

**PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT
AND
ITS PERCEIVED IMPACT ON CHILDREN'S ACHIEVEMENT**

**BY
REV. ALEXIUS MINJ, S. J.**

**A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School,
Marquette University,
in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts
Milwaukee, Wisconsin, USA
November 1999**

Rev. Alexius Minj, S.J.

ABSTRACT

Parental Involvement and its Perceived Impact on Children's Achievement.

The purpose of this study was to investigate parental involvement and the parents' perceived impact in their children's achievement. The subjects of this study were parents having children in a suburban Catholic elementary school. Modes of investigation were survey, interviews, and review of school documents.

The findings of this study indicate that, as individuals, the overwhelming majority of the respondents were directly involved in their children's learning activities; however, as a school community, for instance, as members of PTA/PTO, almost sixty-five percent of the parents who responded to the survey had not attended any of the meetings in that year. However, almost all of the respondents perceived parental involvement as not only very important but as crucial for their children's achievement.

The next step, therefore, is to educate school personnel so that they may be more open and accessible to parental involvement and devise a plan providing ways for parents to perceive more deeply their own impact on their children's achievement. It is also important to educate and inform parents of the vital role they play in the lives of their children.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

There are several people who deserve my gratitude for their help and support during my studies at Marquette University. First of all, I wish to express my appreciation to the members of my Master's thesis committee: Dr. Jack J. Augenstein (Advisor), Dr. Angeline Cepelka, and Dr. Mark Joerres. I am especially indebted to my advisor, the person most responsible for my completing the master's program at Marquette. His patience, guidance, advice, and support were invaluable.

I would also like to express my special thanks to Rev. Jeffrey Loebel, S.J. who was always ready to help. I am grateful to the principal and the parents of the suburban Catholic elementary school, who facilitated my survey work. I also owe my deepest gratitude to the Jesuit community at Marquette, and to my Jesuit brothers in Darjeeling, India for their love and friendship. Finally, I wish to thank my parents (Mr. Simon Minj & Mrs. Gabriella Tirkey) who truly were my first teachers. Although they are dead and gone, I believe they are with me for my future ministry in education. I dedicate this thesis to them.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I Introduction -----	1
Statement of the Problem-----	2
Significance of the Study -----	2
Research Questions -----	3
Definitions of Terms -----	3
Limitations of the Study -----	4
The Outline -----	5
CHAPTER II Review of the Literture-----	6
Introduction -----	6
A Brief History of Parental Involvement-----	6
The Importance of Parental Involvement -----	9
Types of Parental Involvement -----	10
Parental involvement in the school-----	11
Parental involvement in the home -----	14
Effects of Parental Involvement -----	15
Barriers to Parental Involvement -----	17
Changing demographics -----	18
School norms that do not support partnership-----	20
Resistance from educators -----	21
Resistance from parents -----	22
Limited resources (Time, Money, Training, and Leadership) to support parental involvement-----	24

Parental Perception on their Children's Achievement -----	27
Summary-----	29
CHAPTER III Methodology-----	31
Selection of Subjects -----	31
Instrumentation -----	31
Data Collection Procedure -----	33
Data Analysis Procedure -----	34
Inter-Coder Reliability-----	35
CHAPTER IV Presentation of the Findings-----	36
Introduction -----	36
The Findings of the Mailed Survey-----	37
Demographic information -----	37
Parental involvement at school -----	43
Parental involvement at home -----	45
Parents' perception of their own involvement-----	47
Grade point average (GPA) of children -----	48
Highlights of the open-ended responses -----	49
Summary of Interview Data-----	54
Introduction -----	54
Findings of the interview -----	55
Demographic information -----	55
Summary of open-ended responses -----	56
Review of the School Documents -----	59

CHAPTER V Summary, Discussion, Conclusion, and

Recommendations -----	62
Summary -----	62
Discussion of the Findings -----	64
Conclusion -----	66
Recommendations for Future Research -----	67
LIST OF TABLES -----	37

TABLES

1. Subjects Completing Survey -----	37
2. Parents' Age Groups -----	38
3. Parents' Educational Background -----	39
4. Family Income -----	40
5. Parent Marital Status-----	41
6. Number of Children In a Family -----	42
7. Parental Involvement at School -----	44
8. Parental Involvement at Home -----	46
9. Parents' Perception of Their Own Involvement -----	47
10. Child's GPA on Last Report Card-----	48

REFERENCE LIST	68
-----------------------------	----

APPENDIX:

A ----Parent Survey-----	73
B ----Cover Letter-----	76
C ----Interview Guide Questions-----	77
D ---- Human Subject Consent Form-----	79
E ----Introductory Letter For Consent-----	80
F ----Consent Response Form-----	81
G----Table 11-----	82
H ----Table 12 -----	84
I ----Table 13 -----	85
J ----Table 14 -----	86
K ----Table 15 -----	87
L ----Table 16 -----	87

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AND ITS PERCEIVED IMPACT ON CHILDREN'S ACHIEVEMENT

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Parental involvement in the learning activities of their children and the perceived impact of parents on their children's achievement are of continuing interest to educators as they are trying to find ways to improve the academic achievement of their students. In the last few decades, the importance of parental involvement in schools has increasingly gained recognition at both state and national levels. For example, the eighth goal of the National Education Goals, as set out in the Goals 2000: Educate America Act, noted that every school should promote a partnership between home and school that will increase parental involvement and participation in the social, emotional, and academic growth of children (U.S. Department of Education, 1994). Many other studies also support the important role parents play in the education of their children. For example, Dauber and Epstein (1993) maintained:

Research conducted for nearly a quarter of a century has shown convincingly that parent involvement is important for children's learning, attitudes about school, and aspirations. Children are more successful students at all grade levels if their parents participate at school and encourage education and learning at home, whatever the educational background or social class of their parents (p. 53).

Likewise, Henderson (1987) has argued that “the evidence is beyond dispute: parent involvement improves student achievement. When parents are involved, children do better in school and they go to better schools” (p. 1).

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This study investigated parental involvement in their children’s education and those same parents’ perceived impact on their children’s achievement. The importance of parental involvement in schools is acknowledged throughout the literature (Bempechant, 1990; Epstein, 1991; Henderson, 1987; Kagan, 1984; Satters, 1985). Many studies have examined parental involvement and student achievement; however, very few studies are found that have examined what those parents perceive is their impact on their children’s achievement. This research study, therefore, has combined both parental involvement and those parents’ perceptions of their impact on their children’s achievement.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The findings of this study will be important to parents. As the title indicates, parents are the central figures in children’s education, and their perceived impact is relevant to their children’s achievement. It is hoped that the findings will foster parents’ awareness, perception, interest, competence, and responsibility in the education of their children. Furthermore, this study re-emphasizes the importance of parent-teacher partnership and advocates a strong shared responsibility for children’s achievement. Ultimately, this study may help to bring a sense of unity and collegiality among parents as well as with educators in general.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research questions addressed in this study are as follows:

1. What role do parents play in their children's education?
2. In what activities/functions can and do parents participate?
3. What are the barriers to parental involvement?
4. What do parents perceive is their impact on their children's achievement?

DEFINITION OF TERMS

For the purpose of this study, relevant terms have been identified, defined, and clarified. The key terms in this study are parent, parental involvement, and parents' perceived impact. Following are the applied definitions for the present study.

Parent:

In the context of this study parental involvement means the involvement of not just biological parents, but any adult who has parenting responsibilities and who makes contact with the school on the child's behalf.

Parental involvement:

Parental involvement is participation by parents in any school-related activity in school as well as the home. These activities are not limited to merely the traditional categories, such as attendance at school events, home tutoring, teacher-parents conferences, discipline management, and participation on school committees. This participation is seen by educators as supportive of instruction, which may or may not

influence school policies (Epstein, 1984, 1995; Epstein and Salinas, 1993; Moles, 1987; Ost, 1988). In this research study parental involvement is incorporated into two categories: 1) Parental involvement in school activities, and 2) parental involvement in learning activities in the home.

Parent perceived impact:

Parent perceived impact means parents' understanding, or beliefs, or awareness of their own influence or effect on their children's achievement.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

There are three major limitations that must be considered in evaluating the results of this study. First, this study was limited in random sampling of the study. The sample subjects were all comprised of one hundred percent Roman Catholic and white parents of a suburban Catholic elementary school. The findings cannot be generalized to parents of other religious denominations or ethnic groups.

A second limitation of this study was its small number (121 survey respondents and only ten individual interviews) of participants. An argument could be raised about whether the sample represented the entire school that consisted of 274 families with 400 children in attendance.

Finally, this study is limited by the cooperation and veracity of the parents. For instance, regarding the children's GPA, whatever the parents confided was assumed to be accurate.

THE OUTLINE

In Chapter Two, a review of the literature begins with a brief history of parental involvement followed by the discussion on the specific research that highlights the importance of parental involvement, various types of parental involvement, effects (benefits) of parental involvement, barriers of parental involvement in the school activities, and parent perception of student achievement.

Chapter Three describes the methodology used to conduct this research study. In this section, selection of survey instrument, and the procedure used in collecting and analyzing the data are described.

Chapter Four provides the findings or answers to the research questions regarding parental involvement and those parents' perceived impact on their children's achievement.

Chapter Five presents a summary of the interpretation of the research findings, its implication, and the conclusion of the research study. Further recommendations for research are also included.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

INTRODUCTION

A great amount of information is available regarding the role and significance of parental involvement in the process of the education of children. The following review of literature includes a brief history of the growth of parental involvement, the importance of parental involvement, the various types of parental involvement, the effects of parental involvement, the barriers of parental involvement, parental perception on their children's achievement, and a concluding summary.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Since early times, parents have been the most important educators of their children. Children received their first education in the home until 1580 B.C. when in Egypt the first formal education outside the home was started. The root of the current emphasis on parental involvement, however, can be seen in the works of Rousseau (1712-1778) and Pestalozzi (1747-1827). Rousseau emphasized education and the importance of mothers being involved in the education of their children. Pestalozzi viewed a mother as the child's first educator. His thoughts were that the mother is the first to nourish her child's body, so she should also be the first to nourish his or her mind (Pestalozzi, 1951).

In the United States, the kindergarten movement began in the 1880s with its emphasis on involving parents in their children's education. As a result, in the late 1880s

national parent educational organizations were established, and by the 1920s and 1930s there were more than 75 such organizations. Gestwicki (1992) reported that during the 1930s parent cooperative nursery schools began and continue today involving middle-class parents with opportunities to participate in the life of the schools. These efforts may include helping to define school philosophy and practices to aiding in the care and maintenance of facilities.

Although the nation was consumed by World War II during the first half of the 1940s parent education continued, and child care services were provided to allow mothers to work in the war effort. During this decade of war, greater awareness of the emotional and social health of children became important (Berger, 1991). Bloom (1992) described the expanding role home-school communications played in the 1940s. There was communication between parents and teachers and between parents and administrators, but there was also a distinct separation between home and school. Parents were considered experts at bringing up their children, and schools were considered experts at educating children with both parties confident that the other would uphold its end of the bargain. However, in the 1950s school systems consolidated, and children began to travel long distances from homes to schools. School administrators played strong leadership roles, and parents' power was reduced as parents became less involved with their children's schools (Berger, 1991).

Bloom (1992) also discussed that in the 1960s parents actively sought more individual identities for themselves and their children. This resulted in a decrease in the distance between home and school. Parents interested in the relevancy of the curriculum

looked more critically at what was being taught in the schools. During this time, Lopez (1992) described two innovative efforts initiated to interrupt the cycle of poverty and provide inter-generational education in parenting and literacy. These two programs, Head Start and the University of Oregon Follow Through Program, empowered parents through training and communication to become involved in the education of their children.

Parent involvement efforts during the 1970s were described individually by Bloom (1992) and Lopez (1992). Parent involvement in public schools became institutionalized as many federal and state-funded programs, such as Head Start, the Original Follow Through Program, and Title 1 mandated parent involvement. During this decade, educators began to see the need for help and support from parents as reflected in the growth of the Parent-Teacher Associations (PTA) and Parent-Teacher Organizations (PTO). The PTAs / PTOs gained a strong voice in public school hierarchies as parents became more actively involved in all areas of educational policy and practice.

Bloom (1992) and Lopez (1992) also illustrated how parental involvement in schools changed in the 1980s. During this decade, parents became polarized. Many parents who kept their children in public schools were actively involved and instrumental in supporting innovations such as parental choice, site-based management, and school reform. Others reacted by pulling their children out of public schools and putting them into private, parochial, or more homogeneous suburban systems. Furthermore, this decade is marked by an increasing lack of parent-teacher partnership due to dramatic changes in family structures. The number of working mothers, single-parents, and step-families increased drastically. Schools had an additional challenge of working with parents

who were least likely to be able to get involved with their children's school the working poor, the non-English-speaking, those on welfare, and homeless families. During this time decentralization and an increase in site-based management made it possible for some groups of parents to become very involved at local levels, while other groups of parents were not encouraged or invited to participate in schools.

Finally, Bloom (1992) and Lopez (1992) in separate chapters described the current state of parental involvement in schools. The schools of the 1990s, they believed, are attempting to create climates of support and respect for parents. Although largely unfocused and at a grass-roots level, parental involvement in the current decade has seen an increase in schools on all levels. Comprehensive parental involvement policies with nationwide and state networking capabilities are evolving. Parents, continuing to be frustrated with public education, are forming ad hoc parent groups devoted to instigating specific changes or promoting specific issues. PTAs and PTOs are continuing to grow in number and strength as parents are feeling an increased sense of urgency to become involved in their local schools.

THE IMPORTANCE OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Everyone seems to agree that parental involvement in their children's education is a wonderful idea, simply because the challenges which school children face cannot be solved by either the school alone or the family alone. As Henderson (1987) stated, "parent involvement is neither a quick fix nor a luxury; it is absolutely fundamental to a healthy system of public education" (p. 153). In fact, research has found that the fastest

way to improve a student's academic performance is to increase the amount and improve the quality of parental involvement (Fuller & Olsen, 1998).

Kim, Fruth, and Bowles (1976) found that a child's prospects for future academic success were enhanced by parental involvement in the educational process. They said that parental involvement is the critical factor in the aspirations and achievement of high school students. Marquand (1987) reported that parental involvement in school issues establishes a powerful climate for student learning in school as well as in the home. The National Education Goals Panel has defined one of the eight goals to be achieved by the year 2000 as "every school will promote partnerships that will increase parental involvement and participation in promoting the social, emotional, and academic growth of children" (U.S. Department of Education, 1994). According to a meta-analysis including 66 studies of student success (Henderson, 1987), when parents become involved in their children's education at school, one or more of the following results were included: higher grades and better test scores, better attendance and regularly completed homework, reduced placements in special education or remedial classes, higher graduation rates, and more positive attitudes surrounding student behavior at school.

TYPES OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

There are various types of parental involvement in their children's education (Gestwicki, 1992). Gestwicki asserted that parental involvement varies by school and program, simply because the term "parental involvement" means different things to different people. The models of parental involvement range from a low to a high level of

participation. Schools with low levels of parental involvement allow parents to take part in activities that do not challenge the expertise of teachers or the decision-making power of school administrators. These activities may include newsletters, parent meetings, and individual parent conferences. These activities keep parents at a distance while learning secondhand about their children's lives at school. In contrast, schools with high levels of parental involvement provide opportunities for parents to directly participate in their child's education through school visits, classroom observations, or volunteer activities such as serving on school decision-making communities. In these schools parents are regarded as partners and are given the power to make decisions concerning the education of their children. Epstein (1987a) categorized two major types of parental involvement in their children's education: (1) parental involvement in school, and (2) parental involvement in their children's learning activities at home. Both of these major types are examined below under separate headings.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN THE SCHOOL

Parental involvement in school refers to parents who come to school as part of an audience or as visitors to encourage and to support school events, or as volunteers who can be classified as tutors or mentors to students, and as helpers who assist teachers in classroom and school activities. A newer and growing form of parental involvement in school also refers to parents' participation in governance and advocacy to assist school administrators (Epstein, 1988).

Parents as part of an audience or visitors contribute a great deal to the school by responding to invitations to watch children's performances in musical events, dramatic productions, sport activities, science projects, curriculum fairs and so on. Such activities provide parents with an opportunity to see their children's academic as well as co-curricular projects on display. Parental presence as an audience at graduation and award ceremonies not only affirms the children's self-worth and helps children to become more intrinsically motivated and thus encourages children to do better. This presence also provides recognition for the educators who work in preparing children for these great moments.

Parents as volunteers (helpers, tutors, mentors) assist in classrooms as well as in other areas of school activities. In classrooms, parents provide help to teachers, check homework, and other assignments. As tutors, parents listen to children reading aloud individually as well as in small groups or other such activities. As tutors, parents provide remedial tutoring to the children in need, help children to select appropriate literature in the library, or assist in computer-based instruction, and so forth. Parents as mentors collaborate with teachers as problem solvers. Parents as volunteers take part in field trips, sports programs, fund-raising, and so forth. Thus, parents as helpers, tutors, and mentors in school can be very effective in supporting children's learning at school (Gestwicki, 1992).

Parental involvement in school governance (administration) refers to parents' participation in policy and decision making. It also refers to parents who serve as monitors of changes instituted for school improvement (Epstein, 1988). Parents in governance participate as voting members of school councils, steering committees,

advisory councils and other committees or groups at the local level. When parents are involved in governance of the school of their children, they provide input to policies that affect their children's education. Through parents' participation in governance, school faculty and administration become aware of parent perspectives of school policy development. When parents serve as members of a governing body of the school, they not only feel supportive of their children's learning environment, but also that their children's rights are protected (Fuller & Olsen, 1998).

Parental involvement in advocacy involves parents, individually or as a group, in participatory roles in such groups as (PTA) or (PTO), and other committees or groups at school, district, state, and national levels. Parents' involvement in advocacy includes connections with educational agencies, such as the National Parent Teacher Association (NPTA), the National Parenting Association (NPA), businesses, and other groups as well that share responsibility for their children's education and future successes. For instance, parents may become linked to political groups and elected representatives who design and approve educational programs, funding appropriations, and budgets. Parents in advocacy not only advocate within the school but they can also be very powerful advocates for the initiation of new policies and programs within and outside of the school to improve education. Thus, parental involvement in the school is one of the most important factors for the educational improvement of their children.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN THE HOME

Most parent groups and educational authorities agree that children's learning is supported when parents fulfill their basic obligations as parents. The parents' obligations include providing for their children's health and safety as well as developing parenting skills and child-rearing practices that prepare children for school, maintain healthy child development across the grades, and build positive home conditions that support school learning and behavior throughout the school years. For instance, parents make sure their children get sufficient rest, are fed an ample and nutritious diet, get to school regularly and on time, are dressed appropriately for the weather, have clean clothes to wear, and have a quiet and a well-lit place to study at home. Walberg (1984) noted that the home environment has such a strong effect on learning because "87% of a student's waking time is normally controlled by the parents" (p. 397). This "at-home" time can strongly influence school productivity and, if academically stimulating conditions are maintained, will dramatically increase the student's total learning time.

Walberg's (1984) research shows that increasing parental supervision of homework and reducing children's viewing of television strongly affected academic achievement. Walberg further argued that children whose parents had rules concerning television viewing achieved at higher levels in math and reading. Walberg insisted that homework develops self-discipline, enriches the experiences of the school day, provides opportunities for independent study, helps draw the home and school closer together, and maintains students' interest in learning.

A survey by Epstein (1982) found that fifth-grade students who had greater parental involvement in homework reported more positive attitudes towards school. These students also reported more regular homework habits, more similarity between the school and their family values, more familiarity between the teacher and their parents, and more homework assigned as well as completed on weekends. Learning activities that involved parents in their children's education at home includes listening to their children read, encouraging homework and participating in homework or other learning activities, especially with elementary school children.

EFFECTS OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Research has consistently documented the effects of parental involvement on their children's achievement. In 1981, the National Committee for Citizens in Education (NCCE) published *The Evidence Grows* (Henderson, 1982), which described 35 studies on parental involvement. The findings of all the studies in this meta analysis supported the fact that parental involvement in almost any form appears to provide gains in student achievement. In 1988, the NCCE published *The Evidence Continues to Grow: Parent Involvement Improves Student Achievement* (Henderson, 1987) with 18 new studies that strongly suggest that involving parents can make a critical difference (Henderson, 1987). Becher (1984) did an extensive review of the literature on parental involvement in education. She examined how parental involvement affects children and found that there are several key family behaviors that clearly relate to student achievement. According to Becher (1984), regardless of socioeconomic status, children reach high achievement scores

with the support of high expectations from parents who interact frequently with their children. These parents also communicate with a broader vocabulary, provide problem-solving strategies, and reinforce what their children learn in school .

Clark (1983) conducted an intensive case study of 10 families living in public housing projects in Chicago. Five had a senior high school student who was doing well academically (top 20% of his or her class), and five had a senior high school student in the bottom 20% of his or her class. Clark visited with each family for at least two entire days and observed its structure and interrelationships. In the high achievers' homes, Clark found strong parent encouragement of academic pursuits, clear and consistent limits for children, warm and nurturing parent-child interactions, and consistent monitoring of time use. These parents also seemed to hold common attitudes toward education that showed great concern for the school's success and a belief that only with parental input would schools provide sound education.

Dornbusch's (1986) study was concerned with family behaviors that can make a difference in student grades no matter what the income or educational level of the parents. The degree of parent participation in school functions, such as parent conferences, open houses, school nights, and so forth, are strongly linked to students' grades regardless of the parent's own educational attainment. Another important family behavior is the reaction of parents to good or poor grades. For instance, ignoring bad grades or overreacting in anger towards low grades is ineffective to improve the grades, while the use of extrinsic rewards seem to be the most effective response for better achievement. Majoribanks (1976) also showed that parental verbal encouragement and interactions regarding learning

activities at home have a positive influence on achievement. Parents who praise, encourage, and offer help aid their children in attaining better grades.

Bempechant (1990) found that it is not simply the amount of time parents spend interacting in schools, but it is the parents' actions in the home and the psychological process of creating positive expectations that are likely to matter in their child's school performance. This study also found that those schools whose students perform well academically are likely to have active parent organizations, numerous volunteer opportunities, and a high frequency of positive interactions between parents and teachers.

Bempechant (1990) noted that accumulated evidence supports the importance of parent involvement in children's education. Some parents have the skills to foster academic achievement. Most importantly, research shows that when teachers and educational administrators are strongly committed to involving parents in their children's education, academic outcomes for children can be very positive.

BARRIERS TO PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

In theory, parents and teachers overwhelmingly agree on the importance of parental involvement or home-school partnership that contributes to student success. However, in practice, the paradox is that an actual resistance to parental involvement in schools comes from teachers as well as from parents themselves. The benefits of home-school partnership are evident, yet parental involvement in school programs and activities remains rare (Burns, 1993). In 1932 Waller maintained that parents and teachers are natural enemies. He argued that, despite the urgent need for partnership and the weight of

supportive evidence for such a partnership, parents are continually kept at a distance in most schools. Pulitzer prize-winning columnist William Raspberry wrote: "I suspect that the single biggest reason for noninvolvement is as simple as this: parents don't know how important they are to their children's academic success, and they don't know what to do" (Raspberry, 1994, p. A27). One must conclude, therefore, that there are powerful barriers against parental involvement. In this section the following five major barriers of parental involvement are explored: (1) changing demographics; (2) school norms that do not support partnerships; (3) resistance from educators; (4) resistance from parents; and (5) limited resources (time, money, training and leadership) to support parental involvement.

CHANGING DEMOGRAPHICS

Family structures have been changing very rapidly in the last few decades. For example, the traditional two-parent nuclear family is now one structural form in a society of multiple family structures; 70% of mothers of school-aged children are now in the work force compared with 30% in 1960. Almost half of all marriages today result in divorce. There are more single-parent families. A third of all marriages are now remarriages, and one out of four children has one or more step-parents (Swap, 1990). The number of children under 15 having children has increased dramatically in the last decade. The number of children living below poverty level is increasing. Racial, linguistic, and ethnic diversity is more common in classrooms. Swap, goes on to say that by the year 2000, the census bureau projects that the total number of minority children will have increased from 28% to 33%. Over and above, immigration figures are soaring. According to preliminary

data from the 1990 census, immigrants now account for 30% of the nation's population growth, up from 19% in 1980. All these demographic changes have made parental involvement in their children's education more complicated. The growing necessity of mothers to be employed outside the home limits their capacity to be involved in school activities during school hours.

The demographic changes also affect educators. Their availability for meeting parents before or after school cannot be taken for granted, especially when their time is not compensated with released time during the day for other aspects of their educational duties, or with greater compensation, or with a special arrangement to meet a child in special need. For all these reasons, taking on the additional responsibility of reaching out to parents in new ways may not be rewarding to educators. The increase in the diversity of our students has also created many challenges for educators. Swap's study (1990) found that in Chelsea, Massachusetts, 70% of the children now come from homes in which English is not the primary language. In a public school in La Jolla, California, 31 different primary languages are spoken by children (Swap, 1990). In many cases, the diversity in the student body can be enriching to the class, the teacher, and the curriculum. On the other hand, the extent and range of differences make it difficult for teachers to cope. Thus, demographic changes are one of the major barriers of parental involvement.

SCHOOL NORMS THAT DO NOT SUPPORT PARTNERSHIP

Parental involvement, collaboration, partnership and so on do not make up the dominant model for the management of schools in the modern age. The traditional approach to managing schools emphasizes hierarchy, individualism, and technology rather than dialogue, relationship, and reciprocity (Epstein, 1984). Team-teaching, collaborative problem solving, or a respect for a strong teachers' voice in a school-based management are still the exception. Teachers' training programs rarely emphasize a curriculum that would help teachers to find and use their own voice to learn skills of working in groups of teachers or parents to understand the effects of different approaches to school management, or to explore the contributions of other human service professionals to family and community development. According to Seeley (1985):

The essential trouble is the nature of the system itself, a system that has been guided by a "delivery system" mentality. Public education today is a professionalized, bureaucratized, governmental enterprise attempting to deliver education as a service. The system is at fault because it is designed to deliver something that cannot be delivered. The system is failing and will continue to fail until education is rediscovered as a dimension of human development dependent on personal motivation, initiative, and relationship, not on systems service delivery (p. 4).

Seeley went on to argue that American schools have adopted a "delegation model" of parent involvement in which parents signal that they do not have to be involved because the job of education has been delegated to the schools, and educators see parent-involvement as an interference with the jobs that have been delegated to them. In the delegation model, conversation is necessary only during crises.

RESISTANCE FROM EDUCATORS

The improvement of teacher-parent interaction is considered an integral part of any successful educational setting (Ames, & Caroe et al. 1995 Epstein, 1987; Leitch & Tangri, 1988;). However, when educational reform movements began proposing changes in schools, involving increased interaction from parents, teachers were unprepared for the assertive attitudes of parents (Schreiber, 1962; Ost, 1988). Teachers reacted defensively to community concern and became gradually isolated from parents, students, and administrators. One manifestation of this isolation is that the majority of teachers were observed relating to parents in a distrustful, hostile, and self-preserving manner (Ost, 1988). Brian (1994) observed that low expectations and negative attitudes of some teachers toward low-income parents also inhibited the development of initiative to involve parents. According to Ferro and Bush (1994), disillusionment and frustration within the first two years of a teacher's experience may also inhibit the development of initiatives to involve parents.

London, Molotsi, & Palmer (1984) discovered that teachers face a certain dilemma regarding parental involvement. While the request for such participation can suggest that the teacher is professionally weak, any refusal to allow it can yield questions from professional organizations over control issues. In the bargain some teachers may totally reject parental involvement simply because it could interfere with their daily schedule and lesson plans.

Other studies of teachers' attitudes toward parental involvement include Lortie's (1975) large-scale study in which he found that teachers want parents to be supportive of

their efforts and participate when asked, yet want parents to stay out of the teacher's realms. Gorton (1977) addressed the question of whether principals truly want parents to become active in school affairs. The study concluded that principals look upon parental involvement as demanding, time-consuming, and frustrating. According to Treffinger and Fine (1979), much of the resistance from educators toward parent involvement and parent participation in the schools revolves simply around the complications and difficulties in arranging and conducting involvement programs.

As educators have become more possessed of a sense of their own importance as they have become more professional and organized, parents have gradually been removed from the decision-making process. Although research, as well as experience, reports the importance of parental involvement in the school, parents are often perceived as peripheral and tangential rather than essential to education. The reason behind this perception of parents is that teachers and administrators face realistic time constraints. The administrators and teachers are busy maintaining the educational operation as it currently exists. Any changes mean that something will receive less attention, and it all too often seems to be parental involvement for all the noted reasons.

RESISTANCE FROM PARENTS

Studies conducted through parent-teacher interaction indicate that a difference in educational values leaves the parents feeling awkward in their encounters with school personnel. Furthermore, while the home and school value system may seem congruent, parents feel ostracized in the face of indifference or unfriendliness received from school

personnel. Parent perceptions of teachers' disinterest or disapprovals may be reasons that many parents are reluctant to contact them or come to the school.

Sasser (1991) argued that a reluctant parent-participant is not an uninterested parent. Reasons for parents' reluctance could be several. For instance, some parents believe that they do not get enough information from the school to help their children at home. Parents also have reported that school teachers often ask them to tutor children at home, and these parents would be willing to do so if only they knew how (Brian, 1994). Moreover, a study by Epstein (1986) found that parents believe that they should help their children if the teachers give them learning activities to do at home. In addition, parents often find that as their children progress through higher grades, they are less qualified to provide the necessary help for their children. Thus, the parental involvement dwindles as grade level increases.

Gress and Carroll (1985) reported that the setting of the school itself can create territorial barriers for the parent and can create a psychological "set" in which the parents may revert to childhood roles and role relationships. Gress and Carroll also found that many parent-teacher conferences are defensive, antagonistic, disorganized, and frustrating. According to Fredericks (1987), parents who do not become involved may reflect uneasiness with the school, often due to their personal experiences as students themselves. Shifts in sociological structures of home and school have apparently promoted parental resistance to involvement and participation in their children's schooling.

Comer (1986) reported that, in addition to the racial, economic, educational, and social differences between home and school, parents are reluctant to become involved in

their children's school because they may be afraid that their children will perform poorly and reflect negatively on their parenting ability. Parents will come to school activities, but with time so precious, they want to make sure that they are not wasting their time on activities where their involvement is not really wanted nor valued, or where they are not making a contribution to their children's education and welfare. Increased diversity among the parent population and a sense of being different from school personnel may lessen parents' comfort in seeking contact with teachers or administrators.

LIMITED RESOURCES (*Time, Money, Training, and Leadership*)

TO SUPPORT PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Time is one of the most important resources in a school almost all of which is allocated directly to teaching. Finding time continues to be a barrier to home-school partnership. Changing demographics have made time even more precious and fragmented for both parents and educators. This reality needs to be acknowledged, accepted, and planned for, but usually it is not. In the lack of easy solutions to this problem, misunderstanding and conflict develop. Parents and teachers often interpret the other's lack of availability as a signal of a lack of concern for the children involved. Teachers get annoyed when parents fail to appear for conferences or neglect to carry out agreed-upon educational activities at home for which there is not an adequate amount of time or energy. Parents despair when teachers talk to them only in 15-minute conferences and occasionally fail to recognize their child's special strengths. Anger and disappointment, frustration and exhaustion are commonplace in this struggle, each party often seeing the other at fault.

However, parents and teachers do make time for each other during a crisis, but at that point, the stage is set for trouble, and the time spent together is often punishing and adversarial. When trust, respect, and openness do not already exist in the relationship between parents and teachers, it is difficult to engage these foundational values in a crisis atmosphere.

Time is not the only limited resource, money raises problems as well. School budgets are subjected to continual scrutiny. In many states, the financial resources that are available to schools are declining; the need to provide salaries to attract good teachers, the rising cost of the necessary technology, equipment and appropriate educational space burdens the budget. Consequently, money is not readily allocated to parent-teacher partnership programs, which makes it difficult to initiate or maintain this outreach for parents. The lack of availability of money for start-up or expansion of partnership activities is a practical barrier to successful outreach.

Beside time and money, inadequate training skill on the part of both parents and teachers has been cited as a barrier to parental involvement. Even if they have positive attitudes toward school, parents may not have the training or skill needed to help their children learn (Burns, 1993). Many teachers and other staff members also lack the necessary skills to work effectively with parents and families, particularly those who have different cultural, socioeconomic, or language backgrounds. Teachers and administrators may be uncomfortable having parents in the school because they do not know how to involve parents in the classrooms while still maintaining their role as educators (Cotton & Wikelund, 1989).

In his study, Starr (1978) found that school staff and administrators are not well trained to facilitate parent-teacher partnership. Starr concluded that the average home is open to a partnership with the schools, but that the average school personnel are afraid of parent-partnership due to lack of training in such necessary skills. He contended that the nature of teacher-education training retards the concept that parents can or should have knowledge of their children's education. Comer (1986) suggested that teachers and administrators are not necessarily hired for their ability to relate to parents, nor are they taught how to work with parents or trained to assist them in promoting the growth and development of students. According to Comer, educators do not offer meaningful opportunities for parental involvement in the school. Often, they simply do not want parents in the school. Thornburg (1981) found in one study that the teachers were actually in subtle ways discouraging parental involvement.

The lack of leadership limits access to parental involvement. Epstein (1982) argued that there is a relative lack of active administrative leadership and attention from the educational administrators to promote parental involvement. Epstein (1987b) also pointed out that, while administrative leadership in supporting parental involvement is very important as a means of achieving good results in the educational process, administrators often leave the selection and use of parent involvement activities to their teaching and support staff. On the other hand, there are very few teachers who make frequent or systematic use of parent-involvement activities because pre-service and in-service training sessions currently "result in attitudes and practices designed to keep parents out of the learning process and even out of the classroom" (p. 23). Epstein goes on to say that in-

service education offered to principals or teachers on parent involvement is generally restricted to a single session, hardly enough time to confront complex attitudes, identify and work on needed skills, or learn about promising practices in other settings. Thus, although the information about the benefits of home-school partnership is easily accessible and often mentioned in professional journals, useful, organized information or comprehensive training that would help educators to incorporate the information into their own practice has not been widely available (Aronson, 1996; Burns, 1993).

PARENTAL PERCEPTION ON CHILDREN'S ACHIEVEMENT

Kellaghan, Sloane, Alvarez, and Bloom (1993) reported that parental perception towards education, interest in their children's education, and belief in the value of schooling have been found to be related to children's academic achievement. A study conducted by the Great Britain Department of Education and Science found that more of the variation of academic achievement could be accounted for by variation in parents' perception, interest, and attitudes (helping with homework, talking with the child about school, educational aspirations for the child) than by either variation in the material circumstances in the home or by variation in schools.

Marjoribanks (1976) found that for elementary and secondary school students, family environment related strongly to academic performance as measured by intelligence and subject matter tests. This included parents' perception on aspirations for children, parental literacy level, interest and support for schooling, initiative and responsibility taken

by parents toward education, parental belief in the value of school, and parental interest in helping with schoolwork. Support for this research comes from the National Assessment of Educational Progress report, *Crossroads in American Education*, which states:

Children are more likely to be successful learners if their parents or care-givers display an interest in what they are learning, provide access to learning materials, and serve as role models interested in their learning experiences. The more encouragement and resources provided at home, the more likely students are to do well in school (Applebee, Langer, & Mullis, 1989, p. 34).

In research conducted by Keeves (1975), students in their first year of high school and their parents were studied in order to describe the ways in which characteristics of the educational environment of the home, the school, and the peer group accounted for change in academic performance. Results suggested that the perceptions, attitudes, and ambitions of parents for their children contributed to the highest level of achievement in both mathematics and science. The study further found,

if in cases where the parental perception, interest, and attitudes are low the mother and the father could be persuaded to take a greater interest in the student's schooling, the evidence from this investigation indicates that the level of achievement of the student would be raised (P. 458).

Moreover, the evidence suggested that improved parental perception towards school is accompanied by increased parental involvement in children's school activities (Epstein, 1986, 1987b). Twillie, Petry, Kenney, & Payne (1991) found a positive correlation between academic achievement of fourth grade inner-city students and parent perceptions, interests, and attitudes about school. Likewise, Russell (1993) examined parent perceptions of middle schools and their impact on parental involvement and student achievement. Results of the study showed that parents' involvement, perception, and so

forth are important for adolescents' learning, development, and school success. Students performed better academically, possessed positive school attitudes, had higher aspirations, and exhibited other positive behaviors when parents were aware, knowledgeable, and involved in the school life of their children. However, Kellaghan et al. (1993) cautioned that although the direct benefits to the child are unclear, parental support for the school may be communicated to the child in a variety of ways. This reinforces the value of schooling and academic achievement.

SUMMARY

The literature review supports the thesis that parents are their children's first and most influential teachers. Additionally, what parents do to help their children learn is more important to academic success than the socioeconomic status of a family. Although teachers as well as parents overwhelmingly agree that parent involvement contributes to student achievement, resistance for partnership comes from both sides. Nevertheless, if school reforms for the twenty first century are to be effective, parental involvement in their children's education must continue.

Henderson (1987) has summarized research on parental involvement and found that the more comprehensive and long-lasting the parental involvement, the greater its influence is likely to be, not just on student achievement but on the quality of schools as well. The major message of parental involvement, therefore, is that parents are important for children's learning, development, and school success. Berger (1919) wrote:

Children are a nation's future. The hope of that future lies in the acknowledgment by schools and society alike that parents must be involved with their children's education if our nation is to continue flourishing. Strong parent-teacher collaboration will be needed to ensure continuity in care and education, and support for children of all income levels and ethnic backgrounds. A concerted effort by all those involved with children's welfare is essential if we are to meet the needs of the coming generation successfully (p. 217).

Likewise, research conducted over the last two decades suggests that students at all grade levels do better academic work and have more positive school attitudes, higher aspirations, and other positive behaviors if they have parents who are aware, knowledgeable, encouraging, and involved (Epstein, 1992). It has been observed that regardless of the diversity of culture, background, language, socioeconomic and family status the more involved parents are, the greater their children's educational achievement.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This study investigated parental involvement in children's education and the perceived impact of parents upon their children's achievement. The purpose of this chapter is to describe the methodology for the various components of the study. This chapter addresses the selection of the subjects (participants), instrumentation, data-collection procedures, data analysis procedures, and inter-coder reliability of the study.

SELECTION OF SUBJECTS

The subjects for this research study were parents of children in a suburban elementary Catholic school. The selection strategy of the subjects was as follows: from a total of 274 families who have children in the school, 100 families (that is every 1 of 3 families of the total number) were selected for participation in a survey and 10 parents (that is every 27th family of the total number) were selected for a personal one-on-one interview. In the case of refusal (or inability to participate) of the selected parent, the next immediate family with the following number was selected .

INSTRUMENTATION

A mail survey (Appendix A) and interview guide (Appendix C) were developed to obtain data to answer the research questions of the study. The survey was comprised of 22 questions, 17 of which were multiple-choice and 5 were open-ended. The questions were divided into three categories.

The first category of 10 questions were multiple-choice questions with four choices each. These questions were aimed at investigating into the demographic information of the respondent. The first question sought to establish the relationship of the respondent with the student. The second and third questions were with regard to the mother's age and education. The fourth and fifth were with regard to the father's age and education. The guardian's age and education were asked for in the sixth and seventh questions. The eighth question sought information about the family income, the ninth marital status, and the tenth on the number of children at home.

In the second category there were seven questions which were all multiple-choice questions. These questions were aimed at inquiring into the parental involvement at school and home. The first question focused on parents visiting the school. The second question was with regard to their attending PTA/PTO meetings. The third question inquired about parents' participation in school activities. The fourth asked about parents helping their children with home work. The fifth question was regarding conversation between parent and child about school. Whether the parents listened to the child's reading at home was the sixth question, and the last question focused on the child's GPA.

In the third category there were five questions all of which were open-ended questions. These questions were aimed at parents' perceptions regarding their own involvement. The first and the second questions were on the importance of parental involvement. The third question was on parents' perception of their own impact on their children's achievement. The barriers to parental involvement was the fourth question, and the last question sought suggestions to increase parental involvement.

The interview schedule was comprised of 18 questions based on the survey. These questions were divided into three categories. The eight questions of the first category inquired into the demographic details of the interviewee. The four questions of the second category inquired into the interviewees' participation in the learning activities of the children at home, at school, and in the PTA/PTO activities. The first five questions of the third category were aimed at investigating into the perception of the interviewee with regard to their own involvement in their children's learning activities. And lastly parents were invited to share any other information on the topic.

DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE

The modes of data collection were threefold - survey, interview, and review of school documents.

The survey (Appendix A) together with a cover letter (Appendix B) and a self-addressed stamped envelope were mailed to the 100 randomly selected families having children in the selected school. The cover letter was added to inform the subjects that their responses were voluntary. The respondents were given 15 days to complete the questions and mail them back. From these first mailing surveys, 65(65%) were returned. In the second mailing 100 surveys were sent, and 56 (56%) were returned. A total of 121 (60.5%) surveys were returned to the researcher.

A letter of introduction and request for participation in the interview (Appendix E) was sent to 15 parents. The letter assured the respondents of complete anonymity. Ten parents responded positively.

For the interviews, all parents those who agreed to be interviewed were asked to fill out the response form (Appendix F) and return it to the researcher. They were also asked to give their written consent on the "Consent Form for Human Subject Protection" (Appendix D). The guide questions (Appendix C) for the interview were the same as for the survey, but they were restructured to suit the interview situation. Each interview lasted approximately 20 to 25 minutes. All interview sessions were audio-taped and transcribed for later analysis.

The review of the published school material was the third mode of data collection. The researcher, collected monthly school newsletters, the principal's letter to the parents, weekly memos, budget reports, minutes of different school committees, and such other pieces, and explored the articles for ideas, and recurring themes indicating parental involvement in the education process of the school. The researcher then identified, categorized, and synthesized them in the thematic sequence of the research questions.

DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURE

The data collected from the survey, interviews, and published materials of the selected school were coded and computed. The questions, section A, q. 1-10 and section B, questions 1-8, were analyzed using procedures in the Statistical Package of the Social Sciences (SPSS, 1997) called frequency cross-tabs. The open-ended questions' responses (data obtained by the survey section B, questions 9-12) were content-analyzed and summarized according to the research questions of the thesis. The interview responses and the data collected from the school's published materials were organized, content-analyzed, and summarized according to the research questions of the thesis.

INTER-CODER RELIABILITY

Once the researcher had completed his own observation and interpretation, three independent observers were asked to review and interpret the same data. The observers then reached an agreement among themselves with their own interpretations, and determined the reliability of the researcher's interpretation.

CHAPTER IV

PRESENTATION OF THE FINDINGS

INTRODUCTION

The investigation was conducted during the month of May 1999. The modes of investigation were mailed survey, individual interviews, and a review of documents of the selected school. Of the 200 surveys that were mailed 121(60.5%) surveys were returned. Of the 15 parents requested for the individual interview, 10 parents presented themselves. The school documents that were reviewed included monthly school newsletters, weekly memos, annual budget reports, and minutes of the school committee meeting.

In this chapter the results of the findings are presented in the following order: (1) The findings of the mailed survey which includes the demographic information of the respondents, parental involvement at school, parental involvement at home, parents' perception of their own involvement and impact, and the grade point average (GPA) of children on the most recent report card, highlights of the open-ended responses; (2) summary of the individual interviews; and (3) review of school documents.

THE FINDINGS OF THE MAILED SURVEY

Demographic Information

The demographic information includes the number of subjects who completed the survey, the parent age groups, their educational background, family income, marital status, and number of children in each family. Table 1 presents the number of parents who completed the questionnaire and returned it to the researcher. Of the 121 surveys returned, 106 (88.3%) were from mothers, 11(9.2%) percent from fathers, and only 3 (2.5%) were from guardians/others.

Table 1
Subjects Completing Survey

Respondents	Frequency	Percent
Mother	106	88.3 %
Father	11	9.2
Guardians/Other	3	2.5
Total	120	100.0

Note: -Valid cases -Missing case

120

1

N.B. Missing cases represent that parents failed to report.

Analysis of parent age groups found that the largest number of parents were in the 31-40 years bracket with 84 (70%) mothers, 63 (53.8%) fathers, and 4 (57.1%) guardians/others. The 41-50 years of age group had the second highest number with 33 (27.5%) mothers, 46 (39.3%) fathers, and 1(14.1%) guardians/others. (See Table 2.)

Table 2
Parents' Age Groups

Age Groups	Mother		Father		Guardians/others	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Under 30	---	---- %	---	---- %	2	28.6 %
31 - 40	84	70.0	63	53.8	4	57.1
41 - 50	33	27.5	46	39.3	1	14.1
51 or +	3	2.5	8	6.8	114	----
Total	120	100.0	117	100.0	121	100.0

Note: Valid cases - Missing cases

Mother -- 120 ----- 1
 Father -- 117 ----- 4

The educational background of parents shows that 78 (65%) college graduates were mothers, 71(61.7%) were fathers, and 3 (60%) were guardian/others. Of the high school diploma holders' 26 (21.7%) were mothers, 27 (23.5%) were fathers, and 1 (20%) were guardians/other. Of the other type of informal degree/diploma holders, 15(12.5%) were mothers, and 17 (14.8%) were fathers. Thus, the majority of the parents were college graduates. (See Table 3.)

Table 3
Parents' Educational Background

Educational Level	Mother		Father		Guardian/others	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Under HS	1	.8 %	---	----	1	.8 %
HS Diploma	26	21.7	27	23.5	1	20.0
College Degree	78	65.0	71	61.7	3	60.0
Others Diploma	15	12.5	17	14.8	116	----
Total	120	100.0	115	100.0	121	100.0

Note: - Valid cases - Missing cases

Mother -- 120 ----- 1
Father -- 115 ----- 6

The analysis of the parents' annual income level shows that 87 (72.5%) of the families have as annual income of \$ 60,001 or more, 29 (24.2%) of the families have between \$40,001 - \$ 60,000, and only 4 (3.3%) of the families have between \$20,000 - \$40,000. Thus, 73% of the respondents have as annual income between \$60,001 or more. (See Table 4.)

Table 4
Family Income

Income Level	Frequency	Percent
\$ 20,000 - 40,000	4	3.3 %
\$ 40,001 - 60,000	29	24.2
\$ 60,001 - or more	87	72.5
Total	120	100.0

Note: - Valid cases - Missing case

120

1

The marital status of parents was the last but one question of the demographic survey. Of those who responded, 111 (92.5%) of the parents were married, 5 (4.2%) were divorced; and only 4 (3.3%) of the respondents were single. Thus, the overwhelming majority of the respondents represented two-parent families. (See Table 5.)

Table 5
Parent Marital Status

Marital Status	Frequency	Percent
Married	111	92.5 %
Divorced	5	4.2
Single	4	3.3
Total	120	100.0

Note: - Valid cases -Missing case

120

1

The final demographic question concerned the number of children in the family. Of 120 respondents, 17(14.2%) of the parents have only one child, 56 (46.7%) have two children, 35(29.2%) parents have three children, and only 12(10%) of the parents have four or more children in the family. Thus, the majority of the families have two or three children . (See Table 6.)

Table 6
Number of Children in a Family

Number of Children	Frequency	Percent
One	17	14.2 %
Two	56	46.7
Three	35	29.2
Four or More	12	9.9
Total	120	100.0

Note: -Valid cases Missing case

120

1

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AT SCHOOL

Parents were asked three questions regarding their involvement in their children's school during the academic year 1998-99. The questions inquired about their visiting the school, attending PTA/PTO meetings, and joining in school activities. Of the 121 respondents, 99 (81.8%) of the parents had visited five or more times, 16 (13.2%) visited three or four times, and 5 (4.1%) had visited one or two times. (See Table 7.)

The second question on parental involvement at school addressed attending PTA/PTO meetings. Of those who responded, 77 (64.2%) of the parents had never attended the meetings, 22 (18.3%) attended once or twice, and only 6 (5.0%) of the parents attended five or more times during the school year 1998-99. There is a striking difference among the parents in attending these meetings. (See Table 7.)

The final question on parental involvement at school related to attending school events. Of those who responded, 89 (73.6%) parents had always attended, 24 (19.8%) had frequently attended, and only 8 (6.6%) had attended sometimes. Thus, almost three-fourths of the parents had always attended the school events, such as sports, drama, field trips, and so forth. (See Table 7 Next page)

Table 7
Parental Involvement at School

School visit		
School visit	Frequency	Percent
Never	1	0.8%
1 - 2 Times	5	4.1
3 - 4 Times	16	13.2
5 or More	99	81.8
Total	121	100.0

Attend PTA/PTO meetings		
Attend PTA/PTO meetings	Frequency	Percent
Never	77	64.2%
1 - 2 Times	22	18.3
3 - 4 Times	15	12.5
5 or More	6	5.0
Total	120	100.0

Note: Attend PTA/PTO: - Valid Cases 120 - Missing 1

Attend school events		
Attend school events	Frequency	Percent
Never	---	---%
Sometimes	8	6.6
Frequently	24	19.8
Always	89	73.6
Total	121	100.0

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AT HOME

Parents were asked three questions regarding their involvement at home in the learning activities of their children. Of those who responded, 64 (52.9%) of the parents claimed they always helped their children with homework, 42 (34.7%) of the parents frequently did so, and 15 (12.4%) only sometimes helped their children. (See Table 8.)

The second question in this category was on talking at home with children about school work. Eighty-one (66.9%) of the parents had always talked with their children, and 40 (33.1%) had frequently talked with their children about the school work. Thus, a majority of parents talked with their children about their school work. (See Table 8.)

The final question in this category was listening to child (ren) reading at home. Fifty-four (45%) of the parents had always listened to their child (ren) reading, 48 (40%) had frequently listened, 15 (12.5%) had sometimes listened to their child (ren) reading, and only 3 (2.5%) parents had never listened to their child (ren) reading. This presentation indicates that most of the parents have listened to their children's reading at home. (See Table 8 Next Page)

PARENTS' PERCEPTION OF THEIR OWN INVOLVEMENT

Having been asked about their involvement at school and at home, the parents were also questioned about their perception of the importance of their own involvement in their children's education. The overwhelming majority 110 (90.9%) considered parental involvement to be very important, 10 (8.3%) replied that it is important, and only one respondent 1 (0.8%) conceded parental involvement has somewhat importance. (See Table 9)

Table 9

Parents' Perception of their Own Involvement

Perception	Frequency	Percent
Somewhat important	1	0.8%
Important	10	8.3
Very important	110	90.9
Total	121	100.0

**GRADE POINT AVERAGE (GPA)
OF CHILD ON THE LAST REPORT CARD**

In the entire survey there was only one question that was asked regarding children's performance in the school. The analysis of GPA on the most recent report card of the school children showed that 60 (78.9%) of the children gained test scores between 3.0 and 3.9 grade point average, 8 (10.5%) children gained 4.0 or more, and 8 (10.5%) gained between 2 and 2.9 grade point average. The GPA test scores indicate that more than three fourths of the children of the participants achieved grade points well above average. The missing 45 cases represent either children of grade one where the GPA does not apply, or parents' failure to report. (See Table 10)

Table 10
Child's GPA on Last Report Card

GPA	Frequency	Percent
4.0 or +	8	10.5 %
3.0 - 3.9	60	78.9
2.0 - 2.9	8	10.5
Total	76	100.0

Note: -Valid cases Missing cases

76

45

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE OPEN -ENDED RESPONSES

The open-ended questions of the survey (Appendix A. section B. 9 -12) were designed to get responses from the subjects in their own words. The questions were asked on the importance of parental involvement, parent perception of their own impact in their children's education, barriers to parental involvement, and suggestions to increase parental involvement in their children's education.

All the parents who responded to the survey were of the opinion that parental involvement has a direct bearing on their child's performance. They argued, despite its inconvenience, firsthand knowledge of the learning activities of their children was of grave importance. Some of the parents insisted that when parents emphasized education at home, the children usually performed better. Some argued that the more involved parents got in their children's education, the more children valued their studies and made an effort to improve their learning. Underlining the importance of parental involvement, these parents insisted that parental involvement should be made mandatory.

As far as homework was concerned, the majority of the parents' opinions were that children should be left free. They do agree that parents' assistance is sometimes necessary; however, this group of parents did not agree that parents should sit and do the children's homework for them. They insisted that parents must foster independence and nurture a healthy sense of personal responsibility.

Some parents felt strongly that parental involvement was not only essential for children's educational development, but it is crucial to their emotional, social and spiritual well-being as well. The same group of parents further stated that parental involvement at

home was essential for the individual attention that the teacher cannot provide in a classroom. One parent reported that parental involvement is important because it complements the teachers' work as well as the students' efforts, and reinforces what is actually being done in the classroom. One of the parents maintained that parental involvement is the one aspect that determined the quality of the school. Many parents expressed that parental involvement in their children's education helped keep lines of communication open between home and school as well as parent-to-parent.

In response to the question on "parent perceived impact," virtually all the parents, irrespective of their own educational background, family income, or social status, stated that their children looked up to them as models; therefore, whatever they did had a direct impact on every aspect of their children's lives. For instance, one mother stated that she made special efforts to know what was going on in the school, and, as a result, her children also made extra effort to maintain their grades. The parents' respect for school teachers influenced the children's respect for teachers. These parents' experience was that their attitude had fostered a comparably favorable attitude in their children.

Most of the parents agreed that their involvement had a deep impact on their children's co-curricular involvements. These parents realized that there is a positive relation between the co-curricular activities and the academic performance. For instance, a parent's presence at school plays and school exhibitions made a difference in the children's performance. The parents believe that children get encouraged by their parents' interest which in turn boosted their self-confidence. Two parents' personal experiences were that, when they took their children's academic concerns seriously, their children also took their

studies seriously. One mother stated "My child would not have valued education this much without my involvement." The reason behind the deep impact of parental involvement she gave was that whatever she did for the child she did it with great love and with personal care.

Some of the parents were convinced that their involvement in their children's learning activities had made their children realize that they sincerely loved and cared for them. Parents strongly believed that their involvement created an environment of trust, in which children had the confidence to articulate what they felt and the courage to ask for help. Parental involvement had taught their children to choose the right priorities with responsibility.

Parents who held full time jobs expressed that the 'shortage of time' and their 'other commitments' were the biggest barriers in being involved in their children's education. Parents were aware of the need for parental involvement and were more than willing to participate in at least a few of the school activities, but their job commitments prevented them. Another factor was that when they came back from their work they were tired and had their own household work to attend to. However, there were parents who belittled this excuse and said that time was never a constraint for the genuinely interested. For those who deemed that their children's education was the first priority, though busy, they found time and energy to participate in school activities.

Three of the parents expressed that modern technology used in the educational institutions was a barrier to parental involvement. For instance, computers, electronics, audiovisual aids, power-point, and so forth, are new to the parents. Therefore, they felt

they were not adequately equipped to help their children. However, four of the young parents were familiar with the modern technology used in the school, but they had small children at home needing full time parental attention.

There were other parents who noted that modern education emphasized professionalism which for many becomes a barrier for participation in school activities. These parents argued that school administrators do invite all the parents to sign up for volunteer jobs, yet they insist on special qualifications which most parents do not have.

A lack of communication and proper organization was another barrier cited. “Today parents,” the chair person argued, “are much more involved in the school than in the past.” He noticed that many parents who have come forward to volunteer in recent years were not accommodated, and once they are not given a chance, they tend to stay out.

The parents made four major suggestions to help increase parental involvement:

- children must be their first priority.
- parent-child activities must be promoted .
- there should be open communication between home and school,
- there should be more opportunities for parents volunteering.

The parents suggested that the overwhelming priority of parents must be their children. They must take care of all the needs of their children, spend time with them, and get involved in their learning activities. At least one of the parents must be at home when their children come back from school. The parents need to discuss the school activities with the children. The best way to start discussion, some suggested, was to ask what lesson or activity they liked most that day, and then move on to other topics.

The second suggestion to increase parental involvement was to promote parent-child activities in the home. These parents felt that the school must adopt textbooks that encourage projects with family involvement. Parents could be provided handbooks so as to follow what was being taught. School teachers must make sure to give homework that requires parental assistance. Teachers must also send a homework checklist to the parents and ask them to sign their names to homework and test papers to make sure that parents know their children's academic performance. On weekends, parents could take up activities or field trips proper to their children's education. One of the parents suggested that parents should also be held responsible for their children's progress. In case of discipline problems, parents should be called in immediately to solve the problem.

The third suggestion was to have cooperation and communication between home and school. The school must, therefore, adopt an open-door policy so that parents may feel that they are welcome on the school campus, even in the classroom. The parents suggested that more open-house programs, and more informal parent-teacher conferences would help create a proper atmosphere.

The fourth suggestion to increase parental involvement in the school was to provide many more opportunities for volunteering and inviting parents to sign up for school programs. The faculty must explain to the parents the value and benefits of parental involvement with regard to their children's education and keep reminding parents of the available opportunities continually all through the year. The parents suggested that the faculty must consider ways of including full-time working parents by organizing programs at convenient timings such as evening hours, weekends and holidays. Some of the parents

also came up with a very strong suggestion that parental involvement be re-emphasized and some involvement be made mandatory for either one of the parents to participate.

SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW DATA

INTRODUCTION

Individual interviews were conducted to investigate more thoroughly the information on this research study. Guide questions (Appendix C) for the interview were the same as the survey. The guide questions, however, were restructured to suit the interview situation. Along with the demographic information, five other major questions were asked; namely, satisfaction or dissatisfaction with their own involvement in their children's education, the importance of parental involvement, their perception of their own impact on their children's achievement, barriers to parental involvement, and suggestion to increase parental involvement in their children's education. They were also given the opportunity to respond to the question 'whether there was anything else the researcher should have information about parental involvement.' All interview sessions were audio-taped and transcribed for later analysis. Three of the inter-coders, a journalist, a sociologist, and a school teacher, reviewed the interpretation of the researcher.

FINDINGS OF THE INTERVIEW

Demographic Information

In the individual interviews, 10 parents having children in the selected school participated, seven of whom were females and three were males. Of those who appeared for the interview 5 (50%) were between 31- 40 years of age and the rest were in 41- 50 year age category (see Table 11, Appendix G). All the interviewees were married and thus, were part of two-parent families. The education levels of the interviewees were 1(10%) were high school graduates, 6 (60%) college graduates, and 3 (30%) with other diplomas (see Table 11). Of those participating, 8 (80%) had two children and 70% of these children were in school, and their most recent GPA test score was between 3 -3.9 grade point average (see Table 11). The frequency distribution showed that 6 (60%) of the interviewees have an annual income of \$40,001-\$60,000, and 4 (40%) have \$60,001 or more (See Table 11). Of those who appeared for the interview, 80-90% help their children with homework, reading, and writing (see Table 12, Appendix H). The children's participation in sports, drama, and field trips is rated between 7-9 (70-90%) (see Table 13, Appendix I). Similarly, parents' participation in similar activities were between 5-9 (50-90%); (see Table 14, Appendix J). Of the ten interviewed, three were PTA/PTO committee members and one was a chairperson of the school committee (see Table 15, Appendix K). The overwhelming majority (90%) said that their involvement in their children's achievement is very important (see Table 16, Appendix L). The overall impression is that the interviewees age group, level of education, social and economic status, and their perceptions are similar to those of survey respondents.

SUMMARY OF OPEN-ENDED RESPONSES

Parental Satisfaction in Involvement

Nine (90%) of the interviewees were satisfied with their involvement in their children's education. They expressed that, they were lucky to have had a number of opportunities available to participate in the school's activities. Two of the mothers said "We love to contribute something constructive to our children's education in the school." The satisfaction of those parents was due to the teachers' openness and the welcoming atmosphere of the school campus. The only one among the interviewed who was not satisfied gave the reasons for her dissatisfaction and said "I live quite far from the school campus, and the opportunities available in the school for parental involvement are not of interest to me."

Impact on Children

All the parents who were interviewed are of the opinion that their involvement had a tremendous impact on their children's educational achievement. One among them added that parental involvement had an impact not only on the children's academics but also on every aspect of their life. Three of the interviewees' personal experience was that their children looked up to them as role models. Those three parents believed that parents' example had the greatest impact on their children. One of the parents confided, "Since both of us have good reading habits, our children also enjoy reading at home. Consequently, our children's reading and language skills are excellent." Another parent stated that her child was only in first grade, yet, seeing that her mother was so involved in her schooling she thought that her education must be important. Again, another parent

said, "Whatever I care for, my child cares for." Two of the interviewees expressed that their mail and phone communication with the faculty had generated in their children a trust and respect for their teachers. Quite a few interviewees believed that the direct impact of their involvement in their children's education was the "good grade" their children got. This group of parents believed that the more they were involved, the better their children performed whether it was in academics or any other activity.

Barriers in Involvement

The majority (seven of ten) of the parents interviewed were working parents. Those working parents said that time and their job commitments were the biggest barriers to getting involved in their children's school. Three of those full-time working parents conceded that after coming back from work either they were too tired to engage themselves in any other task or they were busy with their other household work. Two of the interviewees did not agree that the shortage of time and job were barriers. They argued that, if children were a priority, parents in spite of their busy schedule would find time to involve themselves. They pointed out that there were numerous opportunities in the school to be involved in if they really wanted to. Besides that, some of the school meetings were held in the evenings, and sometimes even over the weekends just to accommodate working parents. Those two parents concluded that those were parents who just did not want to be involved. One of the parents interviewed mentioned that a clique among the committee members was one of the major barriers for parental involvement. The members of the clique, he said, manipulated meetings. They told other parents what to do and what not to do. The recently arrived parents felt uncomfortable working with the clique. The only chairperson interviewed was of the opinion that a lack of organization and leadership was another barrier to parental involvement. "I know," he said, "there are no lack of volunteers

in our school, but hardly anyone comes forward to organize and lead the group of volunteers.” He attributes this to a lack of organizational training and fear of failure. The emphasis on professionalism was also mentioned as a barrier. It was said that the school invited everyone to come forward to volunteer, but at the same time it gave preference to certain degree and diploma holders, such as music, nursing, parenting and so forth. which lessened the good will of the parents. According to one parent the attitude was a barrier for some parents. She said that some parents thought that because their children were in a Catholic school, they did not have to bother about good education or discipline problems. She argued that even Catholic schools could do nothing without parental involvement. Three of the mothers said that their little children at home needed full time attention and that had become a barrier.

Suggestion to Improve Parental Involvement:

A number of suggestions came forth from the ten parents interviewed by the researcher, such as:

- the school and the committee must be more accessible
- the introduction of mandatory parental involvement
- the proper organization of activities
- the proper distribution of work
- a small group of parents be invited to discuss common concerns
- call for frequent informal meetings
- gathering should be organized at the year end for volunteers

REVIEW OF THE SCHOOL DOCUMENTS

The major school documents of the entire academic year 1998-99 were reviewed including the monthly school newsletters, the principal's letter to parents, weekly memos, budget-reports, and minutes of different school committees, such as home-school association, sports and athletic association, parent advising committee, and school development committee. The purpose of a review of the school's documents was to search for the articles, ideas, and recurring themes indicating parental involvement. Through these documents the selected school constantly kept in touch with the parents. The school informed the parents about the upcoming curricular and co-curricular activities, and invited them to participate in the school activities as well as offered suggestions to the parents so that they could assist their children in learning activities in the home.

According to the documents reviewed the school had organized some informal gatherings; for instance, such as back-to-school night, open house, family nights, annual fun fair, Halloween hound evening, etc. Parents, relatives, friends, and the local community were invited to come to the school with their children and attend dinners, play games, as well as have an informal interaction with faculty members. Such informal gatherings were also an opportunity for interaction among parents themselves regarding the school and their children's education. The purpose of such informal gathering was to create a school community.

This school also had organized some formal meetings. For example, parent-teacher conferences, home-school association meetings, school development committee meetings, sports and athletics committee meetings, parent advisory committee meetings, and so

forth. These formal meetings were usually attended by the committee members; however, interested parents were always welcomed. Among the formal meetings, the parent-teacher conference seemed to be the most important one because in this forum parents were directly asked or told about their more direct and more active roles in their children's learning activities. Most of these meetings were organized for the evening so that the maximum number of working parents could participate.

The school documents clearly indicated that there were numerous opportunities provided for the parents to volunteer in school activities. For instance, through the weekly memos the school asked parents to sign up as volunteers for supervision in class, at lunch hour, on the playground, in the library, in the health room, on field trips, for the walk-a-thon, for school-family gatherings, for the annual fun fair, for fund raising, for Christmas programs, and so on. It was noted in one of the school's documents that without the consent of the parent no child was taken for any school activities, such as sports, athletics, fine arts, school plays, music and dance lessons, and so on. The idea was to directly involve parents in their children's activities. On the day of the performance the school invited families, friends, and neighbors to come as audience and encourage, support, and appreciate their children's efforts as well as the efforts of the school and its faculty.

The school principal's letters to the parents were one of the most important set of documents of the school. Most of these letters to parents were invitations to participate in different activities of the school, an expression of appreciation for parents' co-operation, and the expressions of gratitude for the parents' generosity of time, money, and energy. The principal also welcomed parents' valuable suggestions and invited them to share their perceptions regarding the achievement of their children. The principal then took up parents'

ideas, suggestions, and perceptions and with their help and cooperation worked to implement them. The principal also took up parents' questions and concerns, and responded through the school's several publications.

The school circulated to parents a letter titled "The Community Creed" (a letter of faith formation) requesting them to participate in the teaching of the Christian principles to their children. Parents were invited to share their unique approach to prayer and faith-life with their children. The parents were also urged to send prayer intentions for any particular theme, concern, person, occasion, and event, which could be included in the weekly school liturgy.

The school liturgies with the help of the teachers were usually planned and conducted by the students. The other occasions for liturgies were school feasts, parish feasts, parents and grandparents' day, when the school invited the school community to participate in the liturgy. Through "The Community Creed" parents were urged to demonstrate good examples to their children and thereby become role models. In one document the selected school had presented a "theme for each month," such as respect, kindness, generosity, mercy, obedience, discipline, and so forth, and had requested parents to ask their children how and to what extent they had practiced the particular theme. Thus, the selected Catholic elementary school involved parents not only for the intellectual formation but also was deeply concerned for the spiritual and emotional formation of their school children.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

SUMMARY

The purpose of this study was to investigate parental involvement in the educational process and what did those parents perceive as their impact on their children's achievement. The subjects of this study were parents of children in a Catholic elementary school. A request for permission to conduct the survey was submitted to the principal of the selected school and to the Graduate School Office at Marquette University for "Human Subject's Protection." Upon approval, three modes of investigation were adopted: a survey, face-to-face interviews, and a review of the school documents. Of the 200 surveys that were mailed, 121 returned. Of the 15 parents requested for individual interviews, 10 parents participated. The major school documents of the year 1989-99 were reviewed to search for phrases, ideas, and recurring themes indicating evidence of the purpose of the study mentioned above. The survey data were coded and computed using procedures in the Statistical Package of the Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics provided information on frequency and percent of the multiple-choice question answers. Open-ended responses were analyzed and summarized.

The majority of the respondents were between 31-40 years of age, and sixty percent of those were college graduates. Of those who responded, almost ninety-three percent of the parents represented two-parent families, and each of these families had two or three children. Seventy percent of the respondents had an annual income of \$60,000 or more.

Almost all the representatives considered parental involvement in their children's education to be very important. They also perceived that parental involvement had direct bearing on their children's academic performance. Quite a few parents perceived that their children looked up to them as role models.

The significant findings of this study were that the overwhelming majority of the respondents were directly involved in their children's learning activities at home as well as at school. Among those involved, two-thirds were mothers and were well satisfied with their involvement. According to the findings, 70 to 80% of the parents as individuals were highly involved. However, as a school community, parental involvement differed significantly in degree. For instance, as members of PTA/PTO, almost sixty-five percent had never attended a meeting that year.

The subjects who participated in this study cited time and job commitments as the biggest barriers to being involved in their children's education; however, a group of parents argued that for those who were genuinely interested time and job commitments need not hinder involvement. Another barrier to parental involvement perceived by the parents was the issues of cliques within parent groups. While some participants expressed that modern technology used in the educational institutions was a barrier, the others considered emphasis on professional skills, and still others expressed that lack of leadership and organization from the school were the barriers.

For the improvement of parental involvement it was suggested that children must be the first priority. The need for the promotion of parent-child activity was deeply felt. Open communication between home and school was desired. It was insisted that the school

and the committees must be more accessible to the parents even to the point of being partners in the decision making process. It was argued that without parental involvement even a very good private school could do very little to meet the needs and efforts of the children. Frequent informal meetings were encouraged. As an expression of appreciation for volunteer workers, it was recommended that an appreciation dinner party or such gatherings be held. Since the selected school was a Catholic school parents were not only concerned for the intellectual formation of their children but also deeply concerned for their spiritual formation. They felt that parental involvement was not only essential for children but was crucial to their academic, social, emotional, and spiritual well being. Therefore, the respondents of this study not only recommended, but insisted that parental involvement in at least one or two activities be mandatory.

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

According to the survey as well as the individual interviews, the overwhelming majority of the respondents were mothers. Therefore, the researcher is inclined to conclude that mothers, as they were active in the past, are still directly involved in their children's education. The highest number of parents were between 31 and 40 years of age, and 60-65% of those parents were college graduates. This could be one of the reasons that the overwhelming majority (80-90%, Table 12) of the parents were able to help their children with homework, reading, and writing. As a result of parental involvement, almost 79% (Table 10) of the children's GPA was above 60-70%. Since the majority of subject parents are college-educated, it could be interpreted that they have greater access to good jobs,

which again could be the explanation for almost 73% of the participants reporting \$60,000 or greater as their annual income (Table 4). Again, almost 91% of the respondents were married couples. The above demographic information and interpretations of the researcher find support in Epstein (1982) and Walberg (1984) which maintain that most parents' groups and educators agree that children's learning is supported when parents fulfill their basic obligations to provide food, health care, and safety in addition to maintaining a loving and trusting atmosphere at home.

In previously completed research (Epstein 1987), as well as in the present study, it has been established that there are two types of parental involvement. One type is that of audience, or visitor, or volunteer; the other is member of PTA/PTO, or in policy-making governance. In the first category the present study shows that 75-80% of the parents have participated in this form of school activity. However, as members of PTA/PTO, almost 65% (Table 7) of the respondents have never attended meetings in the year 1998-99. The main reasons for not attending PTA/PTO meetings were cited as lack of its organization, poor leadership, and the presence of cliques.

Prior researchers (Kellaghan et al., 1993) and (Marjoribanks, 1976) found that parents perception, their interests, and beliefs are strongly related to their children's academic performance. The findings of this study have been consistent with cited findings of the earlier studies. That is according to the findings of this survey as well as interviews almost 91% (Table 9 and Table 16) of the parents perceived that their involvement was very important. One set of parents commented, "since we have good reading habits, our children also enjoy reading at home." Another parent stated "Whatever I care for, my

child cares for.” These and similar others were an indication of parents’ perception of their impact on their children’s achievement.

CONCLUSION

The ultimate purpose of this study was to investigate the parental involvement and parent-perceived impact on their children’s achievement. The researcher believes that the purpose of the study has been accomplished because the importance of parental involvement and parent perception is highly acknowledged throughout the findings of this study. The present study confirms that parents do play a vital role in providing their children with the values and skills essential to success in school and in later life. Again, the results of this study indicate that it is not just parent involvement that is important, but the perception of parents on the impact of their involvement which matters. Thus, it is important to educate parents to understand the important role they play in the lives of their children and devise a plan for providing parents an opportunity to perceive the effect of their own involvement, which in turn will enhance parental involvement. Otherwise, the danger could be that as long as parents do not understand the importance of their involvement and do not perceive the effect of their involvement, they may not be likely to be enthusiastic about their involvement in their children’s education .

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The results of this study indicate several other areas within the topics of parental involvement and parent perceived impact on their children's achievement that should be explored. However, future study in this area should take the limitations of this study into consideration. Therefore, the following recommendations for future studies are indicated.

1. Based upon the survey, interviews, and review of the school documentary data, educators should devise a plan for providing parents a direct and intense involvement in their children's learning activities at school as well as at home.

2. According to the findings of this study, parents requested assistance from the school in order to improve parental involvement in the following area: (a) helping organizational and leadership skills, (b) offering more access to participation, even as partners in decision-making processes, (c) developing more opportunities for volunteering, (d) organizing more frequently informal meetings, and so forth. A recommendation for educators and parents is to devise and implement a plan that would answer such requests.

4. One of the limitations of this study was its small number (121 for the survey and only 10 for individual interviews) of participants. A recommendation, therefore, is to survey a larger population of parents using similar socioeconomic backgrounds as a primary focus.

5. The subjects of this study were comprised entirely of Catholics and white parents of a suburban elementary Catholic school. A recommendation for further research is to replicate this study using different participants with other demographic, ethnic, and religious denominations than were examined in this study which may provide valuable information regarding parental involvement and parent perceived impact on their children's achievement.

REFERENCE LIST

- Ames, Caroe, et al. (1995). *Teachers' home-to-school communication and parent involvement: The role of parent perceptions and beliefs*. Report no. 281. Center on Families, Communities, Schools, and Children's Learning, Michigan State University.
- Applebee, A. N., Langer, J. A., & Mullis, I. V. S. (1989). *Crossroads in American education: A summary of findings*. Princeton, NJ: National Assessment of Educational Progress.
- Aronson, J. Z. (1996). How schools can recruit hard-to-reach parents. *Educational Leadership*, *53*(7), 58-60
- Becher, R. (1984). Parent involvement: A review of research and the principles of successful practice. In A. Henderson (Ed.), *The evidence continues to grow: Parent involvement improves achievement*, (pp. 17-18). Columbia, MD: National Committee for Citizens in Education.
- Bempechant, J. (1990). *The role of parent involvement in children's academic achievement: A review of the literature, trends, and issues No. 14*. New York, NY: Columbia University. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 322 285).
- Berger, E. H. (1991). Parent involvement: Yesterday and today. *The Elementary School Journal*, *91*(3), 209-218.
- Bloom, J. (1992). *Parenting our school: A hand-on guide to education reform*. Boston, MA: Little, Brown, and Company.
- Brian, D. (1994, April). *Parental involvement in high schools*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association.
- Burns, R. C. (1993). Parent involvement: Promises, problems, and solutions. In R. C. Burns (Ed), *Parents and schools: From visitors to partners* (pp. 9-20). Washington, DC: National Education Association.
- Clark, R. (1983). *Family life and school achievement: Why poor black children succeed and fail*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Comer, J. P. (1986b, February). Parent participation in the schools. *Phi Delta Kappan*, *67*(6), 442 - 446.

Cotton, K., & Wikelund, K. R. (1989). *Parent involvement in education*. School Improvement Research Series, Close-Up No. 6. Portland, OR: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory.

Dauber, S. L., & Epstein, J. L. (1993). Parents' attitudes and practices of involvement in inner-city elementary and middle schools. In N. F. Chavkin (Ed.), *Families and schools in a pluralistic society* (pp. 53-71). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Dornbusch, S. (1986). Helping your kid make the grade. In A. Henderson (Ed.), *The evidence continues to grow: Parent involvement improves achievement* (pp. 31-32). Columbine, MD: National Committee for Citizens in Education.

Epstein, J. L. (1982). *Student reaction to teacher practices of parent involvement* (Report. P. 21). Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Center for Research on Elementary and Middle Schools.

Epstein, J. L. (1984). School policy and parent involvement: Research results. *Educational Horizons*, *62*, 70 - 72.

Epstein, J. L. (1986). Parents' reactions to teacher practices in parent involvement. *Elementary School Journal*, *86*(3), 277-294.

Epstein, J. L. (1987a, February). Parent involvement: What Research Says to Principals. *Education and Urban Society*, 119 -136.

Epstein, J. L. (1987b) *Toward a theory of family-school connections: Teacher practices and parent involvement across the school years*. In K. Hurrelmann, F. Kaufmann, & F. Losel, (Eds.). *Social intervention: Potential and Constraints* (pp. 121-136). NY: W. De Gruyter.

Epstein, J. L. (1988). How do we improve program in parent involvement? *Educational Horizons*, *66*(2), 58-59. (Special Issue on Parents and Schools).

Epstein, J. L. (1991). Effects on students' achievement of teachers' practices of parent involvement. (Ed.). *Advances in reading/language research*, Greenwich, CT: In B. S. Steven: JAI Press.

Epstein, J. L. (1992). *Teachers involve parents in schoolwork (TIPS): Manuals for teachers and prototype activities for the elementary and middle grades*. Baltimore: Center on Families, Communities, Schools and Children's Learning, John Hopkins University.

Epstein, J. L. (1995). School/family/community partnerships: Caring for the children we share. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 76(9), 701-12.

Epstein, J. L., & Salinas, K. C. (Revised, 1993). *School and family partnerships: Surveys and summaries*. Center on Families, Communities, and Children's Learning. Baltimore MD: Johns Hopkins University.

Ferro, G., & Bush, B. (1994). Beginning teacher perception of parent role in education setting. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Association of Teacher Education.

Fredericks, A. D. (1987). Involvement: Planting the seeds. *Early Years*, 17(1), 28, 32.

Fuller, M. L., & Olsen, G. (1998). *Home-school relations: Working successfully with parents and families*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Gestwicki, C. (1992). *Home, school, and community relations. A guide to working with parents*. 2nd ed. NY: Delmar.

Gorton, R. A. (1977). Parent apathy: Problem or solution? *The Clearing House*, 51, 93-94.

Gress, J. R., & Carroll, M. E. (1985). Parent-professional partnership. *Academic Therapy*, 20(4), 443-449.

Henderson, A. T. (1982). Parent participation-student achievement. *In the Evidence Grows*. Columbus, OH: National Committee for Citizens in Education.

Henderson, A. T. (1987). The evidence continues to grow: Parent involvement improves student achievement. An Annotated bibliography. Columbia MD.: National Committee for Citizens in Education Report. (Eric Document Reproduction Service No. ED 315 199)

Kagan, S. L. (1984). *Parent involvement research: A field in search of itself*. Report No. 8. Boston, MA: Institute for Responsive Education.

Keeves, J. P. (1975). The home, the school, and achievement in mathematics and science. *Science Education*, 59(4), 439-460.

Kellaghan, T., Sloane, K., Alvarez, B., & Bloom, B. S. (1993). *The home environment and school learning: Promoting parental involvement in the education of children*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Kim, J. E., Fruth, M. J., & Bowles, B. D. (1976). *Home-school-community relations: The state of the art*. Madison, Wisconsin Research and Development Center for Cognitive Learning.

Leitch, M., & Tangri, S. (1988). Barriers to home-school collaboration. *Educational Horizons*, 66, 70-74.

London, C. B. G., Molotsi, P. H., & Palmer, A. (1984). Collaboration of family, community, and school in a reconstructive approach to teaching and learning. *Journal of Negro Education*, 53 (4), 455-463.

Lopez, R. (1992). Historical review of parental involvement in American schools. In A. L. Ensle, A. B. Bermudez, & S. J. Rakow, (Eds.), *Critical issues in parental involvement*. (pp. 53-56). Houston, TX: Research Center for Language and Culture, University of Houston-Clear Lake.

Lortie, D. C. (1975). *Schoolteacher: A sociological study*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Marjoribanks, K. (1976). Sibsize, family environment, cognitive performance, and affective characteristics. *The Journal of Psychology*, 94, 195-204.

Marquand, R. (1987). Parents want more say-so in how schools operate. *The Christian Science Monitor*, 79(23), 17.

Moles, O. C. (1987). Who wants parent involvement? Interest, skills and opportunities among parents and educators. *Education and Urban Society*, 19, 137-145.

Ost, D. (1988, Winter). Teacher-parent interactions: An effective school-community environment. *Educational Forum*, 165 - 176.

Pestalzzi, J. (1951). *The education of man*. NY: Philosophical Library.

Raspberry, W. (1994, September 9). *Simple things parents can do*. *The Washington Post*, p. A27.

Russell, D. L. (1993). *Parents' perceptions of the middle school and its impact on parental involvement and student achievement*. An unpublished doctoral dissertation, Wayne State University.

Sasser, K. (1991). *Parental involvement in schools: Reluctant participates do not equal uninterested parents*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Mid-South Educational Research Association.

Satter, B. (1985). *Parent involvement: A review of the literature*. Report No. 21. Charleston, WV: Appalachia Educational Laboratory.

Schreiber, D. (1962). *What can be done to reduce academic retardation in minority children?* U. S. Department of Health Education, and Welfare.

Seeley, D. S. (1985). *Education through partnership*. Washington, DC: American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research.

SPSS. (1997). SYSTAT 6.0 For Windows: Student Version. Chicago, IL: Prentice Hall.

Starr, W. D. (1978). High school partnership at the secondary level. *High School Journal*, *61*(7), 327-330.

Swap, & McAllister, S. (1990). *Parental involvement and success for all children: What we know now*. Boston, Mass.: Institute for Responsive Education. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No ED 321 907)

Thornburg, K. R. (1981). Attitudes of secondary principals, teachers, parents, and students toward parent involvement in the schools. *High School Journal*, *64*, 150-153.

Treffinger, D. J., & Fine, M. J. (1979). When there's a problem in school. *Gifted Child Today*, *10*, 3-6.

Twillie, L. D., Petry, J. R., Kenney, G. E., & Payne, R. (1991). *Attitudes of parents and teachers toward improving academic achievement in inner-city schools*. Lexington, KY: Mid-South Educational Research Association. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 340 802).

U.S. Department of Education. (1994). *Strong Families, Strong Schools: Building Community Partnerships for Learning*. Washington, DC: Author.

Walberg, H. J. (1984) Families as partners in educational productivity. *Phi Delta Kappan*, *65*(6), 397-400.

Waller, W. (1932). *The sociology of teaching*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.

APPENDIX A
Survey (Questionnaire) Sent to Parents
PARENT SURVEY

A/- PLEASE CIRCLE ONE CHOICE FOR EACH ITEM THAT ANSWERS BEST EACH STATEMENT.

1. The person who is completing this survey:

[1] *Mother* [2] *Father* [3] *Guardian* [4] *Other (please specify)* _____

2. Mother's age: [1] *Under 30* [3] *31-40* [3] *41-50* [4] *51 over*

3. Mother's Education

[1] *Under H. S* [2] *H.S. diploma* [3] *College degree* [4] *Other (please specify)* _____

4. Father's age: [1] *Under 30* [2] *31-40* [3] *41-50* [4] *51 over*

5. Father's education:

[1] *Under H.S.* [2] *H.S. diploma* [3] *College degree* [4] *Other (please specify)* _____

6. Guardian's age: [1] *Under 30* [2] *31-40* [3] *41-50* [4] *51 over*

7. Guardian's education:

[1] *Under H. S.* [2] *H.S. diploma* [3] *College degree* [4] *Other (please specify)* _____

8. Income level of your family unit:

[1] *20,000 Or less* [2] *20,001-40,000* [3] *40,001-60,000* [4] *60,001-over*

9. Marital status:

[1] *Married* [2] *Divorced* [3] *Single* [4] *Other (please specify)* _____

10. Number of children at home:

[1] *One* [2] *Two* [3] *Three* [4] *Four or more*

B/- Parents get involved in different ways at home and at school. Which of the following have you done this year for your child? Please *CIRCLE ONE CHOICE* for each item.

1. How often did you visit your child's school in this academic year(1998-99)?

[1] *Never* [2] *1-2 Times* [3] *3- 4 Times* [4] *5 & more*

2. How often did you attend PTA/PTO meeting in this academic year 1998-99?

[1] *Never* [2] *1-2 Times* [3] *3- 4 Times* [4] *5 & More*

3. How often did you attend the activities such as school-play/concert, athletic events, open house, etc.?

[1] *Never* [2] *Sometimes* [3] *Frequently* [4] *Always*

4. How often did you help your child with homework?

[1] *Never* [2] *Sometimes* [3] *Frequently* [4] *Always*

5. How often did you talk with your child about his/her school work?

[1] *Never* [2] *Sometimes* [3] *Frequently* [4] *Always*

6. How often did you listen to your child's (ren's) reading?

[1] *Never* [2] *sometimes* [3] *Frequently* [4] *Always*

7. What was your child's (ren's) GPA on the last report card?

[1] *4.0 & above* [2] *3.0-3.9* [3] *2.0-2.9* [4] *1.0-1.9* [5] *Less than 1.0*

8. How important do you think was your involvement to your child's education?

[1] *Not important* [2] *Somewhat important* [3] *Important* [4] *Very important*

9. What is your opinion about parental involvement in their children's education?

[1] _____

[2] _____

10. What impact do you believe you have on your child's (ren's) achievement in school?

Or

How do you perceive your involvement has had an impact on your child's (ren's) achievement in school?

[1] _____

[2] _____

11. What are the barriers to parent involvement in the school?

[1] _____

[2] _____

12. What would you suggest to increase parent involvement in their child's (ren's) education?

[1] _____

[2] _____

APPENDIX B

A Cover Letter Sent Along With the Survey (Questionnaire)

Dear Parent/Guardian,

I am Rev. Alexius Minj, a graduate student at Marquette University, Milwaukee. I am doing a research project to determine how parents' involvement in school activities can increase their children's academic achievement. By this letter, I am inviting you to be a part of this project.

I would like one of the parents/guardians to fill out the survey. All information gained will remain strictly confidential. No persons will be named or identified in any way in the text of the thesis. If you have any questions regarding the details of this study, feel free to call me at any time. My phone number is (414) 288-5000.

In order to have the most useful study possible, please complete the attached survey and return by placing it in the self-addressed envelope by June 2nd, 1999. Please keep in mind that your participation in this survey is purely voluntary.

Thank you very much for your cooperation in this research project. Your timely response is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely yours,

Rev. Alexius Minj, S.J.

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW GUIDE QUESTIONS Interview Guide Questions

A. DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION:

1. Name of the interviewee _____
2. Are you a biological parent or adopted parent?

Yes	No
[1] Father [2] Mother	[3] Guardian [4] Other (please specify) _____
3. What is your age group?

[1] Under 30	[2] 31- 40	[3] 41- 50	[4] 51 Over
--------------	------------	------------	-------------
4. What is your highest level of education?

[1] Under HS	[2] HS Degree	[3] College Degree	[4] other (please specify) _____
-----------------	------------------	-----------------------	----------------------------------
5. What is your marital status?

[1] Married	[2] Divorced	[3] Single	[4] other (please specify) _____
-------------	--------------	------------	----------------------------------
6. How many children are in your family?

[1] One	[2] Two	[3] Three	[4] more
---------	---------	-----------	----------
7. How many of your children are in school?

[1] One	[2] Two	[3] Three	[4] more
---------	---------	-----------	----------
8. What do you do for your living?
 Or
 What is the approximate income level of your family unit?

[1] 20,000 Or less	[2] 20,001 40,000	[3] 40,001 60,000	[4] 60,001 & over
-----------------------	----------------------	----------------------	----------------------

B. OTHER INFORMATION:

1. In which of the following activities do you help your child (ren)?

[1] Homework [2] Reading [3] Writing [4] Other (specify) _____

2. a) In which of the following school activities does your child (ren) participate

[1] Sports [2] Plays/drama [3]-Field trip [4] Other (specify) _____

b) In which of the following school activities do you participate or attend ?

[1] Sport [2] plays/drama [3] Field trip [4] Other (specify) _____

3. In what capacity have you been involved in the PTA/PTO, or other parent organization?

[1] Officer [2] Committee Member [3] Chair person [4] Other (specify) _____

4. What was your child's (ren's) GPA on the last report card?

[1] 4.0 & above [2] 3.0-3.9 [3] 2.0-2.9 [4] 1.0-1.9 [5] Less than 1.0

5. How important do you think your involvement is in your child's (ren's) education? ____ and why?

[1] Not Important [2] Somewhat Important [3] Important [4] Very Important

6. Are you satisfied with your involvement in school activities?

[1] Yes - why? [2] No - why? [3] Indifferent - why

7. What impact do you believe you have on your child's (ren's) achievement in school?
Or

How do you perceive your involvement has had an impact on your child's (ren's) achievement in school?

8. In general, what are the barriers you perceive to parental involvement in the school?

9. What would you suggest to increase parental involvement in education?

10. Is there anything else I should know about parent involvement in their children's education that I have not asked?

APPENDIX D

CONSENT FORM FOR HUMAN SUBJECT'S PROTECTION

Consent Form for Human Subject's Protection

When I sign this statement, I am giving my informed consent to the following considerations.

1. I understand that Rev. Alexius Minj is conducting research on parental involvement and its perceived impact on student's academic achievement, and this research is for his thesis in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Masters of Arts in Education.

2. I am being asked to be interviewed and have my response taped - regarding the effect of parental involvement on students' academic achievement.

3. I understand that Rev. Alexius Minj will make provisions to protect my privacy and will respect my wishes regarding anonymity.

4. Rev. Alexius Minj may be contacted for information about this research project and he will answer my questions about it at any time (phone: 414- 288-5000).

5. I understand that participation in this research project is voluntary.

6. I understand that I may withdraw at any time from this project without penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled.

7. I am not involved in any agreement of this project, whether written or oral, which includes language that clears the institution from alleged fault or guilt. I have not waived or released the institution or its representatives from liability for negligence, if any, which may arise in the conduct of this research project.

I the person signing below, understand the above explanations. On this basis I consent to participate voluntarily in Rev. Alexius Minj's research project.

Date
Signature of respondent
giving consent

Date
Signature of investigator/
Project administrator

APPENDIX E

INTRODUCTORY LETTER FOR CONSENT

Dear parent,

I am Rev. Alexius Minj, S.J., a graduate student at Marquette University Milwaukee. I am doing a research project to determine how parents' involvement in school activities can increase their children's academic achievement. My thesis topic is entitled, "Parental Involvement and Its Perceived Impact on Student Achievement." By this letter, I am requesting you to be a part of this project.

What I am asking of you is this: I need you to agree to spend approximately 20 to 30 minutes with me in an interview session. The interview will be limited to the enclosed interview guide questions (attached on the pages 17- 19). Your answer will be taped for purposes of later analysis. All information or responses used in the analysis and documentation will be completely anonymous. No person will be named or identified in any way in the text of the thesis. The interview session will be arranged at your convenience.

If you agree to assist me in this project, please complete the enclosed form (attached on page 22) and, in the stamped envelope provided, return your reply. Upon receipt of your acceptance, I will contact you to set up an appointment. If you have any questions about my project, please do not hesitate to call me at any time. My phone number is (414) 288-5000. I will be happy to answer any of your questions prior to our interview.

I look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,

Rev. Alexius Minj, SJ

APPENDIX F**Consent Response Form**

_____ I agree to be interviewed as part of the Master's thesis research.

Name _____

Address _____

Home phone _____

Business phone _____

Best time of day to be contacted _____

Preference for day and time of interview _____

_____ I do not wish to be interviewed as part of the Master's thesis research.

Signature

Date

N.B. please return to Rev. Alexius Minj, S.J. in the enclosed envelope.

Thank you very much for your cooperation.

APPENDIX G

Table 11
Demographic information of interviewees

Age Group		
Age group	Frequency	Percent
31 -40 yrs	5	50%
41 - 50	5	50
Total	10	100

Educational Level		
Educational Level	Frequency	Percent
H.S. Grad	1	10%
College Grad	6	60
Other Degrees	3	30
Total	10	100

Number of Children in a Family		
No. children	Frequency	Percent
2	8	80%
4 or more	2	20
Total	10	100

Children in School

Children in School	Frequency	Percent
1	1	10%
2	7	70
4 or more	2	20
Total	10	100

Children's GPA

Value	Frequency	Percent
4.0 or more	3	30%
3 - 3.9	7	70
Total	10	100

Income Level

Income L.	Frequency	Percent
\$ 40,001-60,000	6	60%
\$ 60,001 or more	4	40
Total	10	100

APPENDIX H

Table 12
Parent's Help in Academics

In reading

Reading	Frequency	Percent
No	2	20%
Yes	8	80
Total	10	100

In writing

Writing	Frequency	Percent
No	1	10%
Yes	9	90
Total	10	100

APPENDIX I

Table 13
Children in Activity

In sports

Sports	Frequency	Percent
No	3	30%
Yes	7	70
Total	10	100

In drama

Drama	Frequency	Percent
No	1	10%
Yes	9	90
Total	10	100

In Field Trips

Value	Frequency	Percent
1	1	10%
9	9	90
Total	10	100

APPENDIX J

Table 14
Parents in activities

In sports

Sports	Frequency	Percent
No	5	50%
Yes	5	50
Total	10	100

In drama

Value	Frequency	Percent
No	1	10%
Yes	9	90
Total	10	100

In field trips

Value	Frequency	Percent
1	1	10%
9	9	90
Total	10	100

APPENDIX K

Table 15
Capacity of Involvement in PTA/PTO

Capacity in PTA/PTO	Frequency	Percent
Committee members	3	30%
Chairperson	1	10
Others	6	60
Total	10	100

APPENDIX L

Table 16
Importance of Involvement

Value	Frequency	Percent
Important	1	10%
Very Important	9	90
Total	10	100