underrepresented presence on SARB, and the lack of information and research conducted on this population, is the theoretical basis for this study. Although feminist thought has posed differing theories and arguments regarding the spheres, and have shown how and why the boundaries may or may not be blurred, SARB still has polarized dichotomies which are evident in its hierarchical structure. These theories show that there are two realms in the SARB conferences, which are not of equal weight in working on the issue of truancy as the SARB handbook describes it to be. The structure of the SARB process is gendered and creates an oppressed group, therefore limiting the ability of parents to work with the Board members as an equal member of the team in their own behalf. This structure goes against SARBs intention of working as an equal partner in the intervention process.

Research Questions

The questions that this research is designed to answer are as follows. What are the parent’s perceptions of the SARB process? Is this perception of SARB consistent with the intention of SARB as the California Department of Education has stated? Are the experiences that the parents report consistent with the intentions of the California Department of Education? What was the relationship with school staff before and after
the SARB conference? And finally: How can the knowledge gathered here aid in creating more effective SARBs? These questions will be answered in a narrative form.

Definition of Terms

A few terms used in the remaining text of this study are defined below.

ADA (Average Daily Attendance): The total number of days of student attendance divided by the total number of days in the regular school year. A student attending every school day would equal one ADA measurement. Generally, ADA is lower than enrollment due to such factors as transience, dropouts, and illness. A school district's revenue limit income is based on its ADA. The state collects ADA counts at the district but not the school level (www.ed-data.k12.ca.us/glossary.asp). This number is used to determine funding for each school.

Compulsory Education: Each person between the ages of 6 and 18 years old is subject to compulsory education (EC section 48200). Children of these ages must attend a full-time day school with school hours as designated by the governing board of the school district.

EC (Education Code): The code that establishes the law of the state respecting the subjects to which it relates, and its provisions and all proceedings under it are to be liberally construed, with a view to effect its objects and to promote justice (www.cde.ca.gov).

Family Autonomy: The ability of the family to function in independent thought and decision from the school district or State. To remain intact and functioning as a system,
with the right to self-governance, self-determination and freedom from control of an outside entity.

In Loco Parentis: Latin for "in the place of a parent" or "instead of a parent," refers to the legal responsibility of a person or organization to take on some of the functions and responsibilities of a parent. Originally derived from British common law, it allows institutions such as colleges and schools to act in the best interests of the students as they see fit, although not allowing what would be considered violations of the students' civil liberties (en.wikipedia.org, retrieved 1/12/09).

Parent: For the purpose of this study the term parent shall refer to the natural parent, parental unit, or guardian of a child referred to SARB.

SART (School Attendance Review Team): Team of school support staff such as school nurses and case managers who work with the family, teachers, and other involved parties in order to determine the cause of truancy, educate the family on policies and laws regarding truancy, and aid the family in finding resources in order to alleviate the causes of truancy. This team usually works with the family before being referred to SARB.

Not all school districts have a SART program.

SST (Student Study Team): Team of support staff and the student’s teachers who come together with the family in order to identify resources needed for improving the student’s learning and behavior.

Truant: The California Department Of Education is very specific in their definition of a truant. Truant can be summarized as any student who misses more than 30 minutes of
instruction without a valid excuse three times during a school year. This student must be reported to the attendance supervisor or district superintendent (EC section 48260 a).

Assumptions

In reading this study it is important to first accept a few assumptions as true, as base information from which the study stems. The first assumption is that regular school attendance is important for a child’s educational success. SARB assumes that “school attendance is important to all staff, students, and parents (SARB Handbook, 2002).” Secondly, it would be overly laborious to justify truancy as a societal issue and should be accepted as such. Truancy leads to an increased school dropout rate, and is correlated with arrest and imprisonment, low-income rates for the individual, and other societal problems. Third it is to be assumed that all parents deserve to be treated with respect and have rights, regardless of their lifestyle and history.

Justification

When we as social work practitioners, or as professionals in any human service career such as education, aim to provide a service, it is ethically responsible to know the client’s perspective so that we are appropriately providing services needed, and doing no harm. This is justified in the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Code of Ethics. Social workers are to uphold the value of the Importance of Human Relationships through the principle of recognizing the central importance of relationships by engaging the people we serve as partners in the helping process, seeking to strengthen relationships among people in a purposeful effort to restore and enhance the well being of individuals
and families. According to this code, social workers are also expected to promote the sensitivity and knowledge about oppressed groups (Ethical Principle of challenging social injustice). Social workers are also expected to monitor and evaluate policies, the implementation of programs and intervention methods (5.02). Finally, a social worker has a dual commitment of responsibility to both their clients and the broader society (the parents and governmental entities who have established compulsory attendance laws in this case), and should work to resolve conflicts between these groups. When these ethical principles, values and expectations are combined, it is justified that the implementation of SARB and how it works with parents should be reviewed in order to gain knowledge of the clients’ experiences in order to reevaluate the implementation of the SARB process and ensure that the policy is not oppressive but is “enhancing the clients’ capacity and opportunity to change and to address their own needs” as consistent with these principles in the Code of Ethics.

Delimitations

As stated, this study is looking at one specific school district within California. This district and, therefore, study is affected by the choices made by the district on how to run their SARB process. This study does not review general truancy interventions or the overall effectiveness of SARB, yet focuses on the parent’s experience and role in the process of this one school district. The information discussed is not specific to every school district utilizing SARB, but should be used to look at the scope of SARB and its facilitation so that school districts and professionals involved in the SARB process may
perform services with scrutiny and hold SARBs across the state accountable to providing the best services possible.

Summary

The scope of truancy is broad, as is its impact on society and families. This research focuses on one aspect of truancy intervention; the California Department of Education School Attendance Review Board in one specific school district given the pseudonym Valley School District. This chapter has reviewed the history of SARB, its purpose and goals, and how it can manifest differently in each California school district. Terms that will be used throughout the following chapters of this study have been reviewed, as have the research questions. The research problem has been stated: there is a lack of knowledge on the SARB process in California, specifically on working with parents as partners in their child’s attendance and education, and the what perspectives the parents who are required to attend SARB conferences have of the process. The theoretical basis for this study; the inequality of Public and Private Spheres, has also been justified.

The following chapter reviews the literature on which SARB is based, literature on truancy published by the California Department of Education, and the effectiveness of other intervention methods similar to SARB. The literature review summarizes information gathered by other studies and articles in regards to the topics herein.
Chapter 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

SARB, as has been stated, is a California Policy that was originally created to be required by all public school districts in the state. It is intended to reduce truancy and the school drop-out rate by intervening in the specific situation of the child, holding the entire family; the student, parents or guardians and siblings, accountable for success and improved attendance. Though this policy intends to increase attendance days, and ADA money, there have been few studies done on this policy. While studies regarding different types of truancy reduction models show some positive progress in cost benefits and truant behavior reduction, information in regards to the quality of the process and what takes place within the families as they go through this course of action is scarce (Heilbrunn 2003, Kopperud 2006). To date, it is apparent that the state of California has not published any qualitative or quantitative studies of SARB, nor are there many independent studies of SARB published.

Due to the small amount of research focusing specifically on SARB and parents who have attended SARB conferences, this chapter will concentrate primarily on reviewing information produced by the state of California’s Department of Education on SARB, articles on truancy reduction practices, and the parent’s role in truancy reduction. The purpose of reviewing State literature, and Educational Codes is to understand the intentions of the SARB policy and how it is designed to work in various school districts.
as a basis for this study. Articles on truancy will also be reviewed to gather information regarding causes of truancy and effective reduction practices in order to extract an association between other practices and SARB, in lieu of actual studies on SARB. These topics include literature pertaining to the quality of the intervention of SARB are; the relationships between schools and families, specifically parents; and the impact of fear relating to legal discipline. However, many of these topics are limited as well. The literature reviewed here will focus primarily on state produced materials and material relating to the school-parent relationship.

*Information Produced by the State of California*

Because this study revolves around the affects of a specific policy, it is important to identify and understand the purpose and reasoning behind the policy at hand, as it applies to students, parents, and schools today. For this reason, this section is dedicated to reviewing information published by the State of California regarding school attendance and truancy. To begin with, the SARB policy as written on the public website for the California Department of Education (www.cde.ca.gov retrieved 7/24/08) is written as an intervention method. Described as a “safety net,” local school district and county SARBS are a means to bring an interdisciplinary team together to provide support for families who have one or more truant children, while reserving the authority to refer parents and students alike to the District Attorney to be arrested for breaking compulsory attendance laws. This explanation is kept simple, taking an intervention aspect and explains SARB
as a place where students and families can find connections to school and community resources that will help them solve truancy or behavioral problems.

The School Attendance Improvement Handbook published by the California Department of Education (2000), lists three categories of anti-truancy strategies; prevention, early intervention and legal intervention. SARB is listed as part of the Early Intervention strategy, which is defined as, “educational options to provide the best learning environment for students who are at risk for becoming truant (p.6).” This is further explained as an opportunity for students and parents to find remedies to the issues causing the truant behavior before going to the next level of legal intervention.

As with any budget dependant entity there is a bottom line in school districts and this is directly linked to school attendance. Schools rely on ADA dollars to keep the school functioning. If students miss one day of class, the school looses money that is needed to keep programs running. The wording of this fact in the handbook makes the intentions of the truancy reduction programs unclear. An example of this is how ADA is formulated. Students who attend school are referred to as “worth more” since the 1997 Senate Bill 727 (School Attendance Improvement Handbook, 2000). This bill created an adjustment for students who are actually in school, as opposed to those who have cleared absences due to illness. This legislation was enacted with the intent that the new calculation of ADA money will provide incentives for educators, health professionals, and social service agencies to work closely with families in order to raise attendance rates, therefore lowering truancy rates, and risk of students dropping out of school. However, by
wording this as a child who is in attendance as “worth more” than one who is not, the purpose of assuring attendance may be perceived as motivated by the money that the school receives instead of for the child’s opportunity to receive an education; a common complaint made by parents.

The handbook continues to site research published by the Crime Prevention Coalition (1996), which indicated that the most effective programs used by schools regarding attendance focused on addressing the underlying causes of truancy. These interventions included efforts that were based on partnership between schools, law enforcement, and social service agencies (School Attendance Improvement Handbook, 1996 p.10). The handbook then lists seven programs as examples of ways to reduce truancy rates by 10% each. The first suggested program is a Student Attendance Review Board, although having various components is required for true comprehensive truancy reduction.

This handbook of 86 pages sets out very direct ways of improving school attendance to be implemented by the districts and schools individually. Part of this is having a support team of social workers, psychologists, and school counselors to help remove barriers to attendance and the learning process. Further addressed is how to create school norms that share the responsibility of attendance, includes the community, extends the learning opportunities, and involves the parents. In the section of the handbook about parental involvement the first statement is, “Parents play the fundamental role in the education of their children (p.15).” For this and legal reasons, the parents are often the focus of the SARB conferences, although the students are present and addressed. The
two pages in this handbook regarding parental involvement has a list of strategies to build effective partnerships with parents, one of which is by supporting parental decision making and assisting in developing parents’ skills for leadership in school governance as well as advisory and advocacy roles. As many parents are not involved in organizations, such as the Parent Teacher Association, for multiple reasons, it is vital to reach them on this level via other means, such as exploring their perceptions of the policies in which they are mandated to participate.

As mentioned in the first chapter of this study, the State has published another handbook of a more specific nature. This is the School Attendance Review Boards Handbook (2002). This publication provides guidance for the operations of SARB and further explains the intentions and procedures of these conferences. Simply stated in this handbook is the goal of SARB, which is, to assist students and families in alleviating the factors that interfere with their compliance with this mandate of school attendance (p.2). In the section on the Process of an Effective SARB, the need to acknowledge the vital role of families and their influence in promoting school attendance is considered part of the prevention process. Here it is acknowledged that the parents and families must be included in creating a solution to the truant behavior of the student.

A key statement made in the second chapter of this handbook is that, “in order for interventions to succeed, students and families must view them as supportive, not punitive or judgmental (p. 4).” Shortly after, the authors recognize that this does unfortunately happen. It is stated that, “schools often use SARB as a last resort to
‘punish’ students and families who have not complied with school recommendations.”

When this happens SARB becomes minimally effective in providing a solution to the challenges of regular attendance experienced by students and families. As with any type of meeting or conference the chair person or leader of the session sets the tone and feeling in the meeting. The SARB Handbook reminds members of this and that they must be cognizant of the tone they are setting by keeping in mind that the purpose of the SARB is to help and not punish.

Because school attendance is compulsory, parents can be held accountable for neglecting or ignoring the laws and may face legal penalties. Education Code 48293 outlines the possible fines for parents not complying with compulsory education. These fines can range up to $1,000, however, the fine can be waived if parents comply with counseling or parent education class. It is important to also note that the fine can only become this high after three or more judgments against the parent, in conjunction with willful disobedience to pay a fine or participate in counseling or parenting classes. The final clause of Education Code 48293 (c) states that, “An order of contempt under this subdivision shall not include imprisonment (www.leginfo.ca.gov/calaw.html).” This appears to contradict the SARB handbook, which states that parents who are found to be in contempt of the court’s ruling can indeed be required to serve a jail term. However, David Kopperrud of the California Department of Education states that the intention in the SARB handbook is that a parent may be required to serve a jail term, not for willful
disobedience or even for direct disobedience of mandatory education laws, but rather for contributing to the delinquency of a minor (per conversation October 15, 2008).

SARB was created to redirect families with truant attendance patterns from the courts to the school districts for early intervention. The state produced literature was reviewed in order to understand what the California Department of Education expects from its public school districts in their efforts to intervene in truant attendance patterns. An understanding of how the SARB process works and the intentions of the program’s design will stand as a basis for the further research in this chapter.

Truancy Intervention Programs

State Superintendent, Jack O’Connell stated in a 2005 communication to district superintendents, “Just as decisions about instruction must be driven by data, so must decisions about drop out interventions (Kopperud, 2006).” Unfortunately, it appears that in California public schools, this is not being done to the extent of which the research can give undeniable understanding and knowledge regarding the effectiveness of the truancy reduction intervention of SARB. One reason given by researchers is that school districts have more overwhelming and pressing demands on their schools such as improving standards-based instruction and extremely strained budgets (Kopperud, 2006).

The National Center for School Engagement (NCSE) has produced a significant amount of the published information regarding truancy in the United States, however, much of it focuses on Colorado, as it is an initiative of the Colorado Foundation for Families and Children. Because they have produced such a large amount of information
that can be compared to SARB in proportion to other researchers, the studies of NCSE are reviewed in more depth than other information for this study.

The Court Approach to reducing truancy in Colorado is the most similar to California’s SARB intervention. Although SARB is not a technical hearing (there are no judges nor attorneys present) it does serve as legal notice to families that the truant behavior of their children is an infraction of the law, and coordinators reserve the right to send a family on to court. NCSE has produced a cost and benefits analysis of this approach (as well as two others model truancy reduction programs) to describe and understand the success of these programs.

The outcomes of the success rate varied at differing stages of the Colorado court approach to intervention, but the author was most confident with the finding that 62% of students who went through the court system began attending classes. The court magistrate’s calculated guess of all students appearing in court was that 30% of them were petition hearings; families who had their first time in court for truancy, (NCSE, 2005 p.18). It should also be noted that it appears that there has not been a longitudinal study of students with truant behavior done to provide an estimate of the likely success of truancy court encouraging high school students to graduate in the future (Heilbrunn, 2003).

SARB can also have an element similar to the Case Management Model as described in a variety of studies (Rodriguez and Conchas 2009, NCSE 2005, Spencer 2008). In the Valley Unified School District where parents have been surveyed for this study, there is
an intervention that may precede SARB. This is a Student Attendance Review Team (SART). In this district, SART is a team of social workers and nurses who provide case management services to families who are referred by schools. Each school district does this differently, but for the sake of this study SART is as described.

The Case Management Model in NCSE’s study focusing on the interventions made in Denver, Colorado, resembles the interventions and scope of a SART team. The Denver Case Management program has no specific duration for providing services and provides no specific goal for a success rate of the interventions of the case managers. Yet, those who are working directly with the clients estimate that about 50% of the students served improve their attendance, although their definition of “improved” is not given. In Denver, this model has a Student Attendance Review Board (also called a SARB) intervention process, much like Valley School District. The board consists of members of many of the same professions, such as a representative from the Police Department, Human Services, and other government or community service organizations. The board reviews truancy cases that case managers and schools have not been able to resolve with the families. The main difference between California and Colorado SARBs are that Colorado does not require the student to participate in the process; their attendance is voluntary. In California the student’s attendance at a SARB conference is mandatory, as is the attendance of any and all children living in the home or that are dependants of the parent of the referred child, regardless of his or her attendance patterns. In Colorado, schools choose cases that they feel would benefit most from SARB interventions. These
are generally students who are just beginning to develop truancy patterns who have supportive families and are thought to be willing to accept SARB services and correction. Other, more difficult cases are sent directly to court. In California, all students and families must be sent to SARB before being sent to court. SARB cases in California tend to be the more difficult cases with families who have not been responsive to the interventions of SART or other strategies performed by school staff. In the Valley School District, high school students are sent directly to SARB, skipping the case management approach. SART only receives referrals for elementary and middle school students however, if a referred student has a high school sibling, that sibling is also eligible for SART services. Because of the differing approaches in the Colorado school districts and the Valley School District, this researcher suggests that Colorado’s selection bias may be a strong reason for Colorado’s higher success rate. It is also important to note that some of this research was based on the educated guesses of the professionals working in these programs.

An additional difference between the two state programs contrasted here is the process of follow up. In Denver there is a social worker who provides support and follow up services for students who have gone through the SARB process. Meanwhile, in the Valley School District there are no services for SARB follow up. This usually falls on the school administrator who referred the student to SARB originally, assuming that the student has not changed schools. Occasionally a SART case manager will follow up with a family, but this is generally beyond the scope of practice. In California the follow up
process is dependant on how the school district would like to proceed with service. Both Denver and California legal detention is a last resort.

Court intervention may create a deterrent for some students because it creates the perception that the state is tough on truancy. Even though this has not been guessed or measured, NCSE mentions that “The tougher the court response to truancy, the greater the deterrent effect is likely to be (Heilburnn pg 17).” Other qualitative conclusions include the consensus that truant behavior is a symptom of a variety of other problems including poverty or economic hardship, substance abuse, mental and physical illness, inadequate housing, abuse or neglect, and that the case management interventions have made a difference in providing ways for the family to relieve some of these issues (NCSE 2005, Spencer 2008, Babcock 2009, Cameron and Shepard 2006).

Researchers agree that the varieties of attempts to reduce truant behavior are well worth the effort financially. For example, the findings of the NCSE study state that if the social workers for all three Colorado counties included in the study help only one child graduate from high school in a four year period, all efforts in that time period will pay for the costs that would have been paid by society (through public welfare, legal systems and correctional institutions) had the student not graduated. Per capita cost of interventions in Denver were $640, while per capita savings associated with high school graduation was $215,649. If every student who completed these programs graduated high school, total potential savings to other system is projected at $7,493,944 in Denver alone (Table 11, pg 21).
Also concluded is that children who’s siblings receive services will be benefited, and children who are better educated and grow up in stable environments are more likely to become better parents. Both truancy reduction programs and court interventions have proven to be monetarily valuable; “A problem solving strategy of the kind used by the (case managers) could be the most helpful in many cases of family dysfunction, while the threat of the immediate consequences of a court appearance - detention, loss of driver’s license, parent fines - is what is needed for other children (NCSE 2005, p.23).” Again, the author of this study acknowledges the surprising scarcity of research on truancy, and states that with out a longitudinal study of students with academic and attendance problems, effectiveness can only be surmised.

**National Demographics**

The national demographics of families who have students with truant behavior are nicely summed up in a different study by NCSE called Pieces of the Truancy Jigsaw: A Literature Review (2007). Although each state has different truancy laws, including various definitions and age requirements for compulsory education laws, the data of traits on truancy are important to understand the families that all truancy reduction programs serve. NCSE credits the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) with gathered statistics on these traits. Petitioned truancy cases (court approach) nearly doubled between 1987 and 1996 serving 40,000 children and their families (NCSE p. 2 From Snyder & Sickmund, 1999). Regarding why this happened NCSE states, “It is not clear to what extent these trends reflect an increase in the incidence of truancy versus an
increase in the propensity of schools to send truants to court. However, a national review of discipline issues in schools conducted in 1996-1997 found that school principals perceived student absenteeism and tardiness to be the two most serious problems in their schools (Fiore et al., 1997).

NCSE also brings the demographics together stating, “Data on 634 students served by seven Truancy Reduction Demonstration Programs funded by the OJJDP reveal the depth of the challenges faced by truant youth. 87% qualified for free or reduced lunch, 19% had individual education plans, indicating a need for special education of some kind, 15% had school discipline problems at program intake, and 13% had juvenile justice involvement at program intake – a high proportion considering 70% of the students were not yet in high school. 36% lived with only one adult in the home, and 20% lived with no working adult in the home (Finlay, 2006).”

These statistics lead us to understand that truancy is a symptom of underlying issues. A portion of these specifically show signs of poverty. Difficulties meeting attendance requirements are common in urban areas, and in low-income families (Spencer 2008). Other traits found in students with poor attendance are children of parents with a low education level and students who do not feel safe at school (Babcock, 2009). It has also been found that the families of students with truant behavior are characterized by having unhealthy family relationships such as parents who are less accepting, less consistent or ineffective in their discipline practices, and have significantly greater conflict within family relationships than non-truant families (Corville-Smith, et al, 1998). The specific
demographics for the Valley School District will be reviewed in the fourth chapter of this study.

*Home to School Relations*

An absolute and clear picture of what is necessary for educational success is made in the statement, “It is axiomatic that for education to be a successful enterprise, parents and teachers have to work together and relations have to be comfortable-not marred by distrust, fear, and recrimination (Public Agenda, 1999 p.9).” This brings about a major theme in this study: the relationships between family systems, and school systems and the quality there in. This statement is made as a given or truism, and should be taken as such for the basis of this study regarding parent perceptions and experiences with the SARB process.

For the scope of this study, home to school relations shall be defined as any primary family member or caretaker of a child, and the relationship that they have with any school employee, specifically teacher, administrator or other staff member: a multi system relationship. The independent research firm Public Agenda’s 1999 study *Playing Their Parts* states that, although there are cordial interactions between parents and teachers, “there are also compelling indications from this study that something is seriously amiss when it comes to parent-teacher relations (p.11).” This is found even though all documents reviewed for this study in regards to truancy note that parental and familial connection with the schools are at the core of truancy reduction and intervention. However, true partnership with parents is not limited to inviting parents to the school, or
court, or SARB conference, but rather that parents are asked for their input in the design of the intervention. They should be sought after as “clients of our public systems of care and as experts in the lives of their children. This means engaging (them) as a natural course of events, not just when things aren’t going well (NCSE 2005, p. 2).”

Although the research done by Public Agenda showed findings that parents and teachers both do not prefer parents to have a role in policies such as classroom curriculum, choosing teachers, or school governance, it did find that 50% of parents said they would be very comfortable in helping the school decide its policy on student behavior and discipline (p.13). Because attendance habits are behavioral habits and SARB can have an outcome of disciplining the student and/or the parent, it is fair to deduce from this information that generally speaking parents desire to have input on policies that directly affect them and their children, and that researchers agree that their input is necessary. In this report from Public Agenda, parent involvement is defined in regards to various activities. The study also produced quantitative findings of parent and teacher points of views regarding how parents should and should not be involved in public schools. Although many topics in this publication are not directly relating to the topic of attendance, a child attending school is the first and most direct way a parent can be involved in their child’s education; attendance is the first step of educating a child.

Many researchers state or suggest that a good, effective school district policy on attendance is reflective of the legislative intention in Educational Code Section 48340. This includes early identification and intervention, and “acknowledging the crucial role
of families in developing and promoting the solutions to school attendance problems (Kopperud, 2006).” The Tool Kit for Creating Your Own Truancy Reduction Program (2007), a compilation of many separate publications produced by NCSE grouped as chapters, includes a more recent NCSE publication; Truancy Prevention in Action: The Best Practices and Model Truancy Programs Executive Summary. This publication lists school-community collaboration as a critical component of effective drop out reduction. More directly related to this study is the critical component of Family Involvement, also listed in the publication. The consensus is that, “True participation means that parents/guardians are sought after for their advice, experience and expertise in the community, as clients of our public systems of care and as experts in the lives of their children (p.2).”

Furthermore, research has found that parents tend to contact and receive help from people outside the school staff and systems. When it comes to attendance issues, they reach out to friends, relatives, colleagues, and volunteers before reaching out to the school for help. In a Welsh study it was found that, on average, parents asked approximately six different people or professionals for help with school attendance matters. It was also stated that the information they received from these bodies was not only confusing but conflicting as well. The findings of this same study concluded that parents perceived the attitudes of the school staff to have a strong contrast to the voluntary sector, whom the parents highly valued, therefore supporting the view that
“educational staff need further training on how best to interface with parents and/or care (givers), especially on behavioral and attendance matters (Reid, 2009, p. 33).”

Reactance to Authority

In agreement with the second portion of the quote from the afore-mentioned 1999 Public Agenda article, parent and school relations “have to be comfortable-not marred by distrust, fear, and recrimination,” this section will look more deeply into how this fear may affect parents who are facing the threat of loosing their parenting rights. This is of concern to this study because, a feeling of resentment is linked to truancy causes, as listed in the School Attendance Improvement Handbook published by the California Department of Education (2000). The handbook does not further describe this phenomenon to explain who feels this (parents, child, or both), or why they feel it, however, this underlying cause is worthy of exploration in this study as it pertains to the family system and educator relationship, and the way parents react to them.

People have various reactions to situations dependant upon level of threat. Psychological Reactance Theory (PRT) is the theory that every person has a set of deeply held freedoms to which they feel a strong sense of entitlement. When these freedoms are threatened we react in order to protect our freedom and right to the behaviors that are linked to them. This theory predicts that people, when they perceive their freedoms to be threatened, will react by resisting coercive messages, engaging in the behavior that is threatened or restricted, act against the directives of supervisors, resist change in counseling or psychotherapy, or choose not to comply with physicians’ medical advise
This reactance occurs when the threatened person acts in a manner that attempts to restore or protect the threatened free behaviors; they become motivated to re-establish that freedom (Anonymous, 2007).

In SARB, parents are, in a sense, being told to change their parenting style and/or habits, and if they do not they may lose their freedom to parent. The threat here is to their inherent right to parent as they have determined is fit, a feeling that this researcher suggests is experienced by many parents as deeply rooted, with a sense of entitlement based in the right to self-determination. Furthermore, because of the design of SARB, these reactant behaviors listed in the PRT research can be related to what a parent may experience in a SARB conference. SARB attempts to coerce parents and children into changing their behavior regarding attendance, it also creates a set of directives that are written by a team of professionals who hold authority over their children and freedoms. SARB, having a nurse and sometimes counselors on the board, also sets out directives that students and parents must follow regarding their health and behaviors. Because of this, it is again reasonable to assert that SARB may cause reactance due to fear of a threatened free-behavior of parents, and therefore produce undesirable reactions from parents.

This level of reactance may also be heightened or escalated to the parents’ perceptions of SARB, if parents expect SARB to be an intervention that will work with them as equal partners in order to provide support to their families, yet their experience is dramatically different than their expectations. If the board and parents work together as
determined, reactance may be lowered. Conversely, if the board manages the conference as a panel that takes a role as the “expert” who then threatens the parent’s freedom of parenting, this has created a classic threat. In PRT there are three general types of threat. In the study done by Seeman, Carroll, Woodward and Mueller, the classic threat tested placed the threatened person in a subordinate role, when they had perceived themselves to be an equal. Because of the similarities to the research on PRT and the facilitation of SARB in the Valley School District, this researcher believes that Psychological Reactance Theory reflects on the possible behaviors and experiences of parents who are mandated to attend a SARB conference. Having the understanding that parenting may be a free-behavior threatened by SARB can aid in the understanding of parents in this study, and working with them in truancy cases.

Summary

This chapter has reviewed literature on SARB in relation to; the information produced by the State of California; similar truancy reduction programs; general demographics of this population; research on the relationship between the home and the school system; and finally the theoretical view of reactance, and how it can relate to parents who are mandated to attend SARB. It has been found that the literature suggests that children who have poor attendance patterns are likely to be living in poverty, and have other underlying struggles generalized as special needs, parents with a low-level of education, and poor family relations at home. The State produced literature says that SARB has been designed as an early intervention process where families should be able to find
resources to help alleviate these underlying problems leading to truancy. Additionally found in the literature is support from State produced and independent research that states that parental participation in developing policies and intervention processes is equally as important and useful as is the necessity of having the parents participate in the practice of intervention. Furthermore, when weaving together the literature reviewed herein, it is suggested that, although threat of consequences from the court can help in reducing truancy in some cases, punitive forms of intervention are often ineffective solutions and may cause reactive behaviors in parents due to fear of loosing their perceived right to parent as they see fit. This situation may lead to tension in the home and school relationship, which has been shown to be of vital importance in truancy intervention. The following chapter states the methods used in this study that are designed to add to the previously reviewed body of literature on SARB and the perceptions of the parents it affects.
Chapter 3

METHODS

*Introduction*

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the research design and procedures of this study. The following includes a description of the research design that has been chosen to explore the perspective of parents who have attended a School Attendance Review Board conference. The research is exploratory with the intent to add to the small amount of research about the process of SARB. The definition of the population studied is herein explained as well as the design for sampling and the methods of reaching the subjects for interviews. Additionally found in this chapter is a description and explanation of the original interview instrument used to gather data from the subjects, data gathering procedures, and steps taken to protect human subjects from potential risks due to the study.

*Design*

This is a descriptive, qualitative study of the SARB process as viewed by parents mandated to attend a SARB conference. This study used a non-experimental design. Using a newly developed interview guide that was approved by the California State University, Sacramento Human Subjects Committee, and the Valley School District Department of Accountability and Organizational Evaluation (see appendices for copy of interview guide and committee approvals), qualitative information was gathered through
telephone interviews. A limited amount of quantitative information was also gathered for demographic research of the subjects.

This research was conducted using a case study design with the goal of capturing descriptions of the experience parents have had with SARB in order to compare their experiences with the intention of the intervention. These interviews gather information regarding perspectives and experiences of parents who have attended a SARB conference. Continuing in the fashion of Grounded Theory, the study aims to openly approach the perspectives of these parents in regards to the SARB process.

This research is based on data collected from interviews with parents after the event of attending a SARB conference has taken place. This is ex-post-facoto or retrospective research with the events of SARB being the Independent Variable. SARB is the consistent link all subjects have in common, yet the experience of each parent is the dependent variable, for it is the changing variable that is being researched. Questions within the interview included perceptions of SARB before and after attending the conference, yet the measurement is taken only once, therefore this research is cross-sectional; a one time data collection.

*Research Questions and Variables*

Due to the nature of qualitative research, there is not a hypothesis for this research nor is there an aim to discover a relationship between variables. However, the questions this research aims to answer are; what is a parent’s perception of the SARB process? Is this perception of SARB consistent with the intention of SARB, as the California Department
of Education has stated? Are the experiences that the parents report consistent with the intentions of the California Department of Education? Answering these questions includes gathering information that contributes to an understanding of what parents see as the purpose of SARB, contrasting parents’ understanding of what is expected and required of them as participants in the process, and evaluating the parents’ view of the intervention of SARB in terms of its perceived effectiveness for their children and family. This research also asks how the parent perceives the relationship between themselves and the school staff. This information will be used in order to clarify parental understanding of the role of school staff in the SARB process.

There are a few demographic variables that have an effect on the outcomes of this study. These include family size, annual income, race and ethnicity, availability to be contacted by telephone, knowledge of educational setting, gender, and primary language spoken in the home. These variables can have an effect on which parents are available for an interview, possibly skewing the research outcome.

Other variables which can have an effect on the outcome of this study include the characteristics of the school district that was chosen for this research study and the time frame of the data collection; the fall semester of 2006. As stated in previous chapters, SARB is applied in various ways in the different school districts within the state, and, as the case was in the district where subjects were interviewed, the fall semesters have conferences that are carried over from the previous school year. Dependant upon the administrative staff that was employed at the time within the district and the individual
schools, and their knowledge and experiences with SARB, the SARB experience for each family can differ. An additional variable that can have a large impact on the study is the amount of time lapsed between the dates of the SARB conferences and the dates of the interviews. These variables will be taken into consideration when assessing the findings of this study.

Participants

As previously stated, the population of interest for this study is the group of parents who are mandated by various school districts within California to attend a SARB conference. In order to pool a sample, the author has gained access to the population of parents who have attended SARB conferences during the fall of 2006 in one school district. Again, for the purpose of anonymity, this district is referred to as Valley School District. This list of parents and guardians served as a sampling frame from which subjects were selected to contact for an interview.

The sampling method used for this study was systematic sampling where the number 8 was chosen for a random start for possible participation. Using the list of families who attended SARB, every 8th family was chosen as a possible subject who was then contacted to request an interview. If the parent chosen was not available for any reason, the next 8th family on the list was contacted. The goal sample size is 15 parents contacted and interviewed. The researcher planned to conduct more than 15 interviews if more were available in order to collect as much information as possible and to limit
exclusionary research practices. However, in the case that there were not 15 participants available, less than 15 interviews were planned for as well.

The inclusionary criteria for study subjects were as follows; participants must have been mandated to attend a SARB conference and they must have attended the conference in Valley School District during the fall of 2006. This study sought to interview a variety of parents, including parents of families who may have been resistant to the SARB intervention process, parents of families who were compliant, parents of families who did not follow through with the directives set out by SARB, and parents of families who did follow through with set directives. However, other demographics, such as ethnicity, primary language, age, and gender was dependant upon the subjects who were available and agreed to participate in the study.

The unit of analysis was individual parents, parental systems or guardians of school children age 6 -18 who had been mandated to and attended a SARB conference in this California school district. Subjects were chosen based on the list of families who have attended a SARB conference between August 1, 2006 and December 31, 2006. As stated, this list served as a sampling frame in order to select a sample of families to approach for interviews.

*Instruments*

Interviews were based on a newly developed interview guide (approved by the CSUS Human Subject Review Committee) specifically designed for this study. The interview guide consisted of 3 categories: Perceptions of SARB Experience, School Relations, and
Family Demographics, each broken into more specific questions (see appendices).

Questions were open ended with the opportunity for the researcher to probe for further information. The researcher, for the purpose of answering specific research questions posed by this study, developed the questionnaire used in the interviews. This instrument was developed as a guide by which the conversations should follow, but should not necessarily be scripted, or too specific. In the conversation both the interviewer and the interviewee have the opportunity to clarify the questions asked and the answers given, so that they are effectively communicating. By asking the questions indicated on the interview guide, the researcher may be able to discover if parents with children who are not attending school know about the SARB process and compulsory education laws before attending a SARB conference, the nature of the relationship between this family and the school staff, how they received the information about SARB and if the parents perceive the intervention to be beneficial to their child. By understanding these perceptions, the school districts that run the SARB process can have a view of how their work is perceived by the people they aim to serve.

The questionnaire guide also contained questions regarding quantitative data to ensure that the parent met the prescreened requirements of having attended a SARB conference between August 1, 2006 and December 31, 2006. The researcher utilized the questionnaire during the interview process as an instrument of gathering information regarding the subject’s experience of the SARB process. A Dictaphone was on hand to be used during the interviews in order to record for accuracy.
Because there was a possibility of obtaining subjects who have differing languages in which the researcher is not fluent, professional telephone translation services provided by 1-800-translate were used for communication purposes. This is a professional service that provides various translation services for personal or business needs. When the interviewer was connected with the interpreter, the interpreter was debriefed on the research and confidentiality requirements. Only the first name of the subject was given to the interpreter and the telephone number was given to a separate operator in order to connect the call. This company complies with confidentiality standards, which follow federal requirements requiring them to protect the confidentiality, security and integrity of information collected from customers (www.1800translate.com/About1-800-translate/Privacy.aspx). This research did not require any physical procedures, drugs, or pharmaceuticals. Telephones, interpretation services, postal services, and the original questionnaire were the only instruments used in this research.

*Validity and Reliability*

Validity and reliability of the interview instrument was reassessed each time it was used in the following ways. Before initiating the research, the instrument was peer reviewed by other student researchers and the researcher’s faculty advisor as an interview guide to be used with human subjects. Validity was again tested by verbally clarifying answers given by subjects to ensure accurate recordings of the interview and perceptions being gathered. Reliability was established by approaching each subject in the same way: via telephone, explaining the research, setting up a time to call for interview, sending
them the same information and interviewing each subject with the same interview guide. Additional efforts made to increase reliability and validity included use of a professional interpreter both during telephone communication and written communication; letters sent to families with date of upcoming interviews, and translated consent forms. Other methods to increase reliability and validity included availability of the researcher. Interview time slots were available mornings, afternoons and evenings on various days of the week so that working parents, or parents of small children, and other time commitments could choose the best time to be interviewed.

Researchers differ on definitions and even the existence of reliability and validity in qualitative studies (Rubin and Babbie 2005). Because this researcher sees that there are possible challenges to both of these in this study, she has aimed to keep methods consistent and clear so that the research is sound in reliability and validity. These challenges include the mood, environmental distractions, and circumstance of the subject when first contacted, and for some, the awkwardness of using an interpreter when the respondent is not expecting to hear two voices on the telephone. This latter situation can make the conversation awkward and less personal or comfortable, therefore possibly leading to inaccurate information gathered for that subject. Another challenge is the demeanor and attitude of the subject towards the interviewer, both when contacted for the first time and when being interviewed. For instance, the subject may be immediately deterred from being interviewed because of other experiences with telephone interviews or telemarketing; this may have an affect on the conversation between interviewer and
subject and therefore effect validity and/or reliability. Other challenges include the
interviewer’s experience with the interviewing process, clash or compliment of
personalities between interviewer and subject, inability of the subject to answer questions
due to not knowing or having an opinion or knowledge of the topic, or changed
perceptions of the SARB process due to being interviewed about it. In order to find valid
and reliable results the researcher has tried to keep the interview on topic, to clarify
questions and answers, and to reassess the interview guide for clarity.

Data Gathering Procedures

In order to begin this research, two detailed applications were required of the
researcher. Both the Human Subject Review Committee at California State University,
Sacramento and Valley School District’s Department of Accountability and
Organizational Evaluation have separate applications, which must be completed and
approved before any research can be done. This process took months before the research
was approved by both organizations; CSU, Sacramento and Valley School District. Once
the approval for research was granted, and the SARB coordinator at Valley School
District provided a list of possible subjects who meet the minimal subject criteria, the
researcher was able to begin the process of data collection.

The list of possible subjects, which was prescreened by the SARB coordinator served
as a sampling frame from which the sample of subjects were originally chosen through
systematic sampling with a random start. Once a potential subject was approached for an
interview, a brief explanation of the research was given. After the subject agreed to
participate in the research a request to sign a confidentiality form stating this verbal agreement to participate in the research was made, contact information and confirmation of attendance of a SARB conference was verified and a date and time for the interview phone call was agreed upon. The researcher then sent two copies of the consent to research form (explaining that subjects are not reimbursed for any cost of the research and that they will not receive any gifts or incentives for participating in the research) in the next day’s mail, along with a letter from the researcher with the date and time of the interview, two contact flyers for counseling, and a researcher addressed, postage paid envelope for the subject to return one signed copy of the consent form.

Once the consent form was received, the researcher called the subject on the agreed upon date and time. If the researcher had not received the signed consent form, the subject was again briefed on its contents, asked to read it, sign it and return it as soon as possible. If the subject at that point wanted to continue with the scheduled interview, verbal consent was given and the research interview began. If the subject desired to have more time to read and return the consent form, the interview was rescheduled. If the subject was not available at the agreed upon time an attempt to reschedule the interview was made and the interview was held at the rescheduled time. Once the interview was consented to, either verbally or in writing, the interview began.

The researcher started by thanking the subject for setting aside time to speak about their experience with the SARB process and asked if they had any questions before beginning. Once these questions were answered, the researcher again determined
whether the parent had been mandated to and attended a SARB conference. A few
demographic questions followed, then a section about parent’s perceptions before
attending SARB and after attending SARB, a section on school relations, and a section on
the outcome of the conference for their child and family. The interviews were allotted 40
minutes, though most interviews only took 20 minutes. At the end of the interview, each
subject was asked if they had any other information they would like to add and sincerely
thanked for their time and efforts towards this study.

Once the data was completely gathered, data was compiled and analyzed. A content
analysis was applied, looking for patterns, similarities and themes in responses to
questions as well as responses that deviated from the these patterns or themes. After the
content analysis was completed these findings were then compared to the California
Department of Education’s written goal of SARB in order to answer the research
questions. These finding can be found in the following chapter.

Protection of Human Subjects

The protection of the human subjects interviewed for this study is of utmost interest
and importance to the researcher. According to the School Attendance Review Board
Handbook (California Department of Education, 2002) the minute recordings of SARB
conferences, which identify the names of families mandated to attend a SARB
conference, is public record, subject to the inspection of any person, unless considered a
closed case (cases where another parent or involved person is not allowed access to
school records), therefore being accessible to the researcher. This study only contacted
families who had open cases between August 1, 2006 and December 31, 2006. The school district’s SARB coordinator, who has access to this information, provided the list of families who met initial screening criteria.

Both the California State University, Sacramento Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects, and the Department of Accountability and Organizational Evaluation from Valley School District approved this research process at the minimal risk level. Efforts made to ensure a minimal risk level include confidentiality of any identifying information of the subjects, and the school district. Informed voluntary participation was insured upon contact with the subjects when the researcher explained the research purpose and process to the subjects prior to the interview process. Each subject gave verbal consent at the beginning of the telephone interview stating that they understood the process and minimal risks of the interview process, and that they would be receiving contact information of two counseling centers where they may seek counseling if needed. Subjects were also informed that a written consent form would be mailed to them requesting their signature with a researcher addressed postage paid envelope for return.

Consent forms have been kept separately from interview notes and questionnaires. Interview notes and questionnaires do not have any identifying information on or within the document. Information obtained has been kept in a file within the interviewers home, and the interviewer will be the only person who has access to this information. At the end of the research, and upon the approval of the final researcher paper, the interview notes, questionnaires and tape recordings will be destroyed and disposed of.
Finally, it is important to recognize that this research process may also provide benefits to the subjects interviewed. These benefits include; knowing that they, as a subject, are participating in research that may have findings which can impact the SARB process at the school or district level and; that they may aid in the body of research that may impact a mandated policy within the State of California’s educational system therefore affecting other families who have had similar experiences with truancy. It is in the opinion of the researcher that a subject may mostly benefit from the opportunity to have his or her opinion heard and considered in the evaluation of school district policy because this research may be used in review of the SARB policy. This opens the possibility of change in the effectiveness of the SARB process, which may benefit future families who are mandated to attend a SARB conference and can provide a feeling of empowerment to the parents who have been interviewed.

Summary

This chapter has explained and reviewed the methods used in this study, which is a qualitative study of parents’ perceptions of the SARB process as compared and contrasted to the California Department of Education’s intent of this process. Parents interviewed for this study were selected by random sampling method, reached by telephone communication and interviewed using a newly developed interview guide. As stated, it is the aim of this study to answer the questions addressed herein regarding the intent of SARB as written by the California Department of Education. The procedures used to collect and analyze the data gathered in this study, as well as the efforts taken to
protect human subjects have been discussed in the preceding pages. This discussion includes how subjects were chosen and the methods used to request an interview with them, how their privacy was protected, and how information given was used. This chapter also reviews ways that the researcher aimed to keep the research sound in reliability and validity in order to produce quality research to be used in the field of policy for truancy prevention. The outcome of this study, including limitations in the research process will be reviewed in the following chapter where the findings of this study will be explained.
Chapter 4

FINDINGS

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to review the findings of this research as well as to utilize the findings in answering the research question stated in chapter one; what are parents’ perceptions of the SARB process? Is this perception of SARB consistent with the intentions of SARB as the California Department of Education has stated? Are the experiences that parents report consistent with the intentions of the California Department of Education? What was the relationship with school staff before and after the SARB conference? How can the knowledge here aid in creating a more effective SARB?

In order to answer these questions, the quantitative demographics are presented, followed by a narrative of the qualitative findings from the interviews, each with an interpretation of how these finding may represent the population and problem studied herein. Observations of themes and patterns in the responses to the interviews are reviewed and direct quotes from parents studied, are included to illustrate particular themes. It should be noted that, although the tables presented simplify the data collected, the findings written in narrative form provide a clearer understanding of parents’ perception. Therefore, this researcher finds the qualitative research to be the genuine findings of this study.
Once described, the data will be compared to the Department of Education’s intention of SARB. These findings will be added to the overall findings of this study, answering the second and third research questions asked above. Also addressed in this chapter is how these original findings fit into the literature reviewed in chapter two. Additionally, this chapter shows findings of how the new data supports the theoretical framework discussed in chapter one. The last research question will be answered in the discussion section of chapter 5. A summary of this chapter follows.

**Findings**

This study began with a contact list of 98 households, each with a parent who had been referred to SARB for their children’s truant behavior from the Valley School District in the fall semester of 2006. Some of the parents were not living together, which created a possibility of two separate contacts for each family, however the subjects interviewed were not parents or care givers of the same children. Although the study was set with a goal of 15 interviewed subjects, 4 were obtained. Therefore, in a sampling frame of a possible 98 contacts, 4% were collected.

It is also of interest to note that 44 of the 98 contacts had “wrong” telephone numbers or telephone numbers that were disconnected. Still, others had no answer, some had voicemail or other message machine, but those parents were still not reachable. Some of the possible subjects had multiple telephone numbers listed, such as work or cellular telephones. All telephone numbers listed were utilized in order to make contact with as many parents as possible. This researcher made multiple attempts, on various days of the
week, and at various times of the day, to contact each parent who was randomly selected before deeming them unreachable and moving on to the next 8th parent. Furthermore, a few parents did not keep their interview appointment times, or failed to respond after contact and agreement to be interviewed was verbally confirmed.

Due to the unavailability of the possible subjects, participants were not chosen based on stratified random sampling as designed. The researcher switched to availability sampling. In the end, diligent attempts were made to contact each of the 98 parents on the contact list, of which 4 granted an interview. It should also be recognized that a Dictaphone was not utilized as intended, and an interpreter was only needed once, and that interview was denied. Of all subjects interviewed, no language interpretation was needed.

*Secondary Demographic Data*

Before reviewing the statistical data collected in this research it is important to review the secondary demographical data collected by the California Department of Education. The table below shows information on enrollment and both the truancy rate and drop out rate in the state of California as well as in the school district studied.
Table 1  District and State Truancy and Dropout Data

For the 2006-2007 School Year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Student Enrollment</th>
<th>Number of Truants</th>
<th>Truancy Rate</th>
<th>Prior Year Dropout rate</th>
<th>4 Year Dropout Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valley School District</td>
<td>47,862</td>
<td>18,153</td>
<td>39.38%</td>
<td>955</td>
<td>19.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Totals</td>
<td>6,286,943</td>
<td>1,574,435</td>
<td>25.22%</td>
<td>65,690</td>
<td>14.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Information retrieved from California Department of Education, Educational Demographics Unit and Safe and Healthy Kids Program Office 10/13/2009.

It is evident in this data that truancy affects a large portion of students and therefore families within California’s public schools, and can be inferred that even though the legislation of SARB has been in effect for 25 years, truancy and the drop out rate are still relatively high. Additional information gleaned from this data is the high rate of families that might be referred, and subject to SARB.

Table 2  District and State Demographics for the 2006-2007 School Year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>African American Not Hispanic</th>
<th>Filipino</th>
<th>Hispanic or Latino</th>
<th>Pacific Islander</th>
<th>White Not Hispanic</th>
<th>Multiple Answers or No response</th>
<th>Free or Reduced Price Meals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valley School District</td>
<td>3,601 (7.5%)</td>
<td>635 (1.3%)</td>
<td>7,444 (15.66%)</td>
<td>385 (0.8%)</td>
<td>32,381 (67.7%)</td>
<td>371 (0.8%)</td>
<td>14,645 (30.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Totals</td>
<td>477,776 (7.6%)</td>
<td>165,480 (2.6%)</td>
<td>3,026,956 (48.1%)</td>
<td>38,733 (0.6%)</td>
<td>1,849,078 (29.4%)</td>
<td>170,038 (2.7%)</td>
<td>3,160,957 (51.0%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Information retrieved from the California Department of Education Educational Demographics Unit 10/13/2009.
The previous table shows student demographics by ethnicity throughout the state and school district in review. It also shows the data for students receiving free or reduced price lunches based on household income. This free lunch service is provided to students whose household income is less than 130% of the poverty level. Reduced price lunches are available to students whose family income levels are between 130-185% of the poverty level. For example, a family of 3 qualifies for the free or reduced price lunch program in the Valley School District if the household income is less than $32,560 annually (Ed. Code § 49510, as stated on district Application for Free and Reduced Price Meals 2009-2010 School Year).

Valley School District is not a reflective example of the state population as the demographics differ. The Valley School District student population primarily identifies as White not Hispanic, while the State shows a population as primarily Hispanic or Latino. However, both the Valley School District and the State of California show that the 2 primary ethnicities enrolled identify as White not Hispanic and Hispanic or Latino. Of further interest is the rate of students receiving free or reduced price lunches in both the district of interest and the State. This data shows that slightly more than half of children enrolled in California’s public schools are from low or very low-income families (below 185% of the poverty level), while approximately one third in the Valley School District are known low-income families.
Original Demographic Data

As stated, this study gathered information from 4 families who had been referred to SARB. Each of the 4 families qualified for the study by stating that they were a parent or guardian of a child age 6-18 who had been required to attend a SARB conference between the dates of August 1, 2006 and December 31, 2006. They also confirmed that they did attend the SARB conference. The following table shows original data of the demographics collected for these families studied.

Table 3    Demographics of Subjects Studied in the Valley School District

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family Ethnicity</th>
<th>Gender of students</th>
<th>Gender of subject</th>
<th>Marital Status and Family Custody</th>
<th>Household Income</th>
<th>Household Size</th>
<th>Mode of transport to and from School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parent 1</td>
<td>White/Caucasian</td>
<td>2 Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Remarried Full Custody</td>
<td>$70,000-$75,000 Annually</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent 2</td>
<td>White/Caucasian</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Married Full Custody</td>
<td>$100,000 Annually</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent 3</td>
<td>Mixed Race Family</td>
<td>1 Male 1 Female</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Single Full Custody</td>
<td>$22,000 Annually</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent 4</td>
<td>White/Caucasian</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Single Full Custody</td>
<td>$110,000 Annually</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This data shows that all subjects interviewed for this study were female with full custody of their children, had access to a personal car and identified as white or a biracial
family. The majority of the students in these cases were male. Of important interest is that most of these families reported a relatively high income level; above free or reduced lunch program qualifications. This differed from the secondary data collected about State income levels, which showed approximately half of the public school population as low income. On the other hand, the original data is consistent with district demographics where approximately one third of the district population is low-income. Of the subjects studied one forth fit that demographic.

It has been found that, when this original data is compared to the secondary data of the State and District demographics, the analysis is that these 4 subjects reflect the district population in ethnicity and income level. Further information about family compilation for the District or State was not found and therefore could not be compared. However, this data should not be considered an accurate sampling of the population of families who are referred to SARB as the sample size gathered was too small to make that analysis. A more accurate analysis may be inferred from the high percent of families who had disconnected telephone numbers or were not able to be contacted. The implications of this will be further explained in the discussion portion of this study founding chapter 5.

**Qualitative Analysis**

The research questions answered by the qualitative analysis of these interviews focuses on two of the questions asked in the previous chapters of this study. These are: What are the parents’ perceptions of the SARB process and what is their perception of the relationship between themselves and the interfaced school staff while going through the
process? These were answered through ex post facto interview questions regarding their perception of SARB before attending the conference and then after attending it.

The following tables show patterns in the answers gathered in each section of the interview. This data has been interpreted through content analysis of the answers given in the interviews and extracted to create a simpler presentation form. The detailed answers including quotes from the subjects will follow.
### Table 4  
**Parents’ Perceptions of the SARB Process**

**Before Attending a Conference**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prior Knowledge Before Referral</th>
<th>Understanding of How Process Worked</th>
<th>How they gained the Information that formed Understanding of Process</th>
<th>How they Felt About SARB</th>
<th>Expectations of the Meeting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parent 1</td>
<td>Some</td>
<td>Thought that she had an understanding</td>
<td>District Employee</td>
<td>Negative connotations: Felt “threatened”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent 2</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Basic; thought it was a hearing about attendance and negligent behavior</td>
<td>Notices Sent Home from School</td>
<td>Positive but concerned. “Welcomed any assistance”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent 3</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Felt that she had no understanding of it.</td>
<td>No answer because she felt that she “knew nothing”</td>
<td>Somewhat Negative connotations “Only knew I could go to jail”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent 4</td>
<td>Not Much</td>
<td>Thought that she had to go to court</td>
<td>Letters Sent Home from School</td>
<td>Confident that she had a “good argument”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In all, it appeared that parents were frightened or did not understand SARB’s purpose prior to attending. Also, 3 of the 4 parents interviewed stated that their children’s absences were due to illness. Parent 1 stated that her child had severe asthma and
migraines. Parent 3 stated that she had been ill; an emergency hysterectomy, and that her child missed school because of mom’s illness. She also stated that her daughter had unexcused absences on other days when she had taken her to school. She stated she was not sure whether the child had been cutting class, or if the teacher had miss-marked her attendance; this was a teacher that they had struggled with before. Parent 4 stated that her son had been ill for months and the doctors had not been able to find out what was causing the illness. Eventually he was diagnosed with diabetes. At the same time mom had been ill with Hepatitis C.

All of these parents stated that they felt they had tried to utilize school protocols such as chronic illness verification forms (a form which has detailed information from a child’s physician giving the parent the power to excuse absences beyond the normally allowed absences due to a verified chronic illness) and temporary independent study (a program where parents and children work with teachers who provide class assignments for a short period of time while the child cannot attend school for various reasons. These are usually considered excused absences) in order to clear their child’s absences while the family attended to their health and personal matters. They felt that they had acted responsibly regarding their children’s attendance.

This next table shows parents’ understanding and experiences with SARB after attending a conference regarding their children.
Table 5 Parents’ Perceptions of SARB after Attending a Conference

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Purpose of SARB Seen as Intervention or Punishment</th>
<th>How Views Before Attending Compare to After Attending SARB</th>
<th>Did SARB Make Situation any Different Better or Worse</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parent 1</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>No Different</td>
<td>Better, because provided adequate information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent 2</td>
<td>Intervention</td>
<td>Somewhat Different</td>
<td>Somewhat Better, may have helped son change behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent 3</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Somewhat Different</td>
<td>Better, they changed districts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent 4</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Somewhat Different</td>
<td>Worse, added more stress to family</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the responses regarding SARB conferences, there was a theme of feeling disrespected, and otherwise upset by the handling of the meeting. Some of the quotes include the following:

“I felt threatened and sick about it”

“I cried and shook, and I have heard other parents do too”

“We had no chance for rebuttal in SARB”

“They made assumptions about our family”

“I felt like a terrible parent after SARB”

“They could do it in a nicer manner, not belittling”

“It hurt my kids to see me so disrespected”

“I was not aware of the intensity before hand and was not prepared”

“Was not a comfortable situation, but was necessary”
“It was horrible. The (facilitator) said, ‘I could be your worst nightmare’.”

“Extremely judgmental”

“They were judgmental”

“I was hammered (by the board). I was drilled and judged. They were not supportive.”

“They were very mean”

Other complaints were that the board would bring up a family’s past history. An example of this was Parent 4 who stated that the Board turned the topic to the family’s drug history. She stated that she had a drug issue when she was 18 years old. She was 35 now, and sober. She stated that they assumed that the attendance problem was about drugs, and would not listen when she told them about her son’s diagnosis of diabetes.

“I am sure it serves a purpose for others, but my kid was sick. They did not listen, which was frustrating. I worked hard to get out of the drug lifestyle and did not appreciate it being thrown in my face.” She also stated that her overall experience with SARB was not pleasant and that the facilitator was “cocky” and “acted like he was God.” She said she had gone in with a positive outlook, but came out feeling very negative.

Parent 3 complained that what was being asked of her was not realistic for a single mother. She said that she saw SARB as trying to be helpful, but “not trying to really assist me.” She felt that she was doing the best she could and the kids, “thought it was a joke.” She stated that the school personnel and SARB tried to transfer her daughter to a
continuation school, but then mom transferred her daughter to the school where she worked, in a new district.

The overall comments from Parent 1, a district employee, concluded that SARB served a purpose, however “the way they (handle the conference) could be better; firm but not rude and degrading.” The positive outcome was that the family now knows how to appropriately use a chronic illness verification form and since then they have used one every school year. Now, the child also “knows what he is supposed to do.” Regarding the way the board spoke to her, she stated, “You would have thought I was homeless and doing drugs. We were offended.” Finally she stated, “They could have the same intent but on a friendlier note. Everyone deserves respect.”

Parent 2 had a different experience than parents 1, 3, and 4. She said that she felt it was good for her son to hear where his actions were taking him, from an outside authority, specifically someone other than parents and school administration. She said that it offered her some good guidance and assistance. “It was a difficult experience but it made a change.” Her complaint was that the board mandated her to a parenting class. “It was a good class, but it felt like a punishment.” She also stated that some of the Board members were compassionate, and some came down hard. Overall she felt her experience was informative, and helped her to make some decisions, yet, SARB did not directly improve her son’s attendance. Like Parent 3, this mother changed her son to a new school and eventually sent him to a wilderness program, because he was not able to follow the directives set for this family in SARB.
The final outcomes of these 4 SARB interventions were that 2 families transferred their children to different school districts or programs, and the other 2 learned how to use chronic illness forms and manage attendance issues with the school more effectively.

**School Relations**

The next table simplifies parents’ perceptions of school relationships, throughout their experience with truancy patterns.

Table 6  Parents’ Perceptions of Relationships with School Personnel

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Did you feel school staff was helpful before referral to SARB?</th>
<th>Feel respected by the school staff throughout process?</th>
<th>Receive services from SART before attending SARB?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parent 1</td>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td>Yes, respectful</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent 2</td>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td>Somewhat respectful</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent 3</td>
<td>Very Helpful</td>
<td>Somewhat respectful</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent 4</td>
<td>Somewhat Helpful</td>
<td>Yes, respect by school staff Not by SARB</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Regarding how school personnel handled providing information and aid to these parents, one theme that was noticed in the parents’ detailed answers, was of confusion and a lack of knowing what to expect, as well as poor communication from school personnel in explaining SARB and other protocols. Parent 1 stated that the chronic illness form, which the school kept on file, was not explained appropriately or clearly to her by multiple school staff members. This lack of communication, in her opinion,
created more difficulty in clearing absences, because it was not being used correctly.
Parent 4 reported issues of a similar situation. Her son was going through the process of a serious illness diagnosis and eventually had a chronic illness form on file, but this took a year for the parent to discover that it was an option. Both parents reported that the school personnel did not believe them when they reported their children ill, which caused more struggles for the family.

Parent 3 said that she had been asking school for help and that there was a lack of communication between teachers and parents. She also felt that teachers should be held more accountable for accurate records of student attendance. She added that she felt that her child’s school had given up on her daughter and just wanted to transfer her out of their school. As for feeling respected she felt that she knew an administrator and attendance clerk well, and felt respected by them, but not by district employees; “they only want (the students) to be there for the (ADA) money.”

Parent 2, although she defined the school as somewhat respectful, she did not find them helpful. Her response was that they tried in a friendly way, but that their assistance did not have much impact on her son.

Overall, it can be surmised that these parents felt that school personnel was mostly respectful, but was not very helpful in providing services and accurate information about protocol and SARB. This researcher finds that the subjects’ narrative responses provide the most accurate information found herein regarding their experiences with school relations as applied to their individual cases and situations.
Findings Compared to Program Intent

Again, as explained in the first and second chapters of this study, the purpose of SARB as originally created by the State of California was to combat truancy and the dropout rate by creating an early intervention, which reroutes students with truant behavior from the juvenile court system by utilizing a multi-disciplinary board who can directly intervene in the specific situation of the child and the child’s family as pursuant to Education Code Section 48320-48325. The following table shows statements, quoted or otherwise paraphrased of SARB’s intentions from various resources used in the implementation and facilitation of district SARBs.
Table 7: Intentions of SARB from State Sources
Regarding Parents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State SARB Policy</th>
<th>Education Codes Defining SARB</th>
<th>SARB Handbook, 2002</th>
<th>School Attendance Improvement Handbook</th>
<th>CA Department Of Education Website</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trust and collaboration should be the objective in communicating and interacting with parents</td>
<td>Dispense information on successful community-based and school based programs 48325 (a)(2)</td>
<td>Assist families in alleviating factors that interfere with appropriate school attendance</td>
<td>Partnership between schools, law enforcement, social services agencies, and parents</td>
<td>SARB is a “safety net”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members should facilitate open, honest, and blame-free discussions.</td>
<td>Include a parent representative on the Board 48321 (a)(2)(A) 48321 (b)(1)(A)</td>
<td>Parents and families must be included in solutions</td>
<td>Support team to help remove barriers</td>
<td>Provide support for families</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insure that families are involved in selecting resources and services.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Families must see intervention as supportive, not punitive or judgmental to succeed.</td>
<td></td>
<td>SARB is a place where families can find connections to resources that will help them solve truancy issues.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*www.cde.ca.gov/ls/ai/sb/samplepolicy.asp 12/08/05, retrieved 4/25/06. All other sources cited in chapters one and two of this text, and can be found in the references.

Whereas the focus and purpose of this study is to review and discover how parents view and experience the facilitation and effectiveness of the SARB process, the above table focuses on the state produced material regarding parents.
The findings of the original data collected, specifically the comments and quotes from the four parents interviewed, contradict some of the intentions of the SARB policy. Of great interest are the findings of the negative parental statements about the handling and process of SARB. For example three of the four parents interviewed made statements about feeling judged by the members of the board, whereas the intentions of the policy specifically state that success requires that parents see the intervention as supportive and not judgmental. In review of the tables on parents’ perspectives and SARB’s intention there is conflict, and it appears that, the parents interviewed did not see the facilitation of SARB in their experience, implemented as intended. Furthermore, SARB is intended as an intervention process, and not punitive. The data collected herein suggests that parents understood that the Board was indeed created as an intervention. However, they also saw it as a punishment itself, or else the means to a possible punitive action, and found that the experience of the SARB conference was negative, as opposed to a supportive intervention that provided resources, even if they did receive some long term benefits. It should also be noted that SARB, as intended by the California Legislature, lists as the first participant of the Board, a parent. According to David Kopperud, Education Program Consultant and State SARB Chair, this is intended to be a volunteer peer of the parents in the school district. It was found that the Board in this school district did not have a parent in this role, nor do they have a member who has the role of parent advocate unless the mandated parent brings one in on their own. It was found that not having a parent volunteer was not in compliance with the State SARB suggested guidelines.
Findings and the Literature Review

These findings and the questions answered herein have a place in the literature on SARB and truancy research. The previous section has compared the data collected to the State produced materials reviewed in the second chapter of this study. As for the review on similar truancy reduction efforts, this study has provided more information about the quality of the SARB approach, although it is not extensive, as it focuses on one district. It is also found, that although the SARB in this district may be providing some intervention and education for parents, such as educating the parents on protocol and forms that can help their students’ academic success through improved attendance, it is not in sync with the literature that explains the power of positive working relationships between the home and the school, even though subjects felt that they were respected by school site personnel. Their views of the experience with SARB reinforces that there is something amiss when it comes to home and school relations. This study also finds that, in these situations, parents were not being utilized and respected as experts in the lives of their children as the literature suggests is a best practice, and as is consistent with the NASW code of ethics.

Finally, this researcher did not find enough information to draw conclusions about the subjects studied and Psychological Reactance Theory. The interview questions were not specific enough to look for this information. Although it could be reasoned to link the outcomes of 2 subjects transferring their children to other school districts and PRT, this
researcher does not find that to be a substantiated argument based on the findings as limited in research on that subject.

Unexpected Findings

Because this research was designed as grounded theory, which builds the research and findings from the ground up, and was exploratory, a hypothesis was not determined. Rather, this research aimed to discover patterns in the quality of the intervention of SARB. However, there were a few unexpected findings when reviewing the data.

Much of the literature suggests that families who are deemed truant often live in poverty or otherwise have a low income. Even though the district studied has a large population that is not deemed low income, it was unexpected to find that the majority of parents interviewed here had an annual income of more than $70,000. However, it was not unexpected to find a large number of potential subjects who had disconnected telephone numbers. The implications of this and the other findings will be discussed in the following chapter.

Findings and Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this study is based in Habermas’ theory of the Public Sphere conjoined with Feminist Theory. The framework has shown that SARB can be experienced as an oppressive setting whereas the Board has institutionalized use of power over a parent. Furthermore, when SARB is facilitated in this way, the organization and follow through of SARB appears gendered; the Board as having a masculine power, and the parent as a lesser feminized partner. The findings of the original data as seen in this
framework reinforce these themes. It was found that all participants in this study were women, who had full custody of their children. It was also evident that many of them felt that they did not have the opportunity to speak regarding their own needs or situations, or to advocate for themselves. This reinforces the Board as the Public Sphere, because it represented the voice and decision making of the dominate group. This also reinforces that this process can be experienced as oppressive, which in the view of Feminist Theory is a human issue. Other findings in support of this are the comments made by parents including, “He acted like he was God” as well as the recollection of the facilitator stating “I could be your worst nightmare.” Also, the finding that the Board did not utilize a parent peer representative further stratifies the board as not representing or recognizing the parent, or Private Sphere as equal member.

Summary

The major findings of this study are as follows. The sample interviewed, 4% of the population pool, was too small to assume that it represents the population of families who attend SARB in ethnicity, income, family composition and transportation mode. However, the feed back which they provided can be used as information to add to the knowledge of the quality of the SARB process.

It was found that most of the parents studied were not familiar with SARB before referral, and either did not have an expectation of the conference, or else expected punitive measures such as serving jail time. This contradicts the information that participants gave regarding how they viewed the purpose of SARB. All of the parents
interviewed said that they saw the purpose as an intervention, while 75% of them said it was also a punitive measure against the parent. A different combination of parents at 75% said that SARB made their situation better in some way. However, the qualitative answers provide a different view. While these parents said that SARB helped in making their situation better, “better” may not necessarily be defined as intended by SARB, or the SARB directives. While each of these families made a new situation for their child, the reflection on the process was punctuated with multiple negative connotations in regards to how the families felt they were treated by the Board. A strong parental feeling of discontent and disrespect from SARB was evident in this study.

Again, the research questions asked here are: What are parents’ perceptions of SARB? And what are parents’ perceptions of their relationship with the school during this process? There is not one simple answer to these questions because each case study had different experiences. However, this information can be generalized by this statement: It was found that parents perceive SARB with the intention of intervening in a students’ truant behavior, however this process is poorly managed creating more stress and frustration for families who are struggling with situations such as illness and defiance. It was also found that the parents in this study perceived the school staff with whom they interfaced to lack knowledge of protocol and had poor communication with parents, although, parents viewed the school staff to be mostly respectful when working with their families.
In comparing the original data to SARB intentions, this study provides enough qualitative information to deduce that these parent experiences do not reflect the intention of SARB as far as how parents are interacted with during the conferences. Also noted are the truancy rates and the dropout rates in the district and State. They are still considerably high even with the legislation of SARB in place.

A discussion of these findings and their implications for the professions of Social Work and Education is reviewed in the following chapter. Finally, a list of recommendations based on these findings and discussions conclude this study.
Chapter 5

CONCLUSION

Introduction

The following chapter concludes this research by discussing the findings and implications of the data discovered. Also, implications for the professions of Social Work, School Social Work, and Education, specifically SARBs, are discussed, as are the implications for further research. These implications are followed by the researcher’s recommendations, and final conclusions.

Discussion

Both the quantitative and qualitative findings of this study are herein discussed. This section also contains a discussion of the unexpected limitations of this study and how they were handled by the researcher.

One of the quantitative findings that may have the most meaning in this portion of the research is the rate of inaccessible parents who had been mandated to attend SARB. The possible reasons for this are extensive. However, because of this researcher’s experience with this population, observations of SARB conferences, and with this study, the suggested explanations for this are as follows. This population tends to be highly mobile, as reported by the district personnel, that this interviewer had contact with through the process of this study. Although published research was not found to support this, it is a plausible explanation for inaccessibility. It is not uncommon for district personnel to have difficulty contacting these families, as they find that families in this population
frequently move, changing residences and telephone numbers. Furthermore, demographic research of the population of truant students shows that these families are often impoverished. This may support the observation that these families are highly mobile. It is possible that the researcher found disconnected telephone services, because the service was revoked due to unpaid bills, or changed, because they are no longer staying at that residence. The reasons for this could include eviction among countless others; however it is reasonable to suggest that a high rate of poverty may explain inaccessibility.

Other factors that may have affected the low rate of accessible parents include a lack of interest in the study, shortage of time to give an interview, or avoiding a perceived telemarketer. It is also possible that the person who answered the call did not tell the truth, that it was indeed the correct contact number, but that they wanted to avoid the call for any reason. Of all these possible explanations, there was one parent whose refusal stood out from the others. This father refused to be interviewed and without prodding voiced his reasons why. He stated that SARB had been a very bad experience for him and his family and that they didn’t want to talk about it. He stated that it was an ongoing and overwhelming process. Of more interest was the question that he asked, “Why bother? The Board won’t read it or care. It is a waste of your time.” Because of this type of response, it is of this researcher’s view that more parents need to be interviewed, and much more information needs to be collected so that the experiences, positive and
negative, of the parents who this policy aims to serve is known in order to better serve these families.

Regardless of the reasons for a small participation size, the large number of inaccessible parents intrigues this researcher. The recommendations made at the end of this study are a reflection of this intrigue.

While the sample size of this study is small, the quality of feedback is high. This researcher collected comments from parents that painted a clear picture of how they, as case studies, felt during the SARB conferences and process. When reviewing these statements, it stands to reason that, the Valley School District School Attendance Review Board may not be effectively creating partnerships with parents, but rather may be creating a more detrimental experience for these families, and is therefore opposing the intentions of SARB. It is also of this researcher’s view that when SARB is facilitated as it appeared to have been in these case studies, it may be more ineffective and possibly create harm to the families, as it could break down family autonomy and further create barriers and feelings of distrust in home and school relations, therefore pushing families away from school interaction and intervention.

**Difficulties with the Research Process**

This research was not without unexpected setbacks or limitations. One setback was in working with the SARB coordinator of the district. He was to approve the research by a certain date in order for this research to meet deadlines for completion. However, after the researcher made multiple attempts to ensure this approval was obtained, the
The coordinator informed the researcher of an additional Human Subjects Review process that was necessary in utilizing district data and contacting parents in this district. This information was given on the date that the approval was needed. This delayed the collection of data by weeks, therefore delaying the final production of the study. Nevertheless, the researcher did as needed and obtained approval from the district in order to do the research. This was the most significant delay and challenge in the research process.

**Implications for Practice**

The implications gleaned from this study for Social Work, specifically School Social Work, are based in the relationship that the profession can facilitate between families and schools or other large organizations. Specifically implied is the need to pay attention to how clients who are served by school personnel are treated in these processes. This study implies that social workers are needed to bring attention to oppressive experiences of all people, and the need to advocate against the occurrence of such experiences. This can be done in the spirit of the profession through empowering clients, holding all professions involved accountable to the goals of the processes created, and through the review of policy.

Social workers should work to engage clients such as these parents served by SARB, as to guide them and empower them to find their voice in the process. This can be done through education and advocacy while working with a client, even if the social worker is not part of the school system.
Social workers should also hold themselves and other team members accountable to the intervention. When a member of an interdisciplinary team is conducting business in a way that may not be supportive to the goals of the effort, the social worker should professionally draw attention to that matter, ensuring proper services to the clients.

Finally, social workers should be sure to review policy and analyze it carefully, so as to ensure that the policy and its implementation are supportive and just. If this had been done in the school district analyzed for this study, it is possible that the parents interviewed may have had a better experience with the intervention, and therefore it may have been more effective. Social workers should ensure that policies such as SARB create opportunity for positive change, and are facilitated according to the intended goals.

The profession of Social Work employs people with a specific knowledge and professional approaches that differ from other disciplines that influence the application of the policies and treatment of clients worked with. This study implies that people in the profession utilize their skills to create change when clients who are served experience oppression, and to hold all professionals accountable while scrutinizing the implementation of policies that affect these clients. Also implied here is that social workers need to question authority, find answers to problems observed, put the information into action to fill the gaps of communication, in this case between home and school, and provide this information to those who create and implement policy.

The implications for SARB members are foremost in the implementation process. It is herein implied that SARB needs to be held accountable to professional standards, and
effectively engage the parents that are being served as equal partners in the intervention process. It is also implied that SARB needs to clarify the use of forms and protocol. This should be done with office staff, teachers, and administration as to head off any confusion on how to utilize these forms as they are intended so that they can be properly explained to parents and students. This provides the family with fair opportunity to better their personal situation, and may avoid SARB altogether, therefore saving SARB resources and energy for other families.

This study has also implied that the way in which SARB and service providers work with parents is at least equally as important as the information provided in the conferences. The delivery of the service and methods are of great important to parents and therefore their desire to “buy-in” to the intervention. This “buy-in” or engagement is vital, as the literature has shown, in making a true change in the attendance patterns of these students and the support that they get from their families.

**Implications for Further Research**

This study is the beginning of research on SARB and the quality of the services from the parents’ view point. More research with various research questions and methods are necessary to gain a comprehensive knowledge on this experience. Furthermore, the difficulty in contacting parents in this study suggests that other methods may yield higher results in participation rate.

This research implies that State and local SARBS should organize and produce more research on the quality of this intervention as well as the numerical outcomes, such as
change in attendance patterns of children who attend SARB. This need implies a more in-depth study such as a cross-case analysis and longitudinal studies of multiple school districts throughout the State. Furthermore, this study implies that each local SARB should be surveying parents on a regular basis in order to understand the experience of the service provided. This information, along with examples from the Model SARB Program, could be compiled and compared to legislative intentions in order to be used for training school and district personnel on working with parents on truancy issues. After conducting this study, it is in this researcher’s opinion that much more information needs to be gathered on this subject.

This study touched on the relationship between SARB and Psychological Reactance Theory. Full discovery of the relationship between these concepts was not within the scope of this study; however, the information gathered here implies a compelling relationship between the perceived threats of SARB and Psychological Reactance. This information could provide a strong understanding of parent and child reactions when attempting to initiate engagement in the intervention process, and may suggest new approaches to truancy reduction.

Other implications for research include the need for more studies to be done on various approaches to truancy reduction utilized in the SARB process. Examples of this included utilizing a more comprehensive approach to coordinate SARB, SART and SSTs more effectively to work together. Additionally, it has been shown in the literature that families with truant behavior have a variety of struggles and needs. Other research is
needed to discover how to meet these needs. This includes research on a comprehensive approach, such as working with community organizations, and creating supportive peer relations among families within each school. The research should be taken further in finding how to best engage parents in the decision making process when creating effective interventions.

Recommendations

Of all recommendations to be listed in this sections, the researcher’s primary recommendation is that all school personnel, specifically members of the School Attendance Review Boards treat the clients served with dignity and respect, and that the governing entities of these boards hold the SARB coordinators accountable to higher standards than those discovered in this research. That being said, the recommendations include:

1. All SARBs should be held accountable to the intentions of the legislated goals of the intervention, the State SARB’s outline of how to best work with parents as equal partners in their child’s education and as experts on their family, and to professional standards.

2. All SARBs should have a volunteer parent peer on the board and present at each conference and SARB meeting.

3. Local SARBs or districts shall survey parents’ needs in support of positive attendance, and run studies to ensure proper service to these clients. This
research should be done concurrently with intervention process, and/or directly after.

4. Follow up services should be provided for these families in order to give support while the family adjusts to changes when attempting to follow directives.

5. Longitudinal studies of multiple districts should be performed by the State so that best practices are known.

6. State SARB should provide training workshops for SARBs and school personnel to ensure that recommendations are understood and followed.

Again, as shown in the literature, and the original data, SARB can be an emotionally unnerving time for families struggling with truancy. It can be threatening and may further alienate families from the school, creating the opposite effect intended by the interventions. If educators and legislators are going to require parents to attend SARB, then they should equally require SARB to be accountable to find, and more importantly, implement the best practices in truancy intervention. Therefore, the final recommendation based on this study is that the legislative body that develops intervention methods that are expected of counties and districts, should provide funding for the necessary research and training for the policy that has been created.

Conclusion

This study has contributed to the body of knowledge regarding truancy, specifically discovering parents’ perspectives and experiences in the Student Attendance Review
Board intervention model in the State of California. It was discovered that parents of children with truant behavior are difficult to contact, yet have imperative information to give in regards to their experiences in truancy intervention. It was found that, from the information gathered from parents, the district studied herein did not uphold many recommendations of the State SARB and education codes.

This information has been applied to the known literature produced on this topic, and the implications for the professions of Social Work and Education have been discussed, as have implications for additional research on this topic. Based on the information gathered by this researcher, recommendations for SARBs, state and local, have been given.

It should also be noted that, in the tradition of Social Work, action has followed the research. This study not only added to the body of knowledge on truancy and SARB, but the problems discovered herein have been brought to the attention of the California Department of Education State Student Attendance Review Board. On October 27, 2008, this researcher advised the Board based on the preliminary findings and observations of this study during the process of the new 2009 edition of the SARB handbook. The findings were not sited in the current manuscript as the study was not finished, however, it is the intention that this study will be provided to the State SARB upon final approval and completion. It is the intention of this researcher that these findings and recommendations be known in order to scrutinize the practices of SARB and provide the
best services possible to the parents and children so served in the hope that families may have a better situation and children a better education.
APPENDICES
APPENDIX A

Cover Letter

Michelle Allee
PO Box

Date

Name
Address

Dear Ms.,

As we recently discussed on the telephone, I have requested an interview with you as a subject for the research I am conducting on Parental Perceptions of the School Attendance Review Board (SARB) Process. Enclosed you will find two copies of the consent form and a preaddressed postage paid envelope. Please read this form. If you agree to participate in this study, please sign and date the form and return one copy in the preaddressed postage paid envelope, by the next mail delivery date. You may keep the other copy for yourself.

Once I have received the signed consent form I will be calling you on the agreed upon date__________________ 2007 at____:____ Please allow 20 minutes for the interview. Due to the time restraints on this student research, the researcher requests that the interview appointment time be kept as agreed upon.

I am looking forward to speaking with you and thank you for participating in this research.

Sincerely,

Michelle Allee
Student Researcher
California State University, Sacramento
Department of Social Work
Estimado Padre de Familia,

Por nuestra conversación por teléfono, he solicitado una entrevista con usted como voluntario al estudio que estoy conduciendo en la perspectiva de los padres sobre el proceso del bufete de inspección de asistencia escolar (“SARB”). Incluyo dos copias del formulario de consentimiento y un sobre listo para enviarse de regreso. Por favor lea este formulario y, si está de acuerdo en participar, firmelo y fíchelo. Envieme una copia inmediatamente. La otra copia es para su archivo.

Al recibir su formulario firmado y fechado le llamaré el día y a la hora que acordamos _______________ de 2007 a las _____ : _______ a.m./p.m. La entrevista durará 30 minutos. Es imperativo que sea puntuarse a la cita acordada para la entrevista por que el estudio se llevara a cabo con tiempo limitado.

Espero conversar con usted pronto y le agradezco su participación en este estudio.

Sinceramente,

Michelle Allee
APPENDIX C

Consent Form

Parental Perceptions of the School Attendance Review Board

Consent Form

You are being asked to participate in a research study. This form provides you information about this research study. The research administrator and investigator will describe this study to you and answer all questions you have in regards to the study. Please read the following information and ask any questions you may have before beginning the interview on the agreed upon date. Your participation is voluntary. Your decision to decline or take part in this study will not result in any penalty or reward towards you or your child from the school district. The information gathered in this study is in order to better serve families and students in the School Attendance Review Board (SARB) process. All information gathered will remain confidential; names of participants and information given by them will not be connected in the research findings.

Title of Research Study: Parental Perceptions of the School Attendance Review Board (SARB) Process

Principle Investigators: Michelle Allee, Master of Social Work, Pupil Personnel Services Credential Student supervised by Joyce Burris, PhD, California State University, Sacramento, (916) 278-7179.

Funding Source: The student researcher (principle investigator) personally funds the expenses of this research. Any expenses belonging to the subjects, including cell phone minutes used for the interview phone call are the responsibility of the subject and will not be covered by the principle investigator, supervising professor, CSUS or school district where a child is or has been enrolled.

The Purpose of the Study: This study seeks to recognize and explore the perspectives of the parents who are mandated to attend a SARB conference in order to understand, and better serve the families who are served by the SARB interventions. Exploring this specific area of the SARB process is a means to evaluate this state mandated policy.

What will be done if you take part in this research study: Each subject is asked to participate in this study by being interviewed. The subject is expected to answer all questions honestly. The interview process is expected to take approximately 30 minutes for each subject. This interview may be audio recorded in order to insure precise records
of the interview outcome in order to ensure sound research. Upon completion of the interview nothing more will be asked of the research subjects.

Possible Discomforts and Risks to Research Subjects: This study has a minimal risk to research subjects. Anticipated risks of harm in the research should not provoke more emotional distress or discomfort than ordinarily experienced in daily life or during the performance of routine physical or psychological examinations, tests or interviews. Counseling resources will be provided to each subject upon completion of the interview, however, should this research cause discomfort or harm to a subject, treatment will not be provided by the researcher, or any other affiliates of the research process. Subjects must arrange for their own treatment services and financial means of attaining treatment.

Possible Benefits to Subjects and/or Others: This research process may benefit the subjects by participating in research that may have findings that can have an impact on the SARB process. The subjects may benefit from knowing that they have had impact on a mandated policy within the State of California’s educational system and how this impacts individual families. A subject may also benefit from the opportunity to have his or her opinion heard and considered in the evaluation of school district policy. This research may also benefit families who may be mandated to attend a SARB conference in the future and the effectiveness of the process.

Costs to the Subjects: There are no required fees or costs to the subjects participating in the research, however the subjects are responsible for personal phone services fees, or minutes used on their personal cell phone for the interview phone call.

Compensation: There will be no compensation for participating in this research.

Decision to Participate or Decline Participation in this Study: Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Your decision to participate or to decline participation in this study will not influence current or future relationships between you (or any family member) and the school district a child has attended or currently attends, or the California State University, Sacramento institution.

Withdrawal from the Study: If you wish to stop participation in this study please let the interviewer know during the interview process. Once the interview is complete, and consent is given it is the request of the researcher that the subject does not withdraw from the study. If the subject desires to withdraw at that point, please contact the research supervisor at (916) 278-7179. If a subject decides to withdraw from the research he or she will not be penalized in any way.

Questions in Regards to this Research Study: If you have any questions about this study during the research process please asks the interview administrator who is
conducting the interview. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact Dr. Joyce Burris, research advisor, California State University, Sacramento at (916) 278-7179.

**Privacy and Confidentiality of Research Records:** The principle investigator of this research study is the only person who will have access to the names and responses of the subjects participating in this study. The Attendance Improvement Support Services/SARB coordination of the San Juan Unified School District has provided the principle investigator with subject’s names and contact information for this study, however neither he nor any other school district employee will have access to names, or any other identifying information connecting interview responses with interview subjects. All interview responses will be coded by a random subject number, and will not have identifying information upon any documentation.

The principle investigator will keep all information in a locked file cabinet within the investigator’s private residence. When the final information is tabulated and outcomes are approved, all documents, and tape recordings of interviews will be destroyed and disposed of. Your research records will not be released without your consent.

**If the results of this research are published or presented, your identity will not be disclosed. The findings of this research may be published and therefore will be accessible for public review including employees of the San Juan Unified School District and The California State Department of Education.**

**The researcher will benefit from this research as part of her education towards a graduate degree, but is not otherwise receiving compensation for the research.**

**Signatures:**

By signing this form you agree to the terms of the research as described above and state that you have read and understood and have had the information explained to you and that you accept and agree to the terms of this study. You are also stating that you are age 18 or older, and the parent or guardian of a student who has been mandated to participate in a SARB conference, and that you also attended the SARB conference.

I agree to participate in this study and that the above statements are true:

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<th>Subject’s Signature</th>
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<td>Signature of Principal Investigator</td>
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APPENDIX D

Consent Form Spanish

Percepción de los padres de familia sobre el Comité de Revisión de la Asistencia a la Escuela

Formulario de consentimiento

Se pide su participación en un estudio investigativo. Este formulario le da a usted información acerca de este estudio. La administradora del estudio e investigadora le describirá este estudio y le responderá todas las preguntas que tenga sobre el mismo. Por favor, lea la siguiente información y haga todas las preguntas que pueda tener antes de comenzar la entrevista que se hará en la fecha acordada. Su participación es voluntaria. Su decisión de participar o no en este estudio no tendrá como consecuencia ningún premio o castigo para usted o para su hijo o hija de parte del distrito escolar. La información obtenida a través de este estudio está orientada a servir mejor a las familias y los estudiantes en el proceso del Comité de Revisión de la Asistencia a la Escuela (SARB por sus siglas en inglés). Toda la información reunida permanecerá confidencial; los nombres de los participantes y la información dada por ellos no se conectará en los hallazgos de la investigación.

Título del estudio investigativo: Percepciones de los padres de familia sobre el proceso del Comité Revisión de la Asistencia a Escuela (SARB).

Principales investigadores: Michelle Allee, estudiante de los programas de Magíster en Trabajo Social y de Credencial en Servicios a los Estudiantes, supervisada por Joyce Burris, Ph.D., de la Universidad Estatal de California, Sacramento, teléfono (916) 278-7179.

Fuente de financiamiento: La estudiante que hace el estudio (principal investigadora) financia personalmente los gastos de este estudio. Cualquier gasto que corresponda a los sujetos, incluyendo los minutos de llamadas por celular usados en las entrevistas telefónicas es responsabilidad de los sujetos y no será cubierto por la investigadora principal, la profesora que supervisa, CSUS o el Distrito Escolar donde está o ha estado matriculado el estudiante.

Propósito del estudio: Este estudio busca reconocer y explorar las perspectivas de los padres a los que se obliga asistir a la charla de SARB para entender y servir mejor a las familias que se benefician con las intervenciones del SARB. La exploración de esta área específica del proceso SARB es un medio de evaluar esta política ordenada por el estado.
Qué se hará si usted toma parte en este estudio investigativo: A cada sujeto se le pide participar en este estudio por medio de una entrevista. Se espera que el sujeto responda con honestidad todas las preguntas. Se espera que la entrevista de cada sujeto dure aproximadamente 30 minutos. Esta entrevista puede ser audio-grabada con el fin de asegurar que haya registros precisos del resultado de la entrevista para garantizar así una sana investigación. Terminada la entrevista no se preguntará nada más a los sujetos de la misma.

Posibles molestias y riesgos para los sujetos del estudio: Este estudio envuelve un mínimo riesgo para los sujetos de la investigación. Los riesgos previstos de daños en la investigación no deberían provocar más sufrimiento o molestia emocional que la que ordinariamente se experimenta en la vida diaria o durante la realización de exámenes físicos o sicológicos de rutina, pruebas o entrevistas. Después de terminada la entrevista, se proveerá consejería a cada sujeto; sin embargo, si esta investigación causare daño o malestar a un sujeto, ni la investigadora ni ninguno otro de los afiliados al proceso investigativo proveerá tratamiento.

Posibles beneficios para los sujetos y/o para otros: Este proceso investigativo puede beneficiar a los sujetos por la participación en una investigación que podría llegar a hallazgos que tengan un impacto en el proceso SARB. Los sujetos pueden beneficiarse al saber que ellos han tenido un impacto en una política obligatoria dentro del sistema educativo del Estado de California y cómo esto impacta a familias individuales. Un sujeto puede también beneficiarse con la oportunidad de que su opinión sea oída y considerada en la evaluación de la política del distrito escolar. Esta investigación puede también beneficiar a las familias que en el futuro sean obligadas a asistir a la conferencia de SARB, y a la efectividad del proceso.

Costos para los sujetos: No se exige ningún dinero a los sujetos que participan en la investigación; sin embargo, los sujetos son responsables del pago de los servicios telefónicos o de los minutos usados en su teléfono celular personal para la llamada telefónica de la entrevista.

Compensación: No habrá ninguna compensación por la participación en este estudio.

Decisión de participar o declinar la participación en este estudio: La participación en este estudio es completamente voluntaria. Su decisión de participar o declinar la participación en este estudio no influenciará presentes o futuras relaciones entre usted (o algún miembro de su familia) y el distrito escolar al que su hijo o hija ha asistido o asiste actualmente, o la Universidad Estatal de California, Sacramento.
Retiro del estudio: Si usted quiere detener su participación en este estudio, por favor hágaselo saber a la entrevistadora durante la entrevista. Una vez que la entrevista se ha completado y se ha dado el consentimiento, la investigadora solicita que el sujeto no se retire del estudio. Si el sujeto desea retirarse en este momento, por favor contacte a la supervisor del estudio en el teléfono (916) 278-7179. Si un sujeto decide retirarse de la investigación, él o ella no serán penalizados de ninguna manera.

Preguntas relacionadas con esta investigación: Si usted tiene preguntas acerca de este estudio durante el proceso de la investigación, por favor hágaselas a la administradora que está haciendo la entrevista. Si tiene preguntas respecto a sus derechos como participante en una investigación, por favor contacte a la doctora Joyce Burris, Consejera de Investigación, Universidad Estatal de California, Sacramento, en el teléfono (916) 278-7179.

Privacidad y confidencialidad de los archivos de la investigación: La principal investigadora de este estudio es la única persona que tendrá acceso a los nombres y respuestas de los sujetos que participen en él. Los servicios de apoyo a la mejora de asistencia/ La coordinación de SARB del Distrito Escolar Unificado San Juan le han dado a la principal investigadora los nombres y los contactos para este estudio; sin embargo, ni él ni ningún otro empleado del distrito tendrá acceso a los nombres o a ninguna otra información que conecte las respuestas de la entrevista con los sujetos entrevistados. Todas las respuestas de la entrevista serán codificadas mediante un número dado al azar y ningún documento tendrá información identificadora.

La principal investigadora mantendrá toda la información bajo llave en un archivador dentro de su residencia privada. Cuando se haya tabulado la información final y los resultados hayan sido aprobados, todos los documentos y las cintas con las grabaciones de las entrevistas serán destruidos y arrojados a la basura. Los archivos de la investigación correspondientes a usted no serán hechos públicos sin su consentimiento.

Si los resultados de esta investigación son publicados o presentados, su identidad no será descubierta. Los hallazgos de esta investigación pueden ser publicados y, por lo tanto, serán accesibles al público, inclusive los empleados del Distrito Escolar Unificado San Juan y el Departamento de Educación del Estado de California.

La investigadora se beneficiará de este estudio como parte de su educación tendiente a obtener un pos-grado, pero no está recibiendo ninguna otra compensación por esta investigación.
Firmas:

Al firmar este formulario usted acepta los términos de la investigación como se describe arriba y declara que ha leído y entendido y que se le ha explicado la información y que acepta y está de acuerdo con los términos de este estudio. También declara que tiene 18 o más años de edad, y que es el padre de familia o tutor de un estudiante que ha sido obligado a participar en una conferencia SARB y que además asistió a la conferencia SARB.

Estoy de acuerdo con participar en este estudio y con que lo declarado arriba es verdadero.

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<td>Firma de la investigadora principal</td>
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APPENDIX E:

Interview Guide

Note to subjects: Thank you for setting aside time for this interview. As you have read in the consent form, this research aims to gather information on what parents know about SARB before they attended the conference, what their expectations of the conference were and how they feel the outcomes worked in aiding their student to attend school more regularly. If at any point in this interview you have questions, please feel free to ask. This will take about 20 minutes. The outcome of this study is expected to be available in the CSU, Sacramento library this fall.

The first few questions are to gather data about the demographics of the subjects.

Do you have any questions at this time?

Interview #_________

Pre-screen verification:

1. Are you the parent or guardian of a child age 6-18 who has been required to attend a SARB conference between the dates of August 1, 2006 and December 31, 2006?  
   Yes or No

2. Did you attend the SARB conference?  
   Yes or No.

Demographics:

How many people were living in your child’s primary residence at the time of the SARB Conference? ________________________________________________________________

Did your child live in more than one residence (due to custody or other arrangements)?  
Yes or No?

What is your marital status? ________________________________________________

What is the approximant income level for your household? ______________________

What race or ethnicity do you identify with? __________________________________
What is the gender of the student(s) required to attend SARB?

________________________________________________________________

At the time of the SARB conference, how did the children get to and from school?

________________________________________________________________

Perceptions of SARB experience:

1. Before your family was referred to SARB:

   What did you know about SARB?
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________

   What was your understanding of how the process worked? Did you feel like you had a good understanding of the process?
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________

   Where did you get this information or understanding about SARB?
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________

   How did you feel about SARB?
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________

   What were your expectations of the meeting?
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________

2. Since having attended the SARB conference:

   From your perspective what do you see as the purpose of SARB? (an intervention or a punishment?)
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
How do the views you had of SARB before attending compare to the views you have after attending the conference?
No different, Some what different, Completely different?
Please explain.

How was attending a SARB conference helpful to you and your family?

How was attending a SARB conference not helpful to you and your family?

Did SARB make the situation any different? Better, worse, no change? Please explain.

3. School Relations

Do you feel that your child’s school staff including the teachers, attendance clerk, and administrators were helpful in your situation before being referred to SARB? Not at all helpful, somewhat helpful, very helpful? Please explain.
Did you feel that these people were respectful to you and understanding of the situation? Not at all respectful, somewhat respectful, very respectful? Please explain.
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________

Did your family receive services from the Student Attendance Review Team (SART) prior to attending a SARB conference?
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________

Please explain the experience of working with SART.
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________

Over all, how would you explain your experience with the SARB process: Very Positive, Positive, Neither Negative nor Positive, Negative, or Very Negative? Please explain.
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________

In regards to improving your relationship with your child’s school staff, would you say that SARB was: Not at all helpful, Somewhat Helpful, Helpful, Very helpful Please explain.
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
Is there any thing else you would like to add, or any information that you would like to give?

__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________

Thank you for your time to participate in this study.
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