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Influences impacting on parent involvement in an inner-city elementary school.

Frances Gamer
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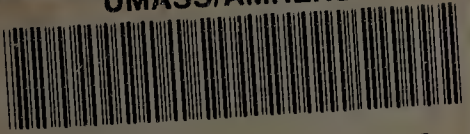
INFLUENCES IMPACTING ON PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN AN
INNER-CITY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

A Dissertation Presented

by

FRANCES GAMER

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

May 1991

School of Education
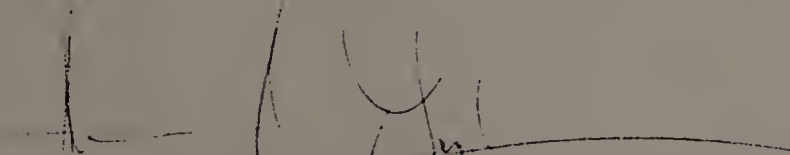
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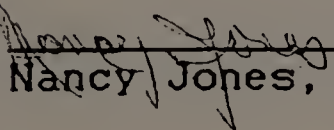
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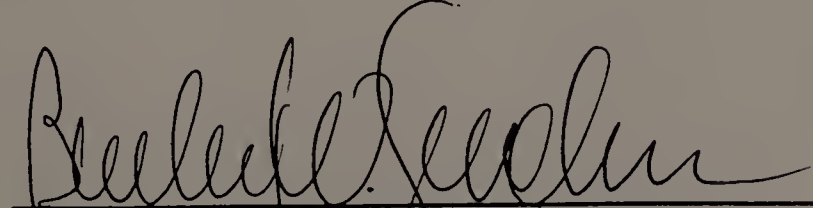
FRANCES GAMER

Approved as to style and content by:

_____
Atron Gentry, Chair

_____
Mohammed Zaimaran, Member

_____
Nancy Jones, Member

_____
Marilyn Haring-Hidore, Dean
School of Education

DEDICATION

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Past:

    To my parents, who are always with me.

Present:

    To Kathleen, without your encouragement,
inspiration, tolerance and above all friendship, this
never would have become a reality.

Future:

    To the return of The Three Musketeers.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The completion of this dissertation was made possible through the efforts of a number of people.

First and foremost to Stephen--you'll never know just how much those hugs meant.

Second to George--for not charging me room and board and for tolerating this nuisance. Thank you, fellow Aquarian.

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Dr. Atron Gentry--for making a believer out of me.

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James B. Corscadden--for allowing me the opportunity to pursue this project. Thank you, Mr. C+.

Jane Cregg--never have so few accomplished so much with friendship and an idea.

Dr. Kathleen Mastaby--"Stop worrying."

ABSTRACT

INFLUENCES IMPACTING ON PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN AN

INNER CITY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

MAY 1991

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Directed by: Professor Atron A.Gentry

The focus of this descriptive study was to
determine parental attitudes and perceptions which
deter parents from voluntarily becoming involved in the
activities of their child's inner city elementary
school.

The research instrument used to determine both
individual and collective impacts upon the
relationships between the Home and School connection
was a questionnaire. This questionnaire was sent out
to 140 parents of inner city elementary school
students. The targeted population was composed of
African Americans, Asians, White Americans, and
Hispanics. The measurement tool was translated both in
English and Spanish, so as to accommodate the language
preferences of the school community.

This questionnaire measured parent involvement
variables such as parent communications with the

school, parental awareness of school operations,
parental participation in school activities,
home-school work habits, and overall relationships with
teachers. The information elicited analyzed
comparisons among the various ethnic groups concerning
their parental attitudes towards the openness of the
school, the collaborative nature between Home and
School, effectiveness of the school, and the general
school climate. This study not only identified those
elements which impede parental involvement but it also
recognized positive and encouraging factors leading
towards the formation of viable Home and School
partnerships.

Since parents are being given more choices in
selecting schools for their children, educators must
encourage and foster parents to become
collaborators/partners in the education of their
children. It is incumbent upon us as educators to
investigate, identify, measure, and recognize these
adverse factors and determine an appropriate course of
action to reduce and eliminate this apathetic trend
currently held by parents towards teachers and
education in general.

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INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

The education reform movement of the mid-1980s
created an awareness that despite rapidly evolving
needs, the process of how we educate American youth has
generally remained unchanged over the past twenty
years. The main emphasis now is on increasing,
establishing,and fostering the importance of parent
involvement in the educational process.

This decade has witnessed a renewed interest in
the quality of public education. Because of today's
high expectations and pervasive negative attitudes
towards people, intensive job competition, dramatic
shifts in our population demographics, the nation's
emergence into the post-industrial economy, and an ever
present specter of war and peace, America's leaders
have written reams about what is wrong with our
schools. Examples of such information show increases
in school crime including homicide, rape, robbery,
assaults on students/teachers, and drugs as all
evidence of the disorder, disruption, and disrespect
for rules/authority, which seems to be so prevalent
today. Dr. James Comer in his School Power pointed out
the need for social, psychological, and motivational

improvements with emphasis placed upon shared
relationships/responsibilities among parents and
teachers. If schools are to overcome this crisis we
must find ways to establish, for the benefit of the
students, a shared sense of expertise, flexibility
among home/school, accountability from all parties,
trust, respect, and open communication to break down
the real or the imaginary barriers parents may harbor,
which in turn have a direct relationship upon the
attitudes and achievement put forth by their children.
Adult disillusionment only leads to
confusion-frustration- apathy, as felt by the children.
Nowhere is this crisis more evident than in our
inner-city urban neighborhoods.

Teachers and administrators in today's inner city
schools find it a difficult task making parents realize
just how important their role is in the education of
their children. This hindrance, as pointed out by Dr.
Sara Lawrence Lightfoot in her Worlds Apart and by
Roland S. Barth in his Improving Schools from Within,
is not just educational in nature but deeply rooted in
the emotional and attitudinal psyches of the parents.

This study identified, explored, analyzed,
compared, and measured parental practices in a
multi-racial, multi-ethnic inner city school and
examined the various influences preventing inner city

parents from taking on a more active role in the home-school collaborative effort.

Significance of the Study

Major studies over the past two decades have indicated that parents are significant educators of their children and that schools alone cannot do the job (Comer 1989). Only recently has the concept of parental involvement become the forgotten factor in discussions of students' and the nation's school success. When the question of parent involvement is raised, it is as if the topic is beyond comprehension, help, and very discouraging. In this light, the area of concern, parental involvement in an inner city elementary school, is being addressed through direct use of school based research.

Research done in the urban inner schools by Carol Ascher (New York), Don Davies (Boston), James Comer (New Haven), and dissertation studies by Louise Hulsebosch (Chicago), and Patricia Bissell (New Orleans) all focused upon the necessity of getting parents actively involved in the education of their children. Each of these studies documented the significance of how positive home/school interaction can effect the attitudes and work ethics of not only the children involved but also the parents

participating in this joint effort. Schools need to assess their strong as well as their weak points in order to create frameworks on which successful home/school partnerships can be built. Teachers must become aware an open to the fact that parents are our partners and we need to communicate with each other if education is to succeed. Why, amidst common organizational, professional, and societal constraints, are there differences among professionals in their willingness to involve parents (Hulsebosch 1988)?

Ms. Ascher in "Improving the School-Home connection for Low-Income Urban Parents" stresses the importance of teachers to recognize the problems faced by poor urban families such as the high rates of single parents, the increasing number of female-headed households--often Black or Hispanic, job related constraints, and other environmental and socio-economical influences which vie for their attention. Attempting to determine what areas of concern our parents are interested in is one initial step in building a bridge between Home and School. Educators must build a rapport that is Home based in order to interest parents in helping their children, and to see how these parent activities can be just as effective on the self-esteem of the parents, themselves, as well as on the positive attitude development of the children

(Ascher 1988). The atmosphere of indifference and insensitivity concerning inner city schools, "blaming the victims", a societal justification for inequality cannot continue (Yeakey and Bennett 1990). Poor and minority parents have complained that the schools are not run to benefit their children; educators complain that parents are so burdened by their own lives that they are of little help (Ascher 1987). Educators need to honestly assess their environments in order to be able to create working partnerships with parents.

Other excellent overviews on parental involvement are Anne Henderson's The Evidence Continues to Grow: Parent Involvement Improves Student Achievement and Susan L. Dauber and Joyce L. Epstein's "Parent Attitudes and Practices of Parent Involvement in Inner-City Elementary and Middle Schools." Both studies reinforced in convincing fashion the notion that parent involvement is essential for children's learning, for the formation of positive attitudes, and for setting one's sights on hopes and aspirations to be developed and obtained. Children are more productive and successful when their parents play a role in their education, no matter what the parental educational background or socio-economic levels may be. When parents are involved in constructive and important ways, there is a definite measurable/observable benefit

to students, to teachers, and to the parents themselves. Authors John E. Chubb and Terry M. Moe reaffirm the belief that "Parents who unite behind a school, trust it to do what is best, and support its objectives and programs in the home can be a real asset not only to their children but to the school." (Chubb and Moe 1990)

While reading School Power by Dr. James Comer the realization that our school needed some form of a needs assessment concerning the influences which were impacting negatively on our parental involvement activities was made. In October of 1989 a group of colleagues and myself conducted a pilot study to assess the influences which hindered our school parents from becoming actively involved in school activities. This study was also to become the basis for a dissertation proposal if deemed acceptable and practical. The results were used to plan, support, and create parent involvement programs in the targeted school. The coalition of educators obtained the knowledge that afforded them the opportunity to plan and initiate new experiences for both inner city parents as well as teachers. When the survey results were used as the rationale for planning and developing these new parental activities the attendance and support levels

for the school and its functions showed a substantial improvement.

This study with only minor adaptations could easily be conducted in other school settings. Surveys such as this, conducted by on site staff, could provide the parental component of a school the opening it may need to become more supportive and involved with the educational personnel working with their children. "Schools must take the initiative to encompass parents in the learning process, for without continuity between home and school, children find it very difficult to integrate the separate experiences." (Lightfoot 1980)

Studies such as this will identify the influences which impact upon parental involvement in the school as well as on home educational activities. We can then begin to understand and establish viable partnership programs which will nurture strong positive attitudes and strive as partners for the highest level of quality education for our children. By working together, parents and educators can begin to rebuild, redefine, and reinfuse our outdated and apathetic educational system. An alliance between groups too long seen as "opponents" rather than "proponents" must be formed.

Targeted Questions Studied

The primary concern of this study was the recognition of influences which impact upon and hinder inner city parents from involving themselves more directly in the educational process of their children. The targeted population was from an inner city public elementary school, which in many cases was the first choice of the parents under new "School-Choice Plan" initiated in 1989 by the superintendent. Even with this element of choice in parental hands, the concern of parental participation and direct involvement is still a major missing ingredient. The main question to us, as educators, was why? Why don't parents feel or want to get directly involved in the education of their children? What influences overshadow parental participation? The following concerns were identified, explored, analyzed, compared, and measured from responses obtained through the parental questionnaire given to parents from a multi-racial, multi-ethnic inner city school.

1. How did parents rate the receptiveness of the school?

2. How did inner city parents perceive the parent-teacher communication network?

3. Are parents aware of school practices and policies?

4. Do parents involve themselves in the home study practices of their children?

5. What preferential school activities would stimulate more parental participation?

6. To what extent do social and economic pressures impact upon parental involvement?

7. Are there sufficient opportunities available for parental/teacher interactions?

8. How do replies from this study match up with current literature and research in the field?

Limitations of the Study

The survey is the most widely used method for obtaining descriptive and evaluative information in the field of education (Borg 1989). The use of the "teacher as researcher" theme is beginning to surface in the educational community and without it substantive and continuing educational improvements will be difficult to achieve (Atkin 1990). In this study a revised questionnaire co-designed by Kathleen Mastaby and myself was deemed appropriate for this project based upon results obtained from a previous trial run. The questionnaire/survey method is considered to be very useful and productive as a means of investigation (Warwick and Lininger 1975) and also, in this case, a

direct method of getting a home/school issue right into the heart of the home.

First and foremost confidentiality is a limitation faced by researchers using questionnaires. Being aware of the jeopardy respondents may fear for themselves when identifiable data is required, the decision to have respondents remain anonymous was established. Asking any identifiable personal questions may touch on emotional or sensitive areas which would be considered "none of your business" by the respondents thus turning them off from completing the survey. The researcher wanted all participants to feel free and in no way imposed upon for information.

Another major concern of questionnaire/survey research is that of its return rate. Getting the parental questionnaire into the homes of our inner city elementary school children was the easy part, the hard part was to eliminate the drawbacks due to lack of cooperation, accessibility, and the unwillingness to participate on the part of the respondents in the completion of this form. The idea of having students personally hand deliver the materials into their homes helped break down the accessibility factor and also fostered an initial stage of parent involvement. This direct method was also tied into the subject matter and respondents knew immediately what was being asked of

them.   Combining personal delivery with a bit of competition to see which classes brought back the most returns would only add, hopefully, to a high rate of return.

Language also presents another limitation in developing a questionnaire. First, the researcher checked the Home Language Assessment printout to determine if any translations would be required, and if necessary, translated versions would be sent to non-English speaking participants to allow them full access to the study. Second, questions were written in clear terms--no educational terms were used. Questions addressed one issue at a time and were specific in nature, so as not to confuse the respondents in understanding the issues at hand. Every effort was made not to include any embarrassing questions so as not to upset or hurt the respondents. Questionnaires were not sent to non interested participants in the population but rather directly sent to students' homes (people directly involved with the topic at hand).

Limiting this questionnaire to only one open-ended question allowed participants to give their views, even if it was on a limited scale. More open questions would require additional time and cooperation from the respondents and possibly make completion a burden. Time and length were all part of the design as not to

be an imposition on the respondents. The closed
question format, with varying responses allowed for
frequency distributions and other measurement
techniques to be used in data analysis.

The designers of this questionnaire/survey made
very effort to construct an instrument which would be
seen as a beneficial and positive experience for the
participants rather than give the appearance of it just
being another negative educational task.

Definition of Terms

Action Research. On the spot research aimed at the
solution of an immediate problem arising as part
of the operation of a school. A guide in the
solution of an immediate practical problem.

Attitude. A manner of thinking, acting, or feeling;
implicit cue/device producing responses to
socially salient characteristics which possess
evaluative properties.

Certification. The act of designating persons whom
public boards of education may legally employ as
teachers in public schools and of issuing teaching
certificates to these qualified persons.

Closed Process. Answering questions in a highly
structured manner. Respondents are asked very
specific questions and required to choose among
only a minimum of alternatives.

Cluster Sampling. A procedure of selection in which
the elements for the sample are chosen from the
population in groups or clusters rather than
singly.

Data Analysis. Procedures used to relate well-reasoned
and well measured variables to each other.

Descriptive Research. The investigation of the
characteristics of a given "as is" universe or
sample interest. Researchers seek such measures
as parameter values, distribution of attributes,
differences between groups, associations between
variables and communality or clustering of
variables. Exhibit important patterns or
relationships.

Descriptive Survey. Means of arriving at a precise
measurement of certain phenomena, such as
attitudes, preferences, neurosis, and opinions;
samples selected to describe a well defined
population in terms of characteristics, attitudes,
or behaviors.

Educational Environment. The emotional, physical, and
    intellectual climate that is set up by the teacher
    and students to contribute to a wholesome learning
    situation.

Environmental Differences-Interfamily. The ways in
    which one home environment is unlike another in
    such features as family income, social status, and
    educational level of the family.

Environmental Differences-Intrafamily. Those factors
    present in a home which cause some differences in
    the influences affecting each member of the home;
    factors which account for the fact that no two
    people live in the same family environment or
    total isolation.

Ethnic Cluster. Pertaining to a group of people based
    upon certain distinctive characteristics, such as
    religion, language, ancestry, culture, or national
    origin.

Guardian. A person who is legally responsible for the
    person or property of another person, such as a
    child who cannot manage his/her own affairs.

Influence. A power indirectly or intangibly affecting
    a person or course of events; power to sway or
    affect.

Minority Group. A group that differs, as in a race, religion, or ethnic background from the larger group of which it is part.

Parent. (1) An organism that has produced issue or descendants: (2) An adult legally responsible for a minor; implies blood relationship as well as legal relationship.

Pilot Project. A smaller scale version or miniature walk through of the proposed investigation to demonstrate and/or test a new approach or procedure.

Questionnaire. Set of questions asked of a number of people in order to gather statistical information.

Sampling-Unit. Population defined in terms of elements or units for which the information is sought. It allows for statistical analysis, and concepts to be formed.

Survey Research. Collection of evidence from a carefully selected sample of the population under study using instruments such as interviews, questionnaires, schedules, forms, or other observational techniques.

Target Population. All members of a real or hypothetical set of people, events, or objects to which we wish to generalize the results of research.

Sources: <u>Dictionary of Education</u> (3rd ed);
<u>Dictionary of Statistical Terms</u> (5th ed);
<u>Encyclopedia of Educational Research</u> (4th ed);
<u>Encyclopedia of Educational Evaluation</u>.

Summary

Schools today are very different from the schools
we attended. The differences are not necessarily due
to what is being done or not being done by the
professionals who run the schools. The 1980s has
brought forth such social changes and forces that there
are unprecedented amounts of stress being placed not
only upon our children but also upon the family
structure (Kaplan 1989). This is a very crucial time
for education and it is incumbent upon us as educators
to reevaluate our thinking about the importance of
parental involvement in our schools. Parents and
teachers must realize that we need each other, as
allies, if our children are going to receive a
successful education. In trying to bring parents and
teachers together, to form parent-teacher
collaboratives, it is essential that all parties
concerned weigh certain factors when determining plans
and goals for the future. As these partnerships begin
to grow and develop answers must be sought dealing with
educational problems and realize the following:

1. We serve a vastly different student
    population.
2. There is a tremendous increase in the amount
    of knowledge to be disseminated.
3. There is an unbelievable mobility in our
    population.
4. There is a tremendous change in the family
    structure with more breakdown of marriages
    than ever before.
5. There is the trauma of desegregation, which
    often involves uprooting a stable community
    school environment.

Based upon professional experience and graduate
school studies the challenging area presented by the
use of action research in opening the doors of urban
public education to parents and fostering a spirit of
collaboration with educators in identifying influences
which impact upon parental involvement was the primary
focus of this study.

The next chapter focuses on the pertinent studies
in the field of urban parental involvement comprising
such notable authors as Rich, Henderson, and Comer.

Chapter III on the methodology and data collection
procedures employed in this study detailed the
structure, subjects, and research techniques used in
measuring and examining the influences impacting upon
parental involvement in an inner city elementary

school. Accounts of the quantitative procedures
applied and samples of the parental questionnaire will
be presented.

CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Home School Connection

The education reform movement of the mid 1980s created an awareness that despite rapidly evolving needs, the process of how we educate American youth has generally remained unchanged over the past twenty years. In recent literature the emphasis on increasing parental involvement in their child's education has come to the forefront of educational revitalization. Attempting to show how improved parental involvement within the schools will help break down the real or imaginary obstacles parents have erected concerning school is a top priority.

This decade has witnessed America's opinion leaders writing reams of material depicting what is wrong with our schools and society in general. Among those wrongs are today's high expectations and pervasive negative attitudes towards people, the increase in competition--be it in one's own job or school and the world in general, dramatic shifts in our population's demographics, the nation's emergence into the post-industrial economy and an ever present specter of way and peace. Examples of such information show increases in school crime including homicide, rape,

robbery assaults on both teachers and students, and
drugs as all evidence of the disorder, disruption, and
disrespect for rules and authority, which seem ever so
present today.

Why were these factors not so prevalent prior to
the 1940s? The term "power" in those days was
demonstrated by principals of authoritarian and
autocratic nature--"a feared individual" (Comer 1980,
7). Teachers, working with these principals, had a
shared sense of power and authority within the schools.
The respect given by parents towards these educational
leaders was carried out within the homes by having no
misbehavior tolerated at all. This stern attitude made
the job of teaching more academically minded than
disciplinary in nature. In most cases, if you
misbehaved in school, you were almost afraid to go home
for you knew punishment was waiting from your mother or
father.

During the 1950s this sense of respect for
authority began to decline and authority figures began
to lose their power (Comer 1980, 6). Changes in the
parental outlook in school and parental expectations
for children, curriculum revisions, staff-teacher
relationships, and the school climate all began to make
the business of schooling more difficult. This was a
time of permissiveness, lessening of moral standards

due to Viet Nam, an increasing dependency on
television, and an increase in classism or racism in
our society. In Dr. James Comer's <u>School Power</u>, he
points out the need for social, psychological, and
motivational improvements with the shared emphasis on
responsibilities placed back on parents and teachers in
educating the children. If educators are to overcome
this crisis, we must find ways to establish, for the
benefit of the students, a shared sense of expertise,
flexibility between home/school, accountability from
all parties, trust, respect, and open lines of
communication to break down real or imaginary obstacles
parents have built regarding teachers and schools.
William Waller is credited with his premise that
parents' negative views of school arise out of a
"crystallization" of their childhood oppression and
fear in relation to the all-powerful teacher. This
attitude is then transferred with or without intention
down to the children of the next generation. This
disillusionment only leads to confusion, frustration,
and apathy as felt by the children. Nowhere is this
crisis in education felt more deeply than in our inner
city neighborhoods. Teachers and administrators in the
public inner city schools find it difficult making
parents realize just how important and vital they are
in the education of their children.

One of the first programs to encourage active parental involvement in education was established in 1964 under the Economic Opportunity Act or Federal War on Poverty (Ascher 1987, 2) and became known as Head Start. This program was designed to help educate the nation's poor preschoolers by offering self-help opportunities to their own parents and communities. It was to have had the most of neighborhood, community and parental involvement as possible. Following this idea in 1965 the initial stages of the federally funded program known as Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act was established. It had a very simple premise, that poor or disadvantaged communities should have a direct way or means of helping to solve their own problems within their own schools. This idea lasted roughly until 1981. In 1981 Title I was revamped under the Reagan Administration and became known as Chapter I of the Education Consolidation and Improvement Act. With this revision the parental component concerning decision making and involvement within community schools in order to improve the quality of education being delivered was downgraded. Parents who were beginning to feel less isolated, less ignored, and less put off by the educational establishment now had the doors closed to them and the rug pulled out from under them. The acceptance of this

revision did not cause the loud outrage from low-income parents it was supposed to be helping. At this time educators also began to believe that parents did not belong inside the schools but rather helping the educational process from their homes, and blaming the parents when failure occurred for not caring or being involved. This societal justification for inequality which projects racial and cultural deficits had the net effect of "blaming the victim" (Yeakey and Bennett 1990, 12). In 1988 a reemphasis on parental involvement was begun by the Hawkes-Stafford School Improvement Act. Getting parents back to caring about the inner city schools was much harder this time for their fear of mistrust and suspicion took hold. Now, as Dr. Sarah Lawrence Lightfoot in her Worlds Apart and by Roland S. Barth in his Improving Schools from Within both pointed out, the obstructive influence was not educational in nature but more deep rooted in the emotional and attitudinal psyches of the parents.

Our inner cities are changing and the schools are caught in the middle. At a time when more parental involvement in our inner schools is needed there is less (Comer 1988, 34-36). Our society is getting poorer and more heavily minority in many urban neighborhoods. Among the poor Blacks as many as 83 percent live in these poverty areas, the poverty level

for other minorities is also on the increase,
female-headed families is 74 percent for Blacks, 55
percent among Hispanics, and 49 percent for Whites
(Ascher 1987, 2). The "traditional families" that are
comprised of a stable couple, who are biological
parents to the children, and where fathers have jobs
and mothers remain home exists in a very small minority
of households, as low as 7 percent (Heath and
McLaughlin 1987). All these factors stress to us the
major problems schools have in communicating with
parents. Today, educators are more involved with
grandparents, stepparents, guardians, and day-care
providers in trying to reach home than with the actual
parent. The link between poor and minority parents and
the schools has been broken. Poor and minority parents
feel the schools are cold to them, do not understand
the stress and strain of their own lives, do not
welcome them when they do come to school, feel a mix of
anger, awe, and resentment towards teachers while
teachers often feel overburdened with having to do more
student/school orientational education preparation,
parenting, and emotional counselling than actual
teaching.

Our schools reflect our society today (Sarason
1990). These social struggles are not new, they are
just more prevalent in today's climate. From both an

historic and contemporary view the role of parental involvement and community has always been important to the African American community. History affords us the opportunity to reclaim valuable lessons that have allowed African Americans as a group to surmount extraordinary obstacles (Anderson 1988). Minority families, within their communities, must take the lead and set examples for our youth. Many African American parents and caregivers are limited by their own backgrounds, they must do the best they can (ACME 1990). Trying to get parents back into the mainstream of the educational process is going to be difficult at best. History sets the foundation and we need to understand it, before we can go forward and try to correct the problems. The mistrust that sometimes characterizes parent-school relations in the inner city encourages some parents to adopt a hostile and aggressive stance towards schools (Payne 1984, 123). The following presents an historical review of the issue.

In earlier times racial prejudice was deliberate and well organized. In modern day ideology this prevailing view has begun to crumble due to pressures placed upon people from three areas--political, social, and economical. Conflicts in the beginning of the twentieth century between race and class were founded

more out of antagonism, jealousy over job competition,
and powers against each other. These tensions spread
over to problems in housing, political control
economic, and social order (Wilson 1980, 21-22). The
battle ground was not in the socio-political arena. It
was for control of neighborhoods, local schools, local
governments, and recreational facilities not with
employment issues alone (Wilson 1980, 121).
Historically poor people in America have not succeeded
economically through the schools; rather, as they
exerted political influence to ensure that their
children would succeed through the schools (Yeakey and
Bennett 1991, 13).

During the first twenty years of the 20th century
the belief that America's racial difficulties would be
solved by integration was slowly eroded (Wilson 1980,
127). Professionals, businessmen, politicians, and
self-help solidarity believers listened to spokesman
Booker T. Washington and tried to form their own little
world. The Depression of the 1930s wiped out many of
these plans and dreams (Wilson 1980, 126). The New
Deal of Franklin D. Roosevelt brought new contributions
to the African American community. His programs opened
up the labor market and improved the relationship
between labor unions and African American workers.
World War II and the Fair Employment Practices Act

brought more job opportunities to the African American
ending discrimination with companies holding federal
contracts (Wilson 1980, 127-1128).

One major effect of the 1940s was the
reestablishment of an integration theme and more
concern for civil rights. With the emergence of the
NAACP many federal, state, and municipal civil rights
acts were passed. Prior to 1960 the urban city
neighborhoods were inhabited by Blacks of different
economic groups--poor, working class, middle class, and
professionals. This social organization provided a
sense of community, and provided a set of norms and
sanctions for people to follow. Affirmative Action
programs initiated in the 1960s provided a means for
more affluent and intelligent Blacks to move out of
their inner city neighborhoods thus leaving behind
their poorer and more disadvantaged neighbors (Wilson
1987). The term "underclass" has been used to describe
this group. Liberals avoid this term and state that
the term is destructive and misleading. Conservatives
on the other hand focus their discussions on the
underclass and have targeted governmental programs as
having an adverse effect on group behavior and
initiatives. Two publications had a great impact on
the studies of the underclass. The Moynihan Report on
the War on Poverty basically reported these programs

helped the poor the least and helped the affluent (education or financial) the most. In Charles Murray's <u>Loosing Ground</u> the view that federal programs were harmful to the poor and made them dependent reinforced the Conservative views of the 1960s. African Americans of the inner city during the 1960s were getting actively involved in political issues in non-violent ways. Even though this movement, under the leadership of Dr. Martin Luther King, was non-violent in nature, the resistance to racial change caused bitter resentments and anger. As a result, anger and frustration spread to disturbances over unemployment, inequality of education, inadequate housing, and police brutality. Focal points now shifted from middle class problems to lower class situations revolving around education, welfare, class oppression, de facto segregation, and control over city or community agencies or government (Wilson 1980, 138-139). This crucial factor as pointed out in Wilson's <u>The Declining Significance of Race</u> underscores the deepening and widening patterns of differences among poor, middle and upper class African Americans in the 1990s. The differences the economic schism formed in the Black community could easily solidify (Wilson 1980, 142).

The events of the past show how these issues have effected family life between 1965-1980. Family life

changed with the increase of male joblessness, the rise
of female-headed families, the increase in the divorce
and separation rates, age in population over 65, all
had major impacts on the poor and Black's problems in
the social, cultural, and moral deterioration of the
Black communities after 1965 (Jencks 1985). The
"culture of poverty" in itself denotes a special
subculture suffering beyond hope in the inner city and
trapped in a never ending cycle of joblessness, broken
homes, welfare, drugs, and violence (Yeakey and Bennett
1990, 7). It appears that although we have made
progress in some areas we still see separate and
unequal educational systems for our American children
(Farley and Allen 1989). If we are aware of past
history and trends as educators we will be better able
to assist our parents, support the issues they show
concerning school and education, and encourage the
development of partnerships necessary to rescue public
education in the inner city schools.

In understanding parental involvement in inner
city schools, educators and parents must view the child
as the central and most important person in their lives
(Payne 1984). Productive collaborations demand this
and cannot be successful unless all parties acknowledge
this basic truth. Acknowledgement and respect for the

child's history, culture, family, are all vital if we
are to work together.

> Schools will only become comfortable and
> productive environments for learning when the
> cultural and historical presence of Black families
> and communities are infused into the daily
> interactions and educational processes of
> children. (Lightfoot 1981)

Getting parents to realize that the work they do

in the home preparing their child for school is

essential for educational success. Parents have

regular activities to accomplish even at the simplest

level of parental involvement such as clothing their

child, medical requirements only parents can provide,

getting their child to school on time and regularly,

signing parental consent forms, establishing some

values and social skills, and attending school

functions or responding to messages from the school

(Henderson et. al. 1986, 5-7). The difficulty arises

when mothers see the above activities in a competitive

or evaluated way. The competition factor mothers feel

towards female teachers has a direct impact on their

involvement and the educators interaction with both the

parent and the student (Lightfoot 1981). Dr. Sarah

Lawrence Lightfoot's book <u>Worlds Apart: Relationships</u>

<u>Between Families and Schools</u> presents urban educators

with many areas of concern. Dr. Lightfoot examines the

fact that schools must realize a conflict exists

between mothers and teachers and reflect upon how the conflict they encounter can be resolved.

Women see the schools and teachers as a method of evaluating their parental abilities. The more the child adjusts to school, the more the mother feels left out or not wanted. Mothers also see teachers as role models diverting attention away from mother to teacher. By becoming aware of these jealousies, teachers could build upon them. Parents are the first and primary educators of the child (Henderson et. al. 1986, 3) and the resources that parents can afford the school are numerous. Developing a mutual respect between mothers and educators with the child at the core will only serve to support educational programs, reinforce the worth of education, and make partners out of adversaries.

Because of the complex social climate we live in today, some children do not have a strong home structure to count on for preparation into the world of school. Pointing out many social aspects which need our attention has been done by one of the most notable and influential leaders in this country, Dr. James Comer. In Dr. Comer's book School Power the facts concerning the following changes in our society between the 1970s-1980s were highlighted and related to the fall of the family unit; drug and alcohol abuse in

schools increased approximately 37.5 percent, weapons

seized 54.4 percent, student assaults 85.3 percent, and

teacher assaults 77.4 percent (Comer 1988). Dr. Comer

devised a long term intervention program in the New

Haven, Connecticut Public Schools focusing on parental

involvement in organizing and managing two city

schools. This project is a five year plan between the

city schools and Yale University Child Study Center.

The goals of this plan were incorporated in Don Davies'

work in Boston and New York and detailed in "Poor

Parents, Teachers, and the Schools: Comments about

Practice, Policy, and Research." The utilization of

the Community Model for parental involvement links the

family and community to healthy development of children

both socially and academically. The Comer Process is

simple--establishing a positive climate for productive

interaction between parents and school staff to

identify the children's needs (Hall and Henderson

1990). The Comer Process involves:

   1. A no-fault approach to all problems to improve

       student achievement, with the focus not on who

       is to blame, but what can be done.

   2. To build cooperation and coordination among

       all adults, concerned with the students' best

       educational interests.

3. To assimilate the social and psychological
    climate of the school to foster learning.

4. To have decisions by consensus when possible.

5. To have active parent involvement.

6. To have regular school community meetings
    (Hall and Henderson 1990, 18).

For direction and guidance in this collaborative
venture many new structures were established. A board
comprised of administrators, teachers, para
professionals, and professional support people gave
guidance to the group. School parent councils were
elected along with elected staff members to evaluate
and implement the program. In establishing program
credibility parental workshops were designed and
implemented. These workshops offered teacher training
and parent participation programs in an equitable and
cooperative climate. As a result of this program
attendance in the pilot schools increased, discipline
and behavior problems declined, a general increase to
grade level in achievement was obtained by most
students, and parent-teacher relationships were built
on trust and respect rather than conflict and
suspicion.

Influencing the home-school factors and bringing
parents into the mainstream of their child's education
means breaking the fallacies parents hold towards

teachers and in turn makes teachers reevaluate their

thinking about the parental role played in education.

Many parents, as pointed out in David Ost's

"Teacher-Parent Interactions: An Effective

School-Community Environment", view teacher-parent

relationships based upon assumptions which may be

grouped as fallacies dealing with teachers and school

environment. His review dealt with teacher-parent

interaction and school-family relationships from

non-systematic evaluation studies from intervention

programs of the 1970s and 1980s, such as Headstart.

These studies dealt with homogeneous teacher

populations and "specially targeted" families (Ost

1988, 165-175). These works did not weigh individual

differences, teacher traits, or community

characteristics. The teacher-parent interactions are

hindered by six fallacies faced in the school-community

environment (Ost 1988,)   1) Teachers have the skills

and techniques to work with parents or community

members. Early childhood teacher training includes

working on and establishing relationships with parents.

Middle and higher education programs simply train

teachers in dealing with parent conferences over

student problems and successes, 2) Teacher-parent

interaction is the same at all levels of schooling, 3)

Teacher-parent interaction is the same regardless of

the school or the community it is located in. They did
not take into account practices found in urban,
suburban, or rural schools. They did not take into
account parental expectations and community
relationships which are different everywhere. They did
not take into account feelings of fear and distrust
which are running rampant in our society., 4) Teachers
are professionally and personally above threats and
intimidations. The new trend towards collaboration is
meant more for business and industry than for parents,
5) Family structures during the course of a school year
do not change but remain stable, 6) Teachers and
parents are competitors for children's attention and
respect. (Ost 1988, 165-176). These six fallacies
challenge the ways for teachers to interact with
parents based on the reality of our changing social
conditions, community differences, neighborhood
pressures, peer pressures, and all changes in society
in general. The question we raise is how can teachers
develop relationships that are mingled with the
school-community when everything in our society is
changing.

To combat some of these fallacies we have already
looked at what Dr. Sarah Lawrence Lightfoot wrote about
competition among women and teachers. Earlier the
statistics were given about our changing inner city

neighborhoods thus reflecting directly upon the inner
city schools and the level of parental involvement if
there is any involvement at all. Reflections on
differing parental expectations can be seen in work
done by Rhoda McShane Becher in her "Parent
Involvement: A Review of Research and Principles of
Successful Practice." In Ost's study it was felt that
parental expectations are the same at all levels of
schooling. Ms. Becher worked on four areas where
parents could become involved in order to improve the
achievement of their children. These areas were: 1)
the part parents can play in determining children's
intelligence and ability, 2) the characteristics of
effective parent programs and the relationship these
programs have upon student achievement, 3) the
beneficial results of parental involvement upon the
entire school community, 4) the principles for
establishing effective parent involvement programs to
get parents involved and active. Children who have
parents with high expectations for them, who respond to
and interact with them frequently, and who see
themselves as "teachers" for their children often are
the high achievers in school (Becher 1984). When
parents show an interest in their children's education
and have high expectations for their performance, they
are promoting attitudes that are the key to

achievement, attitudes than can be formed independently
of social class or other external circumstances
(Henderson 1987, 4). The fallacy that all
teacher-parent interactions are the same has been taken
apart by the works of the late Ira Gordon. In Gordon's
"Effects of Parental Involvement on Schooling" a
presentation for models of parental involvement based
upon the influencing behavior of the parents,
demographic factors, cognitive elements, and emotional
elements (Gordon 1979, 5) all stress the development of
programs which will support learners. He suggests four
models of parental involvement: 1) Parent-Child
Model--family behavior variables such as family
characteristics (education, income levels), family
behavior (enforcement of home rules), family patterns
(married, single, divorced, employed, social support),
or family attitudes (parental expectations, self-image
concepts) all encourage positive educational attitudes
and high expectations for success for the children in
the home learning environment; 2) School Impact
Model--this is a basic model with emphasis on the
home-school interaction and communication network; 3)
Community Impact Model--the unification of all agencies
need to work with children. It is founded on the
assumption that everything in the child's life relates
to educational success; 4) Comprehensive Services

Model--the child's health, social, and psychological

development all effect learning (Gordon 1979, 6-13).

Mr. Gordon's models have been adapted by several

authors in their establishment of parental involvement

programs. Among these authors are Gene Maeroff in his

School Smart Parent and Dorothy Rich in her Megaskills:

How Families Can Help Children Succeed in School and

Beyond. Mr. Maeroff is a basic follower of the

Parent-Child Model. He endeavors in common sense

approaches to provide parents with a guidebook

detailing processes relevant to their child's

schooling. He tries to make parents knowledgeable

observers and advocates in being involved with their

child's elementary schooling. The School Smart Parent

offers parents home involvement activities such as:

how to help at home during a child's learning to read

phase (Maeroff 1989, 45-55), how to deal with

television (Maeroff 1989, 112-124), how to supplement

schools in the afternoons, on weekends, and during the

summer (Maeroff 1989, 377-395), and how to be an

effective advocate for your child (Maeroff 1989,

176-189). Dorothy Rich's book is used to assist

parents in helping their children by using practical

methods. Dr. Rich feels that for children to learn and

keep learning basic skills at home, they need to learn

another important set of skills at home. These are the

megaskills--a child's inner workings of learning (Rich
1988, 3). Trying to reinforce the concept that "home"
is where the child has its most important teacher and
role model. In her book she offers home based
"recipes" for developing the megaskills in children:
1) Responsibility: doing what is right, 2) Confidence:
feeling you can do what you want, 3) Perseverance:
finishing what you start, 4) Motivation: desire to do
something, 5) Problem Solving: using what you know and
putting it to work, 6) Initiative: taking action, 7)
Teamwork: working with others, 8) Effort: willing to
work hard, 9) Caring: concern for others, 10) Common
Sense: using good judgement. (Rich 1988, 4)

Dr. Rich is also the founder of the Home and
School Institute in Washington, D.C. The goal of this
organization is to build strong bonds between home and
school in order to establish a working partnership
between the home and school. The theme of the group is
that all families are able to provide meaningful
learning experiences for children. This is a "parents
as tutors" design which provides "social reinforcement
to the family in the form of increased attention both
to the parent from the school and from the parents to
the child" (Rich 1988, 240).

The School Impact Model was used by Patricia A.
Bissell in her doctoral thesis, 1989. Her work

utilized the communication form of interaction between

parents and teachers. The mode of operation was an

answering machine and a computer-based autodialing

system. Ms. Bissell researched how effective teacher

recorded messages concerning class assignments,

messages, and activities would be received by parents

and students. The results demonstrated the

establishment of positive home-school communications,

improved parental attitudes involving themselves in the

education process, socioeconomic status was of no

concern nor a hindrance to parents, and an increase of

exchanged information between home and school thus

enabling parents to become partners with the teachers

(Bissell 1989). Another School-Impact Model was used

by Patricia Louise Hulsebosch in her 1988 dissertation

dealing with the communication problem between teachers

and their involvement with parents. She dealt with

concepts of conceptualization of similarities and

differences between teachers and parents, the pay-offs,

problems and puzzles of the parent-teacher

relationship. Her result showed how for teachers their

interaction and relationship with parents was closely

tied to their perspective on their own role as a

professional (Hulsebosch 1988).

Community Impact Model was influential in the

formation of the mandated components for parental

involvement found in "The Partnership with Title I Parents" under the direction of Phyllis J. Hobson. The success of having parents directly involved with this program led to its success (Hobson 1979, 41).

This theme of collaboration works when parents become actively involved in trying to change educational climates. "The Changing Role of Parent Groups in Educational Decision Making" presents the following developments by Lois S. Steinberg: 1) School decentralization, 2) Federally mandated parent advisory councils, 3) Parent/citizen councils mandated by state or local school officials, 4) Child advocacy groups, 5) Citizens advisory councils mandated by court ordered desegregation, 6) Court decisions, 7) Changes in the national PTA and local PTAs (Steinberg 1979). Research has shown that government mandated councils are not effective mediating structures for parents who wish to present their goals and ideas to school boards. However, independent organizations have been formed to represent parental concerns and it is these groups which are addressed in this section.

School Decentralization

Research concerning political and administrative decentralization plans have shown that no real powers have been transferred to local boards or parental advisory councils.

Government-mandated Councils

This includes programs such as Chapter I where parents were ordered to participate in the implementation of the program. The objectives of these programs were to make services more responsive to the needs of the poor and disadvantaged. However, the goals of such programs were more times than not ambiguous, guidelines were not clear, and rules were not spelled out nor carried out fully. These groups tended to focus on their own issues and not the larger concerns of the whole school.

State and Local Mandated Councils

These would include school based councils acting for a certain school. Many times these councils would be dominated by the principal and professionals who minimized the involvement of parents. School boards did little to help organize these groups and to support the parents involved.

Child Advocacy Groups

These include citizen run organizations which were established to protect the rights of the child. Included in this group would be advocacy groups instrumental in achieving court decisions and changes in social policy. Parents could be directly effected by non-English speaking children, minority children, and special needs children.

Changing PTA

Studies before 1970 indicated that urban school systems were not responsive to the concerns of parents. At that time educators felt that parents did not belong in the schools. Momentum has been turning to where educators now recognize the need for strong parental support and involvement.

The PTA is the major and most widely known organization for parental involvement in the schools. In recent years the PTA has promoted a more active role and image for parents and has published many books and articles to support an increased role for parental activity in the schools.

The Community Impact model is also the premise put forth by Dr. Byrd Jones and Dr. Robert Maloy in their book Partnerships for Improving Schools. The authors encourage schools to form cooperative collaboratives

with the community, parents, universities, and the business community. A prime reason for the formation of partnerships is the agreement among teachers, and the general public that schools will need help in preparing students for complicated and changing needs of our society (Ascher 1988). Drs. Jones and Maloy suggest that partnerships can bring new perspectives to school. Working together allows for exploration of new issues, new ideas, and new solutions. Partnerships must evolve jointly requiring communication, trust, shared personal strength and weakness, and an openness to accept new ideas and concepts. In our inner city schools where poverty, unemployment, broken families, homelessness, and drug abuse are among the distractions to public education the formation of partnerships is needed to develop allies for the public schools. By successfully forming partnerships the quality of education will improve, new understandings will be established, and new goals for the future will be forth coming. The authors set forth concepts for understanding how to form collaboratives for school improvement through utilization of three concepts: Multiple Realities, Ill-Structured Problems, and Reflexive Thinking (Jones and Maloy 1988, 40-46). By employing these concepts parents and educators will realize through communication and cooperation rather

than controversy and competition that accomplishments

can be made. Improvements will come about after

educators take a long hard look at themselves and the

community they are associated with in order to resolve

dilemmas they each face. In order to develop a strong

and trusting relationship with our parents we must come

to terms with ourselves. These ideas are not new, we

read about their implementation through the works of

Don Davies, Patricia Louise Hulsebosch, and Dr. James

Comer. Unless we develop such insights we will not be

able to understand the needs of the community and the

programs which will encourage support, participation,

and involvement. In our attempt to form partnerships

our first concern should be with the parents. We must

always keep in mind that most parents are uneasy with

teachers and teachers are not that comfortable with

parents. We must be ready to share ideas and

responsibilities in activities, we must be willing to

communicate in open and friendly fashion to determine

the interests of both parties, we must be flexible in

planning activities, and we must be open to planning

for the future. We must pay attention to the needs and

concerns of both parents and teachers in order to

establish trust and mutual respect among all concerned.

Attempting to gain parental involvement in partnerships

will lead to positive attitudinal development towards

educators as parents see their children gaining from these partnerships. Our problem with communication between parents and teachers can be resolved through partnership formation. Through group efforts, the students will see that adults do care and in turn the level of interest and positive self concepts can be energized. For many teachers and parents forming and being part of partnerships not just with each other but also with the external community could be their first opportunities in developing levels of cooperation, coordination, and collaboration that they never thought could exist among themselves.

The concept of collaborative partnerships in educating our children is also being advocated by the Committee for Economic Development. As pointed out by Carol Ascher in "Improving the Home-School Connection for Poor and Minority Urban Students" a strong role for business would be to become pacesetters leading educational reform and as advocates for educational programming and funding (Ascher 1987).

The Comprehensive Service Model has already been examined through the school programs established by Dr. James Comer in New Haven and by Don Davies in both Boston and New York. These programs utilize all aspects reinforcing family life. The process is to establish a positive climate for interaction between

parents and school staff so all can work together to identify the children's needs (Hall and Henderson 1990, 18). Both Davies and Comer stress the promotion of psychological development in order to foster academic achievement. It is important to do this by developing trust, openness, and involvement among parents and teachers. In order to succeed and initiate something new the following steps were implemented: 1) A no-fault approach to all problems to improve student achievement, with the focus not on who is to blame but rather what can be done, 2) Coordination and cooperation among all adults who are concerned with the students' best educational interests, rather than with hierarchy and competitions, 3) Decisions by consensus whenever possible, 4) Meetings on regular basis, with representation from the entire school community, 5) Active parent involvement every step of the way, from membership on school boards and management teams, to parent-teacher activities, to volunteering at school (Hall and Henderson 1990, 19). The backers of this comprehensive involvement model believe that

> . . . cultures of home and school deeply affect
> the psychological and social development of many
> youngsters--particularly poor, minority children
> from families outside the mainstream--and that
> these difficulties, if left unbridged, may be a
> cause of poor academic performance. (Comer 1980,
> 36)

In striving to achieve more parental involvement, educators must first open the lines of communication. Given the many problems urban parents face today, as well as the increasing pressure on teachers' time, several questions concerning the school's expectations for parent involvement must be considered (Ascher 1987, 9). In what ways can single or working parents be expected to participate? Whatever their ability for becoming involved, research indicates that single and working parents may be discriminated against by school personnel, who tend to decide in advance that these parents cannot be relied upon (Epstein 1984). In both dual working parent and single working parent families, parents' involvement is usually related to the flexibility their jobs may allow (Espinosa 1988). What should be done to involve parents with language difficulties? Not only is language a barrier, making communication between parents and teachers difficult, but often these parents are afraid or embarrassed to involve themselves. Parents, themselves, may have misgivings about being in a school with cultural differences. Effective involvement programs must overcome these influences and foster teamwork made up of trust, understanding, cooperation, and openness.

What responsibility do schools have to encourage the hard to reach parent? Without doubt some families

are too burdened by personal problems or their own struggle for survival to be easily reached (Ascher 1987, 12) by the school. This should not be seen as an excuse on behalf of educators to give up. Various ways have been suggested to get these parents involved and to improve the communication between educators and parents. The following is a beginning (Rich 1985): 1) increase the awareness and sensitivity of the school staff to the time constraints faced by parents, 2) creating a more accepting environment for working and single parents, as well as stepparents, guardians, and day-care providers, 3) scheduling evening meetings with childcare provisions supplied, 4) provide before-school and after-school care, 5) provide regular information on school activities, classroom experiences and ask for parental help in completing tasks or helping with problems. "When parents are involved, children do better in school, and they go to better schools" (Henderson 1986, 15).

Summary

Until relatively recently, most of the reform literature has not been aimed on specific problems within the inner city schools. Numerous reports critiqued the way schools worked and the lack of foresight to meet the demands of the late twentieth

century style of American life. Recently, observers have come to realize that, although inner city schools pose a particular set of problems for reformers, most improvement literature has not targeted urban schools. Since much of the work force of the next century will be educated in city schools, failing to factor in the needs of inner city schools represent at best a short-sighted approach to making American public schools the best.

Schools must begin to address issues now for they will only become more severe in the future. Educators must survey their parents in order to develop unique programs which will address the needs of their specific school community.

Major problems facing urban educators consist of the lack of traditional family support for children in school, the increasing divorce rate, the general complexity of modern life, increasing percentage of single parents, increasing percentage in female-headed households, and the increase in the dual working family all characterize city populations. As a result of these pressures there is less parental involvement in education at a time when more is necessary. One of the perverse ironies of modern urban America is that children who need the parental support the most--inner city students from poor and disadvantaged

settings--often have little or no encouragement from
their families. Educators must find ways to help make
parents realize just how vital their role is in the
education of their children. The result is that inner
city schools often are characterized by little parental
involvement and large doses of apathy.

Parents are not the only people to feel
uncomfortable or unwanted in schools--outsiders often
view the school staff as uncooperative and inflexible.
Teachers have been slow to accept change and are often
hesitant about accepting change in any form. Due to
the ongoing criticisms of schools and teachers there
exists a low level of self-motivation and a very low
level of self-esteem. It seems almost impossible to
understand that the basic role of a teacher has
remained the same while the daily demands and
requirements not only on the school but society in
general have placed an every increasing burden on the
backs of teachers. This aspect of "blame-pointing"
must be ended and the ignorance factor between teachers
and parents eliminated. Despite these facts most
teachers are dedicated, hard-working, caring, and
enthusiastic professionals who need opportunities for
sharing, communication, interaction, and
decision-making. Bringing more parental and community

Involvement into the schools can offer new perspectives and hopes to solving school related problems.

We, as educators, must open the lines of communication, establish trust, foster positive self-esteem, be willing to share our knowledge with others all in the hopes of overcoming any fears that may be lying within parents affording them the "OUT" not to come "IN" and get involved.

"Learning is not only a mechanical process. Relationships are also important to learning, and that's what we haven't given enough attention to." (Comer 1990)

C H A P T E R   III
RESEARCH METHODS

Research Methodology

The intent of this study was to identify, analyze,
and accumulate information concerning the parent
involvement problem in a multi-racial, multi-ethnic
inner city elementary school and examine the various
influences preventing inner city parents from becoming
actively involved in the Home-School collaborative
effort thus securing the knowledge to make changes, and
to create strategies for future improvement. The
procedures implemented in this research study were
those found in the descriptive research model. The
study was dependent upon instrumentation for
measurement and observation (Borg and Gall 1985, 5) in
identifying the influences which impact upon the
attitudes of parents, who have children attending an
inner city elementary school, concerning their
involvement in the Home-School activities of the
school.

The concept "teacher-as-researcher" theme is
currently beginning to surface in the educational
community (Atkin 1990, 4). This form of inquiry holds
promise in the educational field for its potential for
getting closer to the concerns of practitioners. It

helps teachers trust in their own experience, and to
build on it systematically and rigorously (Atkins 1990,
6).

The means of conducting this form of descriptive
study was accomplished through the utilization of a
survey/questionnaire. In utilizing this descriptive
survey method the following steps were employed:

1. collection of data was done with a clear
   purpose in mind

2. evidence was tied together in a systematic
   manner

3. answers to research topic were developed which
   would

   a) advance knowledge in the field

   b) be of value in the attack on the specific
      problem

   c) generate other research ideas (Grosof and
      Sardy 1985, 29).

It is hoped that this descriptive study will be used by
inner city elementary teachers in identifying
influences which impact on parental involvement.

Research Design

The survey is the most widely used method for
obtaining descriptive and evaluative information in the
area of education (Borg and Gall 1989, 416).
Requirements for a successful descriptive study include

clarity in conceptualization of the phenomenon one is attempting to describe and attention to sources of error that could hinder the results obtained. A carefully devised questionnaire requires time, patience, and skill (Vichas 1982).

The researcher applied years of personal observation and experience in the education field with information gathered from researching the literature on parental involvement to formulate this survey instrument. A brainstorming session was conducted with the building administrator, two parent representatives, and a group of colleagues to establish areas of vital and mutual concern. After the initial writing of the questionnaire, a trial run with two parents and two staff members was conducted to determine what corrections needed to be made. The final product had each objective clearly stated and the ability to tabulate each attitudinal response was checked. The parental involvement responses were broken down based upon variables such as; number of children in school, grade of each child, gender of each child, and race.

In formulating the parental questionnaire used in this study the following guidelines were covered:

1. the respondents would be able to understand the questions in the same light as the researcher posed them (face validity)

2. respondents would be able to process the
   questions and answer them appropriately

3. responses would lend themselves to systematic
   coding procedures

4. responses to questions would not change just
   because they were asked (non-reactivity)

5. respondents would be willing to participate

The research design section then measured the
questions concerning influences impacting parental
involvement and transferred them into statistical terms
which then were analyzed. The design of the
questionnaire contained both relevancy and accuracy as
primary goals (Warwick and Lininger 1975, 127).
Descriptive statistics were calculated to evaluate the
following questions:

How did parents rate the receptiveness of the
   school?

How did inner city parents perceive the
   parent-teacher relationship?

What were the parental awareness levels regarding
   school policies and rules?

Did parents involve themselves in home study
   practices of their children?

What preferential school activities would
   stimulate parental involvement?

To what extent do economic and social pressures
   impact upon parental involvement?

Are there opportunities available for

parent-teacher interactions?

Pilot Study

In October of 1989, in conjunction with a group of colleagues, a pilot study involving two classes from an inner city elementary school was conducted. The student enrollment was mainly Hispanic, African American, Asian and a small number of White students. The survey instrument utilized in this study was jointly designed by Kathleen Mastaby and myself.

There were 48 children involved in this preliminary project and they played delivery persons by taking these packets home to their parents. We had a five-day collection cycle. The researchers received 40 out of 48 returns back for a rate of 83.3 percent.

The questionnaire design was formulated with a total of 38 questions. The questions were written in clear terms easily understood by the respondents. The Language Preference printout was reviewed to determine if any translated versions of the questionnaire were needed. Confidentiality was utmost in our minds so as to insure respondents the privacy and freedom to answer honestly without being afraid of any repercussions either for themselves or their children. Identifiable data was not requested. The participants were asked to

provide general information such as number of children in school, how many schools each child attended, language spoken in the home, and gender of the child.

The content of the questionnaire centered on parental attitudes towards the school staff, parental home-school practices with their children, and factors which possibly influence their ability to be involved with the school. The results were tabulated and frequency distributions were graphically presented for each question's response.

The pilot study lent itself to a larger scale project, the addition of more variables, an improved introductory letter, question revisions, and improved analysis methods.

Selection of Subjects

Population refers to the aggregation of elements or subjects for which the results of a study are to be generalized. In this study the target setting was an inner city elementary school servicing White, African American, Asian, and Hispanic students. The population refers to students in attendance during the winter of 1991 in one inner city elementary school.

The target population was the population of interest. In this study the ultimate goal were the

parents of 140 elementary students. This population was chosen due to its ethnic and racial diversity.

The <u>sampling unit</u> was the population defined in terms of elements or units for which the information was sought. It allows for statistical analysis and concepts to be formed. In this study a selective sample was utilized.

The guidelines followed in selecting these subjects were as follows:

1. ability to meet the overall goal objective of the study

2. ability of the sampling unit to allow for computation of valid responses or sampling error

3. ability to have procedures actually implemented

4. ability to be economical in its operation

The school's enrollment consisted of 215 students ranging from kindergarten through grade 5. The breakdown for data analysis:

Black	121
White	20
Hispanic	70
Other	4

The school qualifies for Chapter I assistance because of the high rate of eligibility for the Free/Reduced Lunch Program and also because of the

number of children who scored below the 40th percentile
in the Metropolitan Achievement Test in Reading given
in May of 1990. Students comprising Grade 1 through
Grade 5 will be taking questionnaires home.

Instrumentation

A survey is a means of collecting data about a
human population in which direct contact is made with
the involved participants through such means as
questionnaires or interviews (Warwick and Lininger
1975, 1). The designers of this questionnaire kept
certain ideas in mind while preparing this document.
The steps in formulating a valid survey research
product include the following: a) clarity, b) reality,
c) accuracy of responses, d) understanding e) allows
for systematic coding, f) nonreactivity--responses are
the same before and after questioning g) and when
necessary confidentiality. The designers translated
the questions so that the answers could be scored in a
concrete and measurable fashion. Based on the results
obtained from the Fall, 1989 pilot study the format and
reliability of this questionnaire was established.

The selective sample in this study afforded the
researcher reasonable time for completion of the study,
financial sensibility,and realistic administrative
requirements. A sample is never adequate or inadequate

in itself. It must be judged by its usefulness for a given purpose (Warwick and Lininger 1975, 70). The sample and questionnaire, if so desired, could have their results compared with other inner city elementary schools.

The directions for this survey were clearly stated at the beginning of each new section. The questions were written plainly and clearly to strengthen the accuracy of the survey--no educational jargon. Each question was designed so as not to embarrass or make the participants feel uncomfortable. The questions were structured so they had the same meaning for all respondents. Questions had no hidden meanings or double purposes--they were straight to the point. The questions were constructed with the element of time on behalf of the participants in mind. Surveys that are too long in form and time have the tendency to turn people off. Questions were sequenced so as to maintain attention and interest on behalf of the respondents. The survey instrument was designed so that complex responses were not required. The key factor was that no identifiable data was requested in order to safeguard confidentiality and foster honesty.

The questionnaire begins with 9 general information questions. The closed format of questioning was utilized in 28 instances. This

procedure was used because of the relatively short amount of time required on the part of the respondents in completing the form. This format style is better suited for coding and analyzing purposes than the open question style. The measurement applied to these closed question was done by scaling them on a five point attitudinal scale. There was one open format style of question presented to enable the participants the opportunity to make any suggestions or recommendations they wanted to freely contribute.

To help motivate the respondents a cover letter was attached to the front of the questionnaire packet. This letter explained the reason and importance for the study, why their participation was so valuable, that confidentiality regarding their answers would be kept, that participation on their part was purely voluntary, and a sincere Thank You for participating in this project. There was an attached return envelope provided for children to bring the responses back.

Procedures/Collection of Data

The procedures used in distributing the 140 parental questionnaires went as follows: On Monday, February 25th, a staff meeting was conducted to explain the purpose of the survey and to answer any questions the staff had regarding the materials going home. On

Tuesday, February 26th, the researcher distributed to
each classroom the questionnaires and explained to the
children the importance of returning these forms to
school. The survey packet contained a letter of
transmittal, a questionnaire, and a return envelope for
the convenience of the respondents. The time frame
encompassed seven (7) school days and ended on Tuesday,
March 5th. The researcher collected the returns from
each class on a daily basis and offered replacement
forms if necessary. To instill a little competition
and impetus in assuring a high rate of return a
friendly contest to see which class returned the most
questionnaires was conducted. The winner(s) had a
recognition sign posted on the main school information
board. There was a very grateful Thank You
announcement placed in the March School Newsletter on
behalf of this researcher addressed to all the parents,
students, and teachers involved in this project. The
total number of returns received was 126 for a return
rate of 90 percent.

The time schedule established for distribution and
collection of the parental questionnaires was the
following:

Monday   February 25, 1991   Building/Staff Meeting

Tuesday   February 26, 1991   Distribution of
                                 Questionnaires

Wednesday	February 27, 1991	Daily Pick-up of Questionnaires
Thursday	February 28, 1991	* by researcher
Friday	March 1, 1991	*
Monday	March 4, 1991	*
Tuesday	March 5, 1991	Final Collection Day

Data Analysis

This survey research instrument was personally brought home by each child lending itself to a high rate of return.

The survey instrument originally used as the pilot produced descriptive statistics based on the variables used (gender, race, grade) which supported its continued use in this study. The survey measured and reflected important patterns, comparisons, and differences.

The analysis procedures for this project were calculated through the use of the SPSS-X (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences--Version 10) computer software package. The statistical procedures used to calculate the responses were based upon the variables (gender, race, grade, language, number of children in school, number of schools each child has attended) concerned with influences impacting upon parental involvement in an inner city elementary school. The results reflected: measures of central tendency

(mean-median-mode), frequency distributions, standard deviations, and cross tabulations.

Cross tabulations were computed for frequency distributions involving all variables. This provided direct information about the sample. The mathematical figures indicated the subgroup population circling specific responses, column percents (subgroup circling a specific response), row percents, and the expected frequencies (Ellis 1968, 349).

Chi square statistics measured the likelihood that subgroup responses just happened by chance. Chi squares determined whether the frequency distributions differed significantly from each other (Borg and Gall, 1989, 356).

Frequency distributions showed characteristics of responses for particular variables under probe together with the number or percentage of the sample falling into each category (Warwick and Lininger 1975, 295).

Measures of central tendency indicated measurements dealing with averages or what were typical within a group.

Summary of the Study

A need can be defined as a discrepancy between an existing set of conditions and a desired set of conditions (Borg and Gall 1989, 761). In our urban

city elementary schools of today, the need as proven

through numerous literature works, that parents need to

become involved in the education of their children has

clearly and without doubt be shown. The supportive

evidence that parents are not actively involved comes

directly from the inner city classrooms (teachers and

students). We, as educators, must assess our own

educational environment to determine the attitudes and

interests of the parents we are trying to attract. The

schools of today are in turmoil and are at a

crossroad--whether they succeed or fail. It is crucial

that we inspire, cajole, stimulate, and exert every

influence we can in order to open up the lines of

communication between ourselves and all interested

parties concerned with the improvement of education.

The goal of this study was the formulation of an

instrument which will be used to significantly improve

parental involvement in an inner city elementary

school. It is an honest attempt to supply information

that could be not only useful but productive to other

educators. The knowledge and experience gained from a

researcher personally involved with the problem will

lend itself to the development of practical,

innovative, and much warranted parental involvement

activities and programs. Hopefully, the information

obtained and documented in this study will lend itself

to other educators and encourage the improvement in
parental involvement practices between the Home and
School network.

We must make every effort and foster every
opportunity to be flexible, positive, understanding,
and encouraging in our attempts to gain parental
confidence and trust before their apathy towards us, as
educators, and education in general is totally
dissolved.

C H A P T E R   IV

DATA INTERPRETATION

This research project surveyed 140 parents of
inner city elementary school children during the Winter
of 1991. Total school enrollment was 214 students.
This elementary school runs from Kindergarten through
Grade 5. The population of this school included 121
Black students, 70 Hispanic students, 20 White
students, and 4 Others. By administrative request
explaining extenuating circumstances involved with
Kindergarten age children, they were excused from this
survey. The final figures used for calculation
purposes were 140 Parental Questionnaires personally
delivered by way of the children with 126 forms
returned. This resulted with a return rate of 90
percent. Returns from this population included 62
Black, 49 Hispanic, 11 White, and 4 Others.

The research analyzed parental attitudes based
upon Language, Race, and Grade variables. Parental
attitudes concerning the importance of school to
children, the perceived parent-teacher communication
network, the receptiveness of the staff as felt by
parents, the awareness of school practices and
policies, activities that stimulate parental
involvement, social and economic pressures impacting

parental involvement, and opportunities for
parent-teacher contact were investigated.

Analysis by Language

Parental Evaluation of the School's Atmosphere

The first crosstabulation analysis was done by
gender regarding languages spoken with the child at
home. The results produced showed 68.1 percent of the
males and 75.0 percent of females have English as their
home language, 14.5 percent males and 15.0 percent
females reflected Spanish as the home language of
preference, while 17.4 percent males and 5.0 percent
females indicated Other, and 5.0 percent (two females)
indicated Cambodian as their home language. The
overall calculations were interesting for they
signified 70.7 percent of the responding parents
indicated English as the home language, 15.5 percent
indicated Spanish as the home language, 12.1 percent
Other, and 1.7 percent showed that Cambodian was the
home language. This seems to substantiate the
prevailing rationale that parental involvement is
possibly hindered by language obstacles.

The next block concerned itself with the
importance placed upon school as crosstabulated by the
language factors. The response categories used were:
"Strongly Agree," "Agree," "Disagree," "Strongly

Disagree," and "No Opinion." The figures presented may be seen as having a cultural factor in their formation. The calculations for responses of "Strongly Agreeing" to school's importance were English, 90.2 percent, Spanish 72.2 percent, Cambodian homes for 100.0 percent, and Others showing an 85.7 percent rate. The "Agree" responses were 27.8 percent Spanish, 8.5 percent English, and 7.1 percent Others. The results may indicate that in many cultures school is not seen as important, especially for females. Hispanic parents, especially mothers, may be less likely to see their daughters as moving into the work world and thus be less likely to place a high premium on the value of school for future success in general. This stance might be a very interesting area of future research. In total 90.2 percent of the English responses, 100 percent of the Cambodian responses, and 85 percent Others rated school important as compared to 72.2 percent from the Spanish homes.

The next cell dealt with parental judgments concerning children liking school. There were 117 responses to this question with 9 missing observations. The responses were "Strongly Agree," "Agree," "Disagree," "Strongly Disagree," and "No Opinion." The results were Spanish 72.2 percent, English 50.0 percent, Cambodian 50.0 percent, and Others 50.0

percent liked school. The overall parental ratings
were 53.4 percent for children "Strongly" liking
school, 42.2 percent of the parents "Agree" that their
children like school, 3.4 percent of parental responses
reflected--"Do Not Like" school attitudes. This
analysis was interesting for the largest percentage of
students Strongly liking school was the group that
previously had parental responses rating the importance
of school the lowest. The important numbers to
recognize are those combining "Strongly Agree/Agree"
and recognizing them as a positive factor within this
particular school. These categories reflect response
rates of 96.3 percent English, 100 percent Spanish, and
100 percent Cambodian, and seem to speak for
themselves.

The next cell measured the crosstabulations
concerning parental attitudes about the openness of the
school. The summary of responses from parents dealing
with this school seem to run opposite to the basic
trend in education today, where parents feel unwelcomed
or frightened by their inner city elementary schools.
The responses are all on the positive side: 98.3
percent of all parental responses were favorable
towards the welcomeness of the school while 1.8 percent
felt "Not Welcomed" or had "No Opinion" on the subject.
This 100 percent "Welcome Mat" was recorded by both

Spanish and Cambodian parents, while 98.8 percent of the English parental responses felt welcomed, and 92.9 percent of Others recorded a Strong welcome result. The tendency to discount these responses as not valid was negated by the examination of Expected Values assigned to responses. All the Expected Values and the Response Values were balanced and well within acceptable frequency ranges. Parents have expressed confidence in this inner city elementary school yet they do not actively involve themselves in the school's activities or functions. The response patterns and reality of actual practices by these parents are paradoxical in nature.

The next block examined the parental attitudes crosstabulated by language about visiting the school. Here the responses ran almost parallel with the Welcomeness factor parents felt. The combination of "Strongly Agree/Agree" for Cambodian speaking parents was 100.0 percent, English parents measured 98.8 percent, Others gave a 92.9 percent, and Spanish parents 88.9 percent. The variation here was a high level of 11.1 percent for "No Opinion" presented by the Spanish parents concerning the necessity of visiting the school. This parallels the lower rate of significance placed on the importance/future success of school from this parental cluster. It was amazing to

see that 96 percent of all parents feel it is crucial
to visit the school.

The problem in education today is striving to get
parents to realize they are a vital part in the
education of their children. The results obtained from
117 questionnaires showed that the belief that parental
involvement is important measured out as follows:
English dominant parents "Strongly Agreeing"--54.9
percent, Spanish and Cambodian homes both were at 50.0
percent levels, and Others showed 64.3 percent. Both
Spanish and Cambodian parents gave the "Agree" choice
50.0 percent. The total tabulation resulted in 55.2
percent for "Strongly Agreeing" on parental importance
in education, 42.2 percent for "Agree" on the subject
of parental importance in this area, and 2.6 percent
responses for "Disagreeing" with parental importance in
education. These tabulations are all positive but, in
actuality, parental collaboration is non-existent in
this school. The figures would seem to claim just the
opposite.

The next cell measured the attitudes parents have
towards the responsiveness of the teachers
crosstabulated on the language variable. Parents'
attitudes were very positive. There were 120 responses
to this statement with 6 missing observations. There
was a 92.2 percent measurement for the combinations of

"Strongly Agree/Agree" regarding parental feelings

towards their child's teachers. This positive response

rate seems to be opposite the current thinking and

belief about the schools of today (National Commission

on Excellence, 1983).

Parental Attitudes Regarding Home-School Network

This section reflects the crosstabulations

regarding parental attitudes towards the Home-School

work habits assessed by language variables.

This cell concerned parental activities concerning

reading to their children. The results presented were

interesting in regards to the number of parents who

rarely read to their children. The collective

responses read as follows: "Rarely Read to

Child"--English speaking homes 30.9 percent, Spanish

families 16.7 percent, and Others 33.3 percent. The

overall tabulation produced a 28.3 percent level of

children seldom read to by their parents. Children

read to by parents "2-3 times" a week showed larger

results. Primarily English dominant parents reported

reading to their children at a 38.4 percent level,

Spanish parents 27.8 percent, Cambodian families 50.0

percent, and Others 50.0 percent. These figures show

that the largest group of parental readers falls in the

Cambodian homes. The calculations decrease to 3.7

percent of English homes reading "4 times+ a week",
Spanish homes 5.6 percent, Cambodian homes 50.0
percent, and Others 8.3 percent. The percentage
between "Rarely Read" (28.3 percent) and "2-3 Times a
Week" (37.2 percent) is rather disappointing and runs
true to form regarding lack of parental home-study
practices. The calculations in comparison for children
reading to parents showed some difference. In the
"Rarely Read" category responses were English 32.9
percent, Spanish 22.2 percent, Others 35.7 percent.
Between the two Home-School habits, concerning reading,
there was a negligible difference found among the
language variables of English, Spanish, and Others.
The important recognition is that 31.0 percent of these
inner city elementary students do not read to their
parents.

The next cell examines the attitude parents have
concerning their opportunities to speak with the
teachers. These tabulations are significant and
interesting. These responses when compared with the
Welcomeness parents feel towards the school are very
different. The overall analysis showed 7.0 percent of
parents "Never" speak to the teachers, 21.7 percent
speak "Once Per Week", 33.9 percent speak "Once Per
Year". The strange result revealed in this category
was that 100.0 percent of the Cambodian parents never

speak to the teachers. This group was very consistent in all responses dealing directly with the school. The Spanish parents utilized the "Once Per Term" option 55.6 percent of the time. English dominant parents divided their options among "Once Per Week", "Once Per Month", and "Once Per Term" more than any other language oriented group. Considering that language was indicated in a previous cell as not being that significant, in truth there must be a problem.

The following cell discloses a significant relationship regarding attendance at parent-teacher conferences. There is a clear line between the Cambodian parents and their personal connection with the school. Here again we see a 100 percent response rate to "Never" attending conferences. The "Never" response is 41.2 percent for the Spanish speaking parents, and is equally divided among the English and Other language clusters. The "Sometimes" category reflected the largest number of responses. Here we see English speaking parents responded 38.8 percent, Spanish parents, 47.1 percent, and Others responded 64.3 percent. The "Often" category had for its lowest rate of responses--English 26.3 percent and Spanish 11.8 percent, while all other language groups responded .0 percent. To get a general picture of the total amount of parent involvement with teacher conferences

we just need to see that 26.5 percent of parents
"Never" attend meetings, 10.6 percent "Seldom" attend,
42.5 percent attend conferences "Sometimes", and 20.4
percent of the parents come to conferences "Often".
Keep in mind these same parents gave high and positive
ratings pertaining to their attitudes dealing with
their appraisal of their child's school experiences and
general school interactions. The parents seem to put
more stock in how their children are reacting to school
than their own involvement activities.

The next division of crosstabulations are
concerned with factors impacting on parental attendance
at school functions. One of the major school debates
revolves around the time selection concerning functions
at the school. The overall preference was 47.8 percent
of parents choosing "Evening" schedules for events.
The important notation here is that most of the parents
rate safety (63.5 percent) as a major concern. The
safety issues was evenly split among all categories.
The response rates for safety were the following:
"Great Deal"--English 44.4 percent, Spanish 44.4
percent, Cambodians 50.0 percent, and Others 57.1
percent, "Somewhat"--English 9.9 percent, Spanish 27.8
percent, Cambodians 50.0 percent, and Others 42.9
percent, "Little"--English 11.1 percent and Spanish
16.7 percent, and "No Effect"--English 34.6 percent and

Spanish 11.1 percent. The overall measurements show a 63.5 percent level of concern for safety compared to 36.5 percent for little concern over safety.

Parental Enticement Opportunities

In attempting to devise new programs for attracting parents to the school, various alternatives were tested. The idea of bringing guest speakers to functions was received with a high rating among all language clusters--87.0 percent "Very Interested" compared to a 7.8 percent response for "Not Interested". The presentation of films/videos was highly looked upon by 81.9 percent of the parents as weighed against 18.1 percent of the parents not being interested. Another allurement to get parents involved in school functions concerned itself with student awards and entertainment. Needless to say these two enticements ranked over 90.0 percent in the "Very Interested" classification. Two other ideas tested for parental reactions were door prizes and offering refreshments at all school gatherings. These tactics were surprising in their results, since in reality when these items are offered at school functions the attendance levels rise dramatically. Parents gave door prizes in general a 51.7 percent level for "very Interested" while they gave a 53.5 percent rating for

refreshments. Both categories received over 20.0 percent measurements for "Not Interested" and over 26.0 percent for "No Opinions".

Conditions Impacting Parental Involvement

This final section deals with the social and economic aspects impacting on parental involvement. Safety, a major concern, has already been reported in the previous section and proved to be the primary concern parents had for not attending school events.

Another influence investigated was that of Transportation. The survey results came from 126 respondents. The "No Effect" choice was chosen by 47.4 percent of all language clusters while "Great Deal/Somewhat" totaled 52.6 percent. Listening to most of the parental replies when asked about coming to the school, almost everyone insists they have no way to get to the school. The survey results barely substantiated this excuse.

Another pairing concerned with the social and economic pressures is that of Work Schedules and being Too Busy. The tabulations reporting on work schedules produced an evenly distributed array of statistics. Work schedules, as major factors preventing parents from involving themselves with the school, came in at a 25.2 percent level for the "Great Deal" category,

"Somewhat" was reflected by a rate of 24.3 percent,
"Little" was seen by 20.9 percent and "No Effect" was
demonstrated by 29.6 percent of the parents surveyed.
This was a very balanced set of responses and indicated
that parents would be able to manipulate their work
schedules if they were truly interested. The Too Busy
classification presented another significant set of
responses. Here we find that English and Spanish
parents reported being Too Busy for a measure of 11.1
percent under the heading of "Great Deal", Others
indicated a 21.4 percent rate. The heading "Somewhat"
showed a measure of 72.2 percent for Spanish parents
while Cambodian parents responded at 50.0 percent,
Others came in at 42.9 percent, and English parents
were at 28.4 percent for this option. The "Little
Effect" responses were Cambodians 50.0 percent, Others
28.6 percent, English 27.2 percent, and Spanish 11.1
percent. The "No Effect" table showed English parents
33.3 percent, Others 7.1 percent, and Spanish parents
5.6 percent. The overall tabulations were "Great
Deal"--12.2 percent, "Somewhat"--37.4 percent,
"Little"--25.2 percent, and "No Effect"--25.2 percent.
The statistics unveil the sad fact that almost 50.0
percent of all parents are just Too Busy to become
involved in their child's school.

The next block reported on the crosstabulations associated with the problem of Childcare. The conclusions obtained regarding childcare showed that under the "Great Deal" option 100 percent of the Cambodian speaking parents found this to be a problem, 44.4 percent Spanish parents saw this a problem, English speaking parents 22.2 percent, and Others 21.4 percent. The "Somewhat" choice showed English parents 16.0 percent and Others 7.1 percent. The "Little" response was split between others 28.6 percent and English at 25.9 percent. The "No Effect" choice was interesting since this is another favorite argument parents give for their lack of involvement. The calculations were Spanish families 55.6 percent, Others 42.9 percent, and English 35.8 percent. The overall calculations reveal that childcare is a problem to 39.2 percent of the parents as compared to it not being a problem for 60.8 percent of the parents responding to this inquiry.

The final cell analyzed in this section was of interest due to an article by Renato Espinoza, "Working Parents, Employers, and Schools" where he reported that only 3 percent of fathers take the responsibility, time or make the effort to network with their child's school. The statistics for completing this questionnaire were 87.5 percent English speaking

Mothers compared to 2.5 percent Fathers, 61.1 percent

Spanish speaking Mothers compared to 16.7 percent

Fathers, 50.0 percent Cambodian speaking Mothers

compared to .0 percent Fathers, and 78.6 percent

Mothers from Other Language categories compared to 7.1

percent for fathers. In total 81.6 percent were for

"Mothers", 5.3 percent were "Fathers", 5.3 percent were

"Brothers/Sisters", 3.5 percent were "Guardians", 2.6

percent "Others", and 1.8 percent were "Unnamed". The

results presented by this project seem to prove his

point.

Analysis by Race

Parental Evaluation of the School's Atmosphere

The variable now under consideration is that of

racial background. In the following analysis the

crosstabulations from 126 questionnaires is presented.

The first cell introduces the breakdown of languages

spoken in the home and the racial classifications

fitting into these blocks. The language divisions were

"English", "Spanish", "Cambodian", and "Other". The

racial categories employed were African American,

White, Hispanic, American Indian, Asian, and Other.

The tabulations obtained from the questionnaires showed

that English was the home language in 96.3 percent of

the African American homes, 100 percent in both White

and American Indian homes, 60.0 percent in Others, 30.0

percent in Hispanic home,s and .0 percent in Asian

homes.   The Spanish language preference was found to be

in 45.0 percent of the Hispanic homes, 50.0 percent of

the Asian families prefer Cambodian, and 20.0 percent

of Others responded with various options not listed.

The overall analysis indicated 70.2 percent of all

racial groups in this elementary school speak English,

15.8 percent of all groups speak Spanish, 12.3 percent

speak Other languages, and 1.8 percent speak Cambodian.

There were 11 missing observations from this block.

The chi-square significance was .0000.

The next block dealt with the number of schools

children have attended.   Calculations indicated that 58

African American children have attended two schools.

Of the White students--41.7 percent have attended two

schools.   One hundred percent of the American Indians

also attended two schools.   Others reported a split of

50.0 percent for one school and 50 percent for three

schools.   The overall break down displayed children

attending two schools (34.1 percent), one school (33.3

percent), three schools (22.0 percent), four schools

(8.9 percent), and five (1.6 percent).   The chi-square

importance level showed significance level at .0005.

These figures show that inner city children move from

school to school.   The reasons for this movement may

vary from family matters to just the way the public
school system operates. Even with a new system of
choice no parent is fully guaranteed that his/her child
will attend the same school for the entire elementary
school experience.

The next cell under investigation responded to the
attitudes of parents concerning the importance of
school to future success for their children. The
responses were measured upon 124 returns. The options
given were "Strongly Agree", "Agree", "Disagree",
"Strongly Disagree", and "No Opinion". The highest
percentage, 86.2 percent came from all ethnic groups
selecting the "Strongly Agree" response, 12.2 percent
of all groups selected "Agree", "No Opinion" indicated
a 1.6 percent and no group selected "Strongly Disagree"
for responses. Of the two groups selecting "Strongly
Agree", 100.0 percent of the cases were the Asians and
American Indian clusters. All other groups totaled
over 90.0 percent for "Strongly Agree/Agree". The only
group displaying "No Opinion" by a 2.3 percent showing
was the Hispanic cluster.

The next tabulation was based on parental
appraisals, along racial lines, of their child's
attitude concerning school. There were 124 responses
with 3 missing observations. The selection choices
were "Strongly Agree", "Agree", "Disagree", "Strongly

Disagree", and "No Opinion". The American Indian and Asian parents displayed a 100.0 percent measure for SA/A, the African American showing was 99.0 percent, Hispanic responses 95.3 percent, and White 83.4 percent. These measures produced an overall positive approval of 95.9 percent from this body. There was a 3.3 percent (2 White responses and 2 Hispanic) for "Disagree". The overall tabulations produced "Strongly Agree"--52 percent, "Agree"--43.9 percent, "Disagree"--3.3 percent, "No Opinion"--8 percent with 2 missing observations. The chi-square level for significance was .0039. These calculations interestingly enough parallel the responses given on the attitudinal appraisal from parents regarding language. These two comparisons put forth the notion that something positive is going on within this inner city elementary school.

The racial responses dealing with feelings about the school's receptiveness towards parents was very encouraging. The language crosstabs measured against the ethnic results both balanced each other. Parents do feel welcome in this school regardless of their ethnicity yet they opt to remain on the sidelines and not become active partners within the school. The calculations came from 124 responses and showed "Strongly Agree/Agree"--98.4 percent, "Disagree"--.8

percent, and "No Opinion"--.8 percent. The chi-square significance level was .01.

The following responses were for the importance of visiting the school weighed along the racial bands. The consensus was 95.9 percent for "Strongly Agree/Agree" that visitation is a very important factor while 3. percent of the responding parents had "No Opinion" and .8 percent (one response) for "Disagree". Parents measured out equal with their responses along both racial and language lines.

The parental involvement measurement along racial lines was tabulated highly by all groups. There were 126 responses with a 97.6 percent ranking for "Agreement" on its importance while "Disagree" received .8 percent (1 African American), and "No Opinion" (2 Hispanic) showed at 1.6 percent. Parent involvement is recognized by all parents as vital, but their responses are not substantiated by their actions.

Another interesting block examined the problem concerning parental sentiments weighed along racial lines addressing the needs of minorities. We are constantly reading (Locked In/Locked Out, 1990) and hearing how minority needs are not being met in the inner city schools, well based upon the minority responses from parents involved with this particular school, we must stop generalizing about all the

schools. There were 123 responses tabulated with 3
missing. Parental support indicated 79.7 percent for
"Strongly Agree/Agree" concerning the efforts of this
school in addressing the needs of its minorities. The
statistic presented for "No Opinion" was 15.4 percent
which came from 4 African American respondents, 5 White
respondents, and 9 Hispanic respondents. There was
also a 4.9 percent tabulation (3 Hispanics, 2 African
Americans, and 1 White) for the "Disagree" choice.

The final attitudinal appraisal in this section
was based on evidence obtained from the racial clusters
concerned with teacher responsiveness as perceived by
the parents. There were 124 tabulations studied with 2
missing. The response choice for "Strongly
Agree"--35.8 percent and "Agree"--56.9 percent gave a
total positive tabulation of 92.7 percent. The
"Disagree" response was .8 percent (1 African American)
and "No Opinion" was 6.5 percent (5 African American, 2
White, 1 Hispanic). The ethnic divisions for SA/A were
100.0 percent from both the American Indian and Asian
clusters, 97.7 percent from Hispanics, White 91.6
percent, and 89.7 percent from African Americans.
These parents demonstrated through their responses that
this inner city elementary school is responsive to
parents regardless of language or ethnic differences.

Parental Attitudes Concerning Study Habits

The following portion concerns itself with study habits within the home, helping with homework, parents reading to children, children reading to parents, parent/teacher conferences, and school event times. The response selections were "Rarely"--these frequencies increased with each Study Habit presented, "Once Per Week"--results were lower overall in the homework and my child reads to me categories and rose in the overall block for parents reading to children, "2-3 Times Per Week"--frequencies rose in each category, "4+ Times Per Week" showed the largest frequencies in the parents helping with homework as compared to the two reading issues.

The racial presentation showed African American parents "Rarely" helping with homework at a rate of 12.1 percent, "Rarely" reading to their children at a rate of 32.7 percent, and "Rarely" having children read to them--36.2 percent. The "Once Per Week" selections increased dramatically to 27.3 percent for parents reading to children with only 13.8 percent having children read to them. "2-3 Times Per Week" showed the highest frequencies in helping with homework (31.0 percent), reading to children (38.2 percent), children reading to parents (43.1 percent), this was the highest

selected time frame for spending time on home-study
habits.

The White analysis showed "Rarely" helping with
homework--8.3 percent while reading to children and
being read to by children were both measured at 16.7
percent. "Once Per Week" selections increased from
homework--16.7 percent to children reading to
parents--50.0 percent. "2-3 Times Per Week" decreased
from 50.0 percent helping with homework down to 33.3
percent reading to children and further down to 25.0
percent children reading to parents. The "4+ Times Per
Week" decreased from 25.0 percent helping with homework
to 8.3 percent for reading to children and being read
to by children. The most frequent time span was the
"2-3 Times Per Week."

The Hispanic tabulations provided the highest
frequencies under "Rarely" among all racial groups.
The "Rarely" frequencies were homework--11.6 percent,
reading to children--30.2 percent, children reading to
parents--32.6 percent. The statistics for "Once Per
Week" and "2-3 Times Per Week" were almost equal while
the helping with homework rose to 51.2 percent as the
largest selection choice with reading to children being
the lowest--7.0 percent.

The American Indian cluster measured helping with
homework 50.0 percent for "2-3 Times Per Week" and 50

percent for "4+ Times Per Week." This was the largest
parental choice selection from all groups. In contrast
this group was split 50.0 percent for "Rarely"--reading
to children and having children read to parents.

The Asian responses ranked all three work habit
patterns at the "2-3 Times Per Week" span for 100.0
percent measurement.

In general all groups showed working with children
"4+ Times Per Week" as the lowest selection and "2-3
Times Per Week" as the most frequent selection.

The next analysis concerned the opportunity
parents have to talk with the teachers. The choices
were "Never", "Once Per Week", "Once Per Month", "Once
Per Term", and "Once Per Year". The general consensus
was divided evenly between "Once Per Month"--33.6
percent and "Once Per Term"--33.6 percent. The overall
frequency for "Once Per Week" was 22.1 percent, "Never"
was 8.2 percent, and "Once Per Year" was 2.5 percent.
The Hispanic families measured "Once Per Term" at a
51.2 percent level, and "Once Per Week" at 18.6
percent. The Asian returns showed "Never" at 100
percent. This tabulation was in line with all other
areas dealing with direct and personal parental contact
with the school. This cluster helps their children the
most and yet they show the least in personal school
contact. The chi-square significance level on this

cell was .0010 and very interesting due to the
closeness in the overall responses.

The next block measured the racial assessment
pertaining to parents attending parent/teacher
conferences and was tabulated from 121 responses. The
selections were "Often", "Sometimes", "Seldom", and
"Never". The frequencies for the African American
responses were "Often"--26.3 percent, "Sometimes"--31.6
percent, "Seldom"--15.8 percent, and "Never"--26.3
percent. The highest group measuring "Often" was the
White category--50.0 percent with "Sometimes"--41.7
percent, and "Never"--8.3 percent. The
"Often/Sometimes" combination totaled 91.7 percent and
was only surpassed by a 100.0 percent measurement from
the American Indian parents. The Asian cluster gave
"Never"--100.0 percent, which ran true to their
previous measurements. The total cell reported
"Often"--20.7 percent, "Sometimes"--42.1 percent,
"Seldom"--10.7 percent, and "Never"--26.4 percent.
When one combines the "Often/Sometimes" responses the
result totals 68.8 percent. The "Seldom/Never"
grouping equals out to 37.1 percent. This high
positive frequency rate is not seen in reality. The
chi-square significance level was interesting at .0064.

The final inquiry in this section concerns the
selection for a best time to hold school events from

the parental viewpoint. The responses were interesting

since "Safety" (63.5 percent) is a primary concern and

the "Evening" time slot was selected by most parents.

The racial tabulations produced "Evenings" as the major

choice--46.3 percent while "Afternoons" were--24.8

percent and "Mornings"--22.3 percent. The highest

groups selecting night meetings were the American

Indians (100.0 percent) and the Hispanics (61.9

percent). This is fascinating because the majority of

the Hispanic population lives within walking distance

of the school and neighborhood crime is the primary

reason given for not coming to the school during the

day. The African American selections were between

"Evenings"--38.6 percent and "Afternoons"--35.1

percent. The White preference went 25.0 percent across

the board. The interesting tabulations ws a 100.0

percent "Morning" selection from the Asian parents.

The chi-square level was significant at .0091.

Parental Enticement Opportunities

This section focused on suggested themes for the

purpose of encouraging parents to attend school events.

The responses in this portion were "Very Interested",

"Somewhat Interested", "Not Interested", and "No

Opinion." The observation came from 126 responses.

When guest speakers were suggested the combination of

"Very Interested/Interested" was received positively by 100 percent of the American Indian and Asian parents, 91.6 percent White parents, 88.3 percent of the Hispanic parents and 82.7 percent of the African American parents. The overall response for this idea was an encouraging 87.0 percent. There was still a negative attitude of 8.1 percent and a "No Opinion" response of 4.9 percent.

Films/Videos, as enticements, were well received. The combination of "Interested/Somewhat Interested" was received by the American Indian parents--100.0 percent, White parents--91.7 percent, Hispanic parents 81.4 percent, and African American parents--81.0 percent. The "No Opinion" choice was selected by 100 percent of the Asian parents. The acceptance of this concept was positive--81.3 percent. The negative view was taken by 5.7 percent of the respondents. The chi-square significance level was .0452.

The attraction of having children perform or receive awards garnered the highest levels from all parents. The Asian, American Indian, and White parents gave both ideas a 100.0 percent. The African American and Hispanic parents gave these ideas 93.0 percent approval. These two attractions seem to be the best way of getting parents involved in the events at the school.

The idea of having refreshments did not win overwhelming approval from the parents. All racial clusters gave "Interested" a 50 percent response. The largest group for "Not Interested" were the White parents--33.3 percent and "No Opinion" was highest among Hispanic parents--30.2 percent. The calculations were "Interested"--52.8 percent, "No Opinion"--25.2 percent, and "Not Interested"--22.0 percent. These responses gained attention for when refreshments are offered, the parental reaction is very positive. Based upon questionnaire results this is not a priority item.

The final enticement tested was concerned with offering door prizes. The "Interested" responses were 49.6 percent, while "Not Interested/No Opinion" balanced at 50.5 percent. Currently this concept is being employed in many schools but in reality it is a "toss-up" idea.

Conditions Impacting Parental Involvement

This final block under investigation centered on socio-economic issues and their impact along racial lines on parental involvement. There were 126 responses analyzed. The responses were "Great Deal", "Somewhat", "Little", and "No Effect." Safety was the first issue. Confirmation was clearly seen that this is a major problem. One should know that the location

of this inner city elementary school is right in the heart of the high crime area of the city. It is located in the heart of the city's drug zone. The following results were not unexpected. The Asian parents measured "Great Deal"--100.0 percent, Hispanic responses--74.5 percent, African Americans--63.1 percent, and White and American Indian parents--50.0 percent. The overall frequency for "Great Deal"--65.6 percent. The responses for "Little" or "No Effect" measured White and American Indian parents--50.0 percent, African American parents--36.9 percent, and Hispanic parents--25.6 percent. The survey showed that safety is a major concern to 65.6 percent of all parents while it has "Little Effect" on 33.4 percent of the parents. It was surprising to see that Evening meetings were the top choice of the parents while Safety is their main concern. These two options seem to contradict each other.

Transportation was also considered a major difficulty for the parents to the school. The analysis showed that 100 percent of the Asian and American Indian parents considered this to be "Great" Problem. "Somewhat" was indicated by 58.3 percent of the White parents, and 48.2 percent by both African Americans and Hispanics. The "No Effect" responses measured African Americans and Hispanics at 51.7 percent and White

parents at 51.7 percent and White parents at 42.7 percent. The general frequencies showed "Great Deal"--54.5 percent and "Little Effect"--45.5 percent.

Finances impact 100 percent of the Asians and American Indians. "Somewhat" an impact on 50.0 percent of the White parents, 41.9 percent of the Hispanic parents, and 25.8 percent of the African Americans. "Little/No Effect" tabulated out to 74.1 percent for African American parents, 58.1 percent Hispanic parents, and 50.0 percent of the White parents. The itemization showed that Finances were a problem for 37.4 percent of the parents and not a problem for 62.6 percent of the parents.

Responses for Too Busy calculated out--"Great Deal/Somewhat"--100.0 percent for Asians and American Indian parents, 62.8 percent Hispanic parents, 41.6 percent White parents, and 36.2 percent of African American parents. "Little/No Effect" was measured by 63.8 percent of African American parents, 58.3 percent White parents, and 37.2 percent of the Hispanic parents. The overall frequencies produced showed that Too Busy was almost equally used by parents as an excuse to avoid involvement with the school. The chi-square significance level was .0360.

Work Schedules measured out to being a problem to 72.1 percent of the parents surveyed while 27.9 percent

reported this having No Effect on them. The "Great Deal" responses were Hispanic--58.1 percent, White parents--50.0 percent, and African American--43.1 percent. "No Effect" was 56.9 percent for African American parents, 50.0 percent for White parents and 41.9 percent for the Hispanic parents. The tabulations were "Great Deal"--50.8 percent and "No Effect"--49.2 percent. In comparing both Too Busy and Work Schedules it was interesting to note that they were almost equal at 50.0 percent for their impacting influences. Work is valid and understandable and many parents indicated that they would be able to rearrange their work schedules accordingly while Too Busy had no foundation.

Childcare factors proved to be no hindrance to parents in general. The statistics were "Great Deal/Somewhat" a problem--for 38.0 percent of the parents while "Little/No Effect" was indicated by 62.0 percent of the parents. The analysis along racial lines for Childcare went the following way: "Great Deal/Somewhat"--Asian and American Indians 100.0 percent, Hispanics 42.8 percent, African Americans 31.5 percent, and Whites 25.0 percent. "Little/No Effect" frequencies--Whites 75.0 percent, African Americans 68.5 percent, and Hispanics 57.2 percent.

Language as an impacting influence was statistically shown as negative. "No Effect" was a

large 72.1 percent of the total 126 responses from the parental questionnaire while 27.9 percent indicated language was a problem. The measurements showed "No Effect"--100.0 percent American Indian parents, 92.0 percent on the part of the African American parents, 91.7 percent from White parents, 60.5 percent of the Hispanic parents, and 50.0 percent of the Asian parents. "Great Deal/Somewhat"--50.0 percent on behalf of the Asian parents, 39.5 percent from the Hispanic parents, 8.3 percent from the White parents, and 7.1 percent of the African American parents. This was the first indication that language problems do exist on behalf of the Hispanic cluster. No where in previous areas did they express this as a problem. The chi-square statistic for significance was .0052.

Medical Reasons measured along racial lines with "No Effect" at 74.2 percent and "Great Deal/Somewhat" a problem at 25.8 percent. The main groups feeling these problems were the Asians at 100.0 percent, the American Indians at 50.0 percent, and White parents at 41.7 percent. The groups indicating medical reasons as the lowest hindrance were the African Americans--83.4 percent and the Hispanic parents--75.6 percent. The chi-square significance was.0071 for this factor.

The final request asked of the participants was to indicate who completed this form. The completion of these forms were based upon the racial variable and responses were parallel to the ones given based upon the language crosstabulations. In this block mothers completed the forms in 82.6 percent of the cases Completion of questionnaires by "Mothers" was 100 percent for White, American Indian, and Asian plus 80.0 percent for African American and Hispanic. "Fathers" completing this questionnaire--7.0 percent Hispanic and 3.0 percent for African American. "Guardians" responding were 7.0 percent for African American. "Brothers/Sisters" filling this form out was 7.0 percent for Hispanics and 3.0 percent for African Americans. "Others" answering went for 5.3 percent for African Americans and 4.6 percent for Hispanics. In general "Mothers" completed this information in 82.6 percent of the cases, "Fathers" responded in 5.0 percent of cases, "Brothers/Sisters" helped in 5.0 percent of the cases, "Guardians" responding for 3.3 percent of the forms, and "Others" answered in 4.1 percent of the cases.

Analysis By Grade

Parental Evaluation by Grade

This portion of the analysis concerns itself with crosstabulation results from the Parental Questionnaire used as the testing instrument. The number of questionnaires returned for measurement was 126.

The grade distribution in the building reflected the following numbers: First Grade (21 students), Grade Two (22), Grade 3 (27), Grade 4 (27), and Grade 5 (29).

Parental Evaluation of the School's Atmosphere

The first tabulation described the gender composition of this particular inner city elementary school between grades one and five. The results showed the male population to be 62.4 percent (73) as compared to 37.6 percent (44) for females. The number of missing observations in this cell was 9. The males outnumbered the females in grade 1 (76.5 percent to 23.5 percent), grade 3 (60.0 percent to 40 percent), grade 4 (64.0 percent to 36.0 percent), and grade 5 (65.5 percent to 34.5 percent). The only grade that females outnumbered males was found to be grade 2 (52.4 percent to 47.6 percent).

The next calculation reflected the total language distribution found in the building. Parents responding

that English was spoken at home totaled 82 (70.7

percent), Spanish was 18 (15.5 percent), Cambodian

showed 2 (1.7 percent), and Others 14 (12.1 percent)

with 9 parents not responding to this cell.

The following analysis from building wide

responses revealed that out of 125 responses to the

inquiry about the number of schools the children have

attended, the majority indicated 2 (34.4 percent). The

calculations totaled out to be: 43 children attended

one school (33.6 percent), 43 children went to two

schools (34.4 percent), 27 children have attended three

schools (21.6 percent), 11 children attended four

schools (8.8 percent), and 2 students have gone to five

schools (1.6 percent). The chi-square level of

significance was .0182. When you examine these numbers

you notice that the mobility of inner city students has

been demonstrated. This movement could be the result

of family circumstances or just the general upheaval

involved with the student assignment process utilized

by the School Department.

Parental responses regarding the importance of

school for future success, grade wide, measured 108

responses (86.4 percent) indicating parental attitude

for "Strongly Agree". The measurement reported for

"Agree"--12.0 percent and "No Opinion"--1.6 percent.

School wide the parents indicated a 98.4 percent

positive response level concerning school. Parents in grades 2 and 4 rated school's importance at 90 percent.

The following attitudinal replies were measured from 126 questionnaires. The choices given were "Strongly Agree", "Agree", "Disagree", and "No Opinion". The attitude observed was the judgment parents have about their children liking school. The tabulations for "Strongly Agree"--52.8 percent and "Agree"--43.2 percent measured out to a 96.0 percent positive rating while there was a 4.0 percent response for children who do not like school.

The next crosstabulation examined 125 responses concerning the attitudes parents have about the responsiveness of the school. The selections were "Strongly Agree", "Agree", "Disagree", and "No Opinion". The calculations for "Strongly Agree" were 51.2 percent, "Agree" were 47.2 percent, "Disagree" were .8 percent, and "No Opinion" were .8 percent. The "Strongly Agree/Agree" receptiveness factor indicated by the parents totaled 98.4 percent. The parents from grade 4 measured the highest receptiveness 70.4 percent in the building. The total tabulation from the parents in this school resulted in a positive attitude towards parental receptiveness.

The next measurement investigated the attitude parents feel concerning the importance of visiting the

school. The grade wide analysis reported 97.6 percent of the parents--"Strongly Agree/Agree" while 3.7 percent responded that it was "Not Important" to visit the school. These statistics were interesting for on the last Open House held in this school only 62 parents (49.2 percent) attended.

The following crosstabulation focused on the concern parents have towards the school's addressing the needs of minorities. Here again, building wide, the parental responses were rated very high. The tabulations for "Strongly Agree"--25.6 percent, "Agree"--54.4 percent, "Disagree"--4.8 percent, and "No Opinion" on the subject--15.2 percent. The parents from first grade gave "Strongly Agree" the highest percentage at 35.0 percent while parents from third grade had the lowest at 7.4 percent. The fifth grade parents indicated the most "No Opinion" responses at 27.6 percent.

The issue of teacher responsiveness was measured based upon 125 responses. The choices were "Strongly Agree"--36.0 percent, "Agree"--56.8 percent, "Disagree"--.8 percent, and "No Opinion"--6.4 percent. In total parents measured 92.8 percent for "Strongly Agree/Agree" that teachers in this building are responsive to them. On the negative side only one parent responded with a "Disagree". Parents from first

grade responded the highest (50.0 percent) for "Strongly Agree."

Parental Attitudes Concerning Home-School Network

The first tabulation in this section was concerned with 125 responses about parents helping children with homework. The analysis showed "Rarely"--11.2 percent, "Once Per Week"--12.0 percent, "2-3 Times Per Week"--28.8 percent, and "4+ Times Per Week"--48.0 percent. Based on these calculations, building wide, most parents help their children with homework "4+ Times Per Week." The grades with the most parental assistance were grades 2 (63.6 percent), grade 4 (63.0 percent), and grade 1 (60.0 percent) while grade 5 showed the most for "2-3 Times Per Week". The grade most evenly divided was grade 3. The chi-square level of significance was .0315.

Reading to my child produced the following measurements. Thirty-five parents from the school or 28.7 percent, "Rarely" read to their children, 38 or 31.1 percent parents read "Once Per Week", 43 parents or 35.2 percent read to children "2-3 Times Per Week", and 6 or 4.9 percent of the parents read "4+ Times Per Week". The grades in which parents "Rarely" read to their children the most were grade 5 (50.0 percent) and grade 1 (45.0 percent). The highest measurement 61.9

percent was scored by parents with children in grade 2
for reading "2-3 Times Per Week". The parents in grade
3 had the highest total, 51.9 percent, for reading with
their children "Once Per Week". The importance of
these results was also reflected in the chi-square
level of .0090.

The companion inquiry concerned itself with
reading by children to their parents. The responses
and results were "Rarely"--32 percent, "Once Per
Week"--21.6 percent, "2-3 Times Per Week"--36.8
percent, and 9.6 percent for "4+ Times Per Week". The
parents from first grade had the most disappointing
measurement--"Rarely" at 60.0 percent. The opposite
track was found to be second grade where their results
indicated 50.0 percent for reading "2-3 Times Per
Week." The choice "2-3 Times Per Week" proved to be
the most frequent time allotment selected.

The opportunity to talk to teachers was surveyed
school wide. The tabulations showed that 67.8 percent
of the parents selected "Once Per Month" as the most
frequent opportunity they had. There were 10 parents
reporting "Never", 3 parents for "Once Per Year", and
27 for "Once Per Week". Building wide the parents from
first grade showed they had the most frequent
opportunities (35.0 percent) to speak with the

teacher--"Once Per Week." The only grade where parents reported "Once A Year" was found to be grade five.

The next analysis centered on attending Parent/Teacher conferences. There were 122 responses with 4 missing. The selections and results were 25 parents reporting "Often" (20.5 percent), 52 for "Sometimes" (42.6 percent), 13 for "Seldom" (10.7 percent), and 32 for "Never" (26.2 percent). The response with the highest measurement was "Sometimes". The interesting calculations showed that 35.0 percent (8) of the first grade parents "Never" attend conferences only to be followed by 34.5 percent (10) of the fifth grade parents. One of the major problems concerning Parent/Teacher meetings is the time. There were 123 parental responses with 3 missing on this point. The choices and results produced 57 parents (46.3 percent) for "Evening" meetings, 30 responses (24.4 percent) for "Afternoons", and 28 (22.8 percent) parents going for "Morning" meetings. There were 8 parents selecting "No Opinion".

Parental Enticement Opportunities

This division of the questionnaire concerned itself with parental attitudes regarding themes or ideas for attracting more parental involvement. The first consideration was for guest speakers. There were

126 responses for this theme with an overwhelming 87.2 percent or 109 parents measuring "Very Interested". The only group to report "Not Interested" (14.8 percent) was registered by third grade parents.

The responses for having films/videos on specific topics were given an overall 55.2 percent or 69 parents reaction for "Very Interested", 33 parents or 26.4 percent were "Somewhat Interested", 7 parents or 5.6 percent were "Not Interested", and 16 or 12.8 percent had "No Opinion". The total parental response, grade wide, was favorable at 81.6 percent. The parents from grades 4 and 5 indicated the most interest in this area.

The next crosstabulation was done on the attitudes parents have about attending events involving student awards/entertainment. The grade wide responses from 126 questionnaires showed 72.8 percent of the parents were "Very Interested", 23.2 percent of the parents were "Somewhat Interested", .8 percent "Not Interested", and 3.2 percent had "No Opinion". The parents from first grade showed the most interest at 80 percent in this concept while third grade parents had the largest "No Opinion" measurement.

The concept of attracting parents by offering Refreshments was also measured. The overall tabulation from 126 responses produced a 52.0 percent tabulation

for "Very Interested/Somewhat Interested". The
calculations for "Not Interested" were 22.4 percent and
25.6 percent of the responses were for "No Opinion".
Parents from fifth grade showed the highest interest in
having refreshments while first grade parents rated
this at the lowest interest level.

The next attitude measurement concerned parental
feelings regarding the incentive of door prizes. The
responses were tabulated from 125 responses. The
choices and results indicated that 21 parents were
"Very Interested" (16.8 percent), 42 parents were
"Somewhat Interested" (33.6 percent), 27 were "Not
Interested" (21.6 percent) and 35 responses were "No
Opinion" (28.0 percent). The combination of "Very
Interested/Somewhat Interested" produced 63 responses
(50.4 percent) compared to 62 responses for "Not
Interested/No Opinion". Fifth grade parents showed the
least interest in door prizes while first grade parents
displayed the most.

Conditions Impacting Parental Involvement

The crosstabulations concerning Safety involving
this inner city elementary school showed grade wide
48.4 percent of the parental responses were bothered a
"Great Deal" by this factor. There was a 16.9 percent
response for "Somewhat". "Little" concern was

registered by 9.7 percent of the parents, and "No

Effect" by 25.0 percent of the respondents. The

combination of "Great Deal and Somewhat" measured 65.3

percent while "Little/No Effect" measured 34.7 percent.

Parents (57.1 percent) from the fifth grade responded

the most for safety being their main concern as

compared to first grade parents (55.0 percent)

reporting safety was not an impacting factor. It is

interesting to compare the parental responses

concerning safety with the majority of parents who

selected Evening as the best time to conduct meetings.

Transportation is often given as a barrier to

parental involvement. The responses and results showed

45 parents or 36.0 percent expressed having a "Great

Deal" of difficulty with transportation, 22 responses

or 17.6 percent displayed "Somewhat Concern", 9

responses or 7.2 percent reported "Little Concern", and

49 responses or 39.2 percent responding with "No

Effect". The combination of "Great Deal/Somewhat"

totaled 53.6 percent as compared the 46.4 percent for

"Little/No Effect". Fifth grade parents expressed this

as a major problem while second grade parents showed it

to be the least of their concerns. The chi-square

level of significance was .0351.

The crosstabulations produced from 126 responses

analyzed Finances as a problem. The selections

tabulated were "Great Deal" for 12.8 percent, "Somewhat" for 24.0 percent, "Little" for 12.0 percent, and "No Effect" at 51.2 percent. The grade wide parental combination of responses for "No Effect/Little" indicated 63.2 percent as compared to 36.8 percent of the respondents being "Somewhat/Great Deal" concerned. This is interesting for the building has 85 percent of its student body eligible for the Free or Reduced Lunch Program under the Federal Government's poverty guidelines. Parents with children in grade 5 showed finances as a concern more than any other group while grade 2 parents were the least concerned.

Tabulations from 126 questionnaires regarding parents being Too Busy to get involved with the schools were measured next. The responses were "Great Deal" at 12.1 percent, "Somewhat" at 36.3 percent, "Little" at 25.8 percent, and "No Effect" 25.8 percent. The "Great Deal/Somewhat" combination was expressed by 45 percent of grade 2 parents, 45.5 percent of grade 2 parents, 58.7 percent of grade 3 parents, and 55.2 percent of grade 5 parents. The only parents to express Too Busy as not being a problem with involvement were grade 4 parents.

Work Schedules impacted involvement. The crosstabulations were spread closely over all four

response areas. The calculations from 125 parental responses, grade wide, showed Work schedules influencing parental involvement a "Great Deal" by 26.6 percent, "Somewhat" by 23.4 percent, "Little" at 21.0 percent, and "No Effect" by 29.0 percent. The first grade parents (40.0 percent) reported work schedules as impacting them the most.

Attendance influenced by Childcare measured "Little to No Effect" at 61 percent and "Great Deal to Somewhat" at 39 percent. The parents registering the highest "No Effect" results were those with children in grade 4. These measurements seem to demonstrate that childcare is not a factor blocking parental involvement in this inner city school.

Language was a very interesting block to investigate. The primary reason parents give for not being involved with this school is that of language. The 125 responses seem to disprove their excuse. The building statistics showed language impacting involvement a "Great Deal" by 8.9 percent, "Somewhat" by 11.3 percent, "Little" by 7.3 percent, and "No Effect" by 72.6 percent. Building wide 25 respondents (20.2 percent) expressed language was an impacting factor compared with 99 respondents (79.9 percent) indicating this was a non issue. Parents from grade 1 (80.0 percent) reported language as having "No Effect"

the most while parents from grade 4 (26.9 percent)
indicated language as a concern.

The final crosstabulation by Grade was based on
125 responses concerning the person who completed this
questionnaire. The choices and results were 102
Mothers (82.9 percent), 6 Fathers (4.9 percent), 6
Brothers/Sisters (4.9 percent), 4 Guardians (3.3
percent), and 5 Others (4.0 percent). The grade wide
calculations showed that there were 25 fifth grade
mothers (89.3 percent), who completed this form
compared to 0 percent of fathers. There were 22 third
grade mothers (81.5 percent) compared to 4 (14.8
percent) fathers, there were 21 fourth grade mothers
(77.8 percent) who completed this form compared to 0
percent of the fathers, 19 (86.4 percent) second grade
mothers compared to 1 father, and there were 15 first
grade mothers (78.9 percent) who completed this
questionnaire.

Frequencies

The following section presents statistical results
obtained from 126 Parental Questionnaires regarding
attitudes parents have concerning their child's inner
city elementary school. The analysis was done for the
purpose of determining the measures of central tendency

in an effort to identify influences which have an impact on parental involvement.

Parental Evaluation of the School's Atmosphere

The analysis begins first by seeing that the average student in this inner city elementary school is a male, third grader, speaks English and Spanish, and has attended two schools.

--Parental responses to the importance of school for future success.
The recorded options were Strongly Agree (86.4 percent), Agree (12.0 percent), and No Opinion (1.6 percent). The mean response was Strongly Agree.

--My child likes school.
Strongly Agree (52.8 percent), Agree (43.2 percent), Disagree (3.2 percent), and No Opinion (.8 percent). The average answer was Strongly Agree.

--Parents feel welcome in the school.
Strongly Agree (51.2 percent), Agree (47.2 percent), Disagree (.8 percent), and No Opinion (.8 percent). The mean response was Strongly Agree.

--It is important to visit the school.
Strongly Agree (51.2 percent), Agree (44.8 percent), Disagree (.8 percent), and No Opinion (3.2 percent). The mean was Strongly Agree.

--Parent involvement is important.

Strongly Agree (54.4 percent), Agree (43.2 percent),

Disagree (.8 percent), and No Opinion (1.6 percent).

The central tendency was Strongly Agree.

--The school addresses the needs of minorities.

Strongly Agree (25.6 percent), Agree (54.4 percent),

Disagree (4.0 percent), Strongly Disagree (.8 percent),

and No Opinion (15.2 percent). The mean was Strongly

Agree while the mode was Agree.

--Teachers are responsive to parents.

Strongly Agree (36.0 percent), Agree (56.8 percent),

Disagree (.8 percent), and No Opinion (6.4 percent).

The mean was Strongly Agree and mode was Agree.

Parental Attitudes Regarding Home-School Network

--I help my child with homework.

Rarely (11.2 percent), Once Per Week (12.0 percent),

2-3 Times Per Week (28.8 percent), 4+ Times Per Week

(48.0 percent). The mean response was 2-3 Times Per

Week.

--I read to my child.

Rarely (28.0 percent), Once Per Week (30.4 percent),

2-3 Times Per Week (34.4 percent), 4+ Times Per Week

(4.8 percent). The mean was Once Per Week.

--My child reads to me.

Rarely (32.0 percent), Once Per Week (21.6 percent),
2-3 Times Per Week (36.8 percent), 4+ Times Per Week
(9.6 percent). The mean was Once Per Week.

--I have opportunities to speak with the teacher.

Never (8.1 percent), Once Per Week (21.8 percent), Once
Per Week (33.1 percent), Once Per Term (34.7 percent),
Once Per Year (2.4 percent). The tendency was Once Per
Month and mode was Once Per Term.

--Attend parent/teacher conference.

Often (20.5 percent), Sometimes (42.6 percent), Seldom
(10.7 percent), Never (26.2 percent). The mean and
mode were both Sometimes.

--Best time to have school functions.

Morning (22.8 percent), Afternoon (24.4 percent),
Evening (46.3 percent), No Opinion (6.5 percent). The
central tendency was Afternoon and the mode was
Evening.

Parental Enticement Opportunities

--Bringing in Guest Speakers.

Very Interested (60.8 percent), Somewhat Interested
(26.4 percent), Not Interested (8.0 percent), No
Opinion (4.8 percent). The central tendency was Very
Interested.

--Topic Presentations-Film Video.

Very Interested (55.2 percent), Somewhat Interested

(26.4 percent, Not Interested (5.6 percent), No Opinion

(12.8 percent).   The mean was Very Interested.

--Presentation of Student Awards.

Very Interested (69.6 percent), Somewhat Interested

(24.0 percent), Not Interested (2.4 percent), No

Opinion (4.0 percent).   The mean was Very Interested.

--Entertainment by Children.

Very Interested (72.8 percent), Somewhat Interested

(23.2 percent), Not Interested (.8 percent), No Opinion

(3.2 percent).   The central tendency was Very

Interested.

--Refreshments.

Very Interested (15.2 percent), Somewhat Interested

(36.8 percent), Not Interested (22.4 percent), No

Opinion (25.6 percent).   The mean was Somewhat

Interested.

--Parent/Teacher Conferences.

Very Interested (66.4 percent), Somewhat Interested

(28.0 percent), No Opinion (5.6 percent).   The central

tendency was Very Interested.

--Door Prizes.

Very Interested (16.8 percent), Somewhat Interested
(33.6 percent), Not Interested (21.6 percent), No
Opinion (28.0 percent). The mean was Somewhat
Interested.

Conditions Impacting Parental Involvement

--Attendance effected by Safety.

Great Deal (48.4 percent), Somewhat (16.9 percent),
Little (9.7 percent), No Effect (25.0 percent). The
mean was Somewhat and the mode was Great Deal.

--Attendance effected by Transportation.

Great Deal (36.0 percent), Somewhat (17.6 percent),
Little (7.2 percent), No Effect (39.2 percent). The
mean was Somewhat and the mode was No Effect.

--Attendance effected by Finances.

Great Deal (12.8 percent), Somewhat (24.0 percent),
Little (12.0 percent), No Effect (51.2 percent). The
mean was Little and the mode was No Effect.

--Attendance effected by being Too Busy.

Great Deal (12.1 percent), Somewhat (36.3 percent),
Little (25.8 percent), No Effect (25.8 percent). The
central tendency was Somewhat.

--Attendance due to Work Schedules.

Great Deal (26.6 percent), Somewhat (23.4 percent),

Little (21.0 percent), No Effect (29.0 percent). The

mean was Somewhat and the mode was No Effect.

--Attendance effected by Childcare.

Great Deal (27.6 percent), Somewhat (11.4 percent),

Little (21.1 percent), and No Effect (39.8 percent).

The mean indicated Little and the mode was No Effect.

--Attendance hampered by Language.

Great Deal (8.9 percent), Somewhat (11.3 percent),

Little (7.3 percent), and No Effect (72.6 percent).

The mean was a surprising Little Effect and the mode

was No Effect.

--Attendance effected by Medical Reasons.

Great Deal (17.8 percent), Somewhat (8.5 percent),

Little (12.7 percent), and No Effect (61.0 percent).

The central tendency was Little and the mode was No

Effect.

--Optional Race Indication.

African American (47.2 percent), Hispanic (35.0

percent), White (9.8 percent), American Indian (1.6

percent), Asian (1.6 percent), Blank (4.9 percent).

--Optional-Questionnaire Completed by.

Mother (82.9 percent), Father (4.9 percent),

Brother/Sister (4.9 percent), Guardian (3.3 percent),

other (2.4 percent).

Profile

The typical child attending this inner city elementary school is male, African American, in the third grade, speaks English, an has attended two schools. His Mother feels he likes school very much. She also strongly agrees that school is important to his future success.

His mother completed the questionnaire. She helps him with his homework 2-3 times a week. They read with each other once a week.

This mother agrees that visiting the school is very important but does it only once a month. When she does visit, she feels welcomed. This parent finds the teachers in this school very responsive to her parental concerns and that they do address the needs of the minorities.

Her attendance at school functions is hindered by her concerns over safety and transportation. Mother prefers events to be held in the afternoon.

This parent does not find the work schedule a problem but still is too busy to attend school functions. The ideas of having door prizes or refreshments to foster interest is not going to work. The best chance of getting this parent involved with the school is going to be through her child. Involvement would improve if there were guest speakers,

visual presentations, student performances or awards,
any activity directly linking her child to the event.

From optional information gathered this parent
would rather be able to speak by telephone to the
teachers. Parents would like the opportunity to call a
teacher without having to leave a message.

C H A P T E R   V

SUMMARY

<u>Conclusions</u>

This research project concerned itself with
identifying influences which impact parental
involvement in an inner city elementary school. The
instrument used was a parental questionnaire containing
thirty-eight attitudinal inquiries. The effort was
supported by responses from 126 out of 140 respondents,
who have children attending grades 1 through 5 in this
inner city school. The parental population under
investigation was composed of African Americans,
Hispanics, Whites, and Asians. Their attitudes were
analyzed, measured, and compared in order to identify
impacting influences upon parental involvement. The
study recognized not only impeding factors but also
those positive aspects which encourage parental
activity.

The questions studied were:

--How did parents rate the receptiveness of the
school?

--How did inner city parents perceive the
parent-teacher communication network?

--Are parents aware of school practices and
policies?

--Do parents involve themselves in the home study habits of their children?

--What preferential school activities would stimulate parental involvement?

--What social and economic pressures impact parental involvement?

--Are there sufficient opportunities for parent/teacher interaction?

The analysis of the questionnaire was organized into four main categories. The first category concerned itself with parental attitudes/evaluations of the school's atmosphere. The second section under study centered on parental attitudes regarding the Home-School network. The third cell focused on parental enticement opportunities. The final part analyzed socio-economic conditions impacting parental involvement.

The following represents the findings from the parental questionnaire concerning the school's atmosphere. The parental attitudes ran very positive for this area of concern. They found this school to have good administrative leadership, a main group of teachers who bring all goals and ideas into focus, a positive and a peaceful learning environment, high expectations for all students as well as teachers, clear plans for the goals of the school in regard to

the learning attainment levels of every child, a
continuous means of monitoring and observing student
progress, and positive reinforcement techniques for
building self-esteem.

The parental responses concerning attitudes about
school being important for future success of their
children showed 88 percent of the parental responses
Strongly Agree to its value. The racial breakdown
showed that Asians and American Indians measured its
importance at 100 percent, African americans gave it
91.4 percent., Whites rated it at 83.3 percent, and the
Hispanic responses measured the importance factor the
lowest at 81.4 percent. Parents with children in
grades 4 (92.6 percent) and grade 2 (90.9 percent) gave
the highest importance responses while parents from
grade 3 gave it the lowest at 81.5 percent. The old
saying, "Knowledge is power," now means that schooling
is the key to achieving higher social and economic
status (Yeakey and Bennett 1991, 12).

The next focus was on the number of schools the
children have attended. This issue reinforced the
factors that inner city children are mobile. Many
reasons may be the impetus for this fact such as
existing family situations and more so the original
school assignment plan. Until 1990 the inner city
parent had no guarantee that his/her child would remain

in the same elementary school from grade 1 through
grade 5. The revised 1991 School Assignment Plan now
offers guaranteed placement in the elementary school of
their choice, parents are given 5 placement
alternatives to select. Another mobility factor very
well might be due to societal changes such as the
increase in broken homes, increase in single
parenthood, more guardians caring for children, and the
need to find responsible Day-Care locations. With 73
percent of mothers with school-age children working,
almost 25 percent of all children under eighteen live
with a single parent, and only 7 percent of school-age
children live in a two parent household where one
parent works (Bureau of Labor Statistics). These have
a direct impact upon the number of schools the children
might attend. The research also found that the
population of inner city children between 1990-1995
will find Hispanic children between five and thirteen
years of age increasing 17 percent, Blacks 12 percent,
Whites at 5 percent, and Asians and Others at 4 percent
(Bureau of the Census).

The results of this study showed that the average
number of schools attended by these inner city
elementary children was two. The highest proportion of
those attending two schools were the African American
students at 47.2 percent followed by the Hispanic

students at 35.0 percent. Children from grade 5
reflected the highest percentage of movement attending
between two and three schools. The significant effect
upon the children is notable in these measurements.
Until recently bonding between the Home-School was
almost an impossible task.

In conjunction with the problem of school mobility
establishing strong ties with children, parents, and
teachers was difficult. Now, with a supposed guarantee
of school choice the building of partnerships can be
fully established. Parents can make an initial
judgment about their child's school by just sensing the
attitude presented by that child concerning school.
The responses from this questionnaire demonstrated an
overall Strongly Liking attitude presented by children
regarding this school. Only 4 parents out of 126
respondents indicated their children did not like the
school. Students in grades 2 and 4 showed the largest
percentage of students who Strongly Like school. The
overwhelmingly positive attitudes expressed by the
parents exemplifies the "Great Expectations" encouraged
and expected by all. This school sets forth a
cooperative atmosphere based on mutual respect for all.
Teachers are dedicated to communicating with and
getting through to each child. There is no mistaking
the fact that each child is an individual, is

important, and needs teaching strategies adapted for specific needs. The majority of the faculty have established a strong rapport with each student and this positive attitude is reciprocated by the children towards the staff. Many teachers, having been in this building for ten years, have returning students coming back for visits and in some cases even volunteering their services as tutors within the school. This influence impacts not only the students but also their parents.

The receptiveness felt by parents in this inner city school was given an overall 98.4 percent positive reaction. The survey found the Hispanic, Asian, and Whit parents felt welcomed at 100 percent of the time, and African American parents measured 98.3 percent. Parents with children in the fourth grade felt the highest amount of welcomeness (70.4 percent) while parents from fifth grade felt the lowest (37.9 percent). The parents did express their feelings of being treated as partners and not being made to feel like they were outsiders or intruders. Parents do participate and are encouraged to become more involved. The activities which gain the most support are field trip chaperones, lunch monitors, Read-Aloud volunteers, and library assistants. The parents in this building do demonstrate a strong preference for participating in

children centered activities rather than parent-teacher activities.

The attitudinal reaction on the importance of visiting the school was given an overall 97.6 percent "Strongly Agree/Agree" by the parents. The Asian cluster gave this a 100 percent frequency for importance. This was a very interesting calculation for Asian responses dealing with attending school events, participating in school activities, and volunteering time to assist in the school were all received in a negative fashion. It is difficult to understand why parents, who feel welcomed and comfortable in this school, do not attend more school events. One is more apt to judge the parents on what they do not do rather than what they say.

The next important facet of this study concerned parental attitudes towards this school's efforts in meeting the needs of its minorities. The minority population totals 82.4 percent in this building. They responded with an 80.0 percent "Strongly Agree/Agree" distribution for the minority needs being addressed. Parents with children in grade 1 gave this issue the highest praise. Out of a total of 126 responses, 19 expressed "Disagreement/No Opinion" (6 White respondents, 9 Hispanic respondents, and 4 African Americans.) This issue of minority needs combined with

the receptiveness felt by the parents in this building demonstrates that there are inner city schools that work.

Parents not only feel welcomed in this elementary school but responses indicate that they feel a positive relationship does exist between themselves and the teachers. They measured the "Strongly Agree/Agree" attitudinal responses at 92.8 percent for teacher receptiveness. This highly positive response seems to be opposite the negative beliefs held about schools of today (National Commission on Excellence 1983).

The second section of this study dealt with parental attitudes regarding Home-School network. This connection deals directly with what is going on in the home as related to academic reinforcement skills given by the parent. The levels of educational attainment are influenced in various ways be societal pressures. Some of these effects may have led to early parenting, with some 50 percent of teenage mothers failing to graduate from high school. Teen fathers are 40 percent less likely to graduate than their nonparenting peers. In addition, the chances of graduation for both Black males and females is closely linked to their mother's education level (Committee on Policy for Racial Justice 1989, 15). Many inner city parents, specifically mothers, often had negative educational experiences,

very well may have been dropouts, and may have low
levels of self-esteem. Getting them to be a serious
part of the Home-School network is difficult.
Possibly, that is why response levels for home study
activities were low. The first issue addressed
homework. In this survey parents with children in
grades 2, 3, 4, and 5 reported helping their children
with homework between "2-3 Times Per Week". The
alternate choice selected from a portion of fourth
grade parents was "4+ Times Per Week". The responses
covering "2-4 Times Per Week" totaled 76 percent. This
percentage was higher than the 73 percent obtained form
the Parental Involvement Survey conducted by the
PTA/Dodge National Parent Survey. The PTA Survey also
produced a 52 percent rating for parents reading with
their children. In comparison this research
questionnaire produced an overall 66.3 percent level of
parents reading to children. The majority of parents
read to their children but it was discovered that both
50 percent of first graders and 50 percent of fifth
graders are not read to by their parents. The
significance of this point cannot be missed. First
grade is the most important level for reading (Maeroff
1989, 125) and it is not being reinforced at home.
This grade is the most difficult and as Marilyn Adams
in Beginning to Read: Thinking and Learning About

<u>Print</u> explains that 25 percent of middle-class children and an even higher percentage of poor children enter school without any basic reading skills. Reading help is imperative on the part of the parent.

Children reading to their parents reflected an average of "Once Per Week" with the popular response being "2-3 Times Per Week". The sad figure was an overall 32.0 percent of parents reporting their child "Rarely" reads to them at all. Again, the grade projecting the least amount of reading activity was the first grade. In October of 1990 over 70 percent of the first grade children in this elementary school met the criteria for admission to the Chapter I Reading Program. These are the same children who receive little to no reinforcement from home. Programs must be developed to teach parents about the importance of reading to their children. The first question to be addressed might be how many of these parents cannot read themselves and then offer parentsremedial or literacy classes. Parents cannot help their children if they need the help themselves. These two important home activities run parallel in their amount of parental neglect. It should be noted here that reading causes the most concern among administrators, educators, and parents. It is here that teachers lose their patience with the requirements placed upon them

by administrators, school boards, and the lack of support given by the parents. These are the same parents who blame everyone else for the failures of their children. They are oblivious to the important role they must play in the lives of their children. A partnership between parents and educators, initiated by either side, can provide students with a supportive and nurturing environment, but neither parent nor educator can effectively "go it alone" (Heid and Harris 1989).

Opportunities for parents to speak with teachers are usually seen as an area of concern in the Home-School communication network. Many parents claim they are made to feel unwelcomed, treated like intruders in the school, spoken down to, and are not a relevant part of the educational process. Teachers must demonstrate by actions, not by words, that those negative impressions are unwarranted. In this particular inner city school efforts have been made to acquaint parents with the needs of their children. Programs have been experimented with by utilizing workshops that can instruct parents in working with their children. A sense of welcomeness and rapport has been established. Requests for parental volunteers are often made to let parents know they are needed in the school. The staff makes every effort to be sensitive to the work schedules or needs which may require time

adjustments on the part of the teacher in order to help accommodate the parent. There is an Open Door policy regarding parental conferences. The one request made by the school is that the parent just call ahead of time and arrange for a mutually agreed upon time for the visit. There are regularly scheduled Conference Days held once a term. Parents are free to speak with the teachers before and after school without setting up an appointment.

The results of this parent questionnaire indicated that the majority of respondents would like to have evening meetings. The largest percentage (61.9 percent) came from the Hispanic respondents. The selection to have evening meetings was interesting since safety is one of the major concerns influencing parental involvement in school activities. The responses indicated 24.4 percent for Afternoon meetings, 22.8 percent for Morning meetings, and 52.8 percent for Evening. The suggested option offered was to rotate the time schedules for school events. By doing this, the opportunity for all parents to attend school functions at some convenient time schedule would be available. The majority option was to hold Evening meetings but in October, when the first Parent/Teacher Get Acquainted Night was held, there were 43 parents at the meeting.

In conjunction with the best time for holding
meetings the inquiry about attendance patterns at
parent/teacher conferences was made. The response was
very interesting for it reflected "Sometimes" (Once a
Month) as the overwhelming choice of the parents. The
Hispanic parents responded 49 percent Sometimes
followed by 35.3 percent for African American parents.
The Sometimes percentage was 42.1 percent or 51
responses. The "Never" response on the opposite end of
the spectrum showed 32 respondents or 26.4 percent.
Keeping in mind that the majority of the student body
are walkers (children living within walking distance of
the school), the responses were disappointing. The
parents in this school have already expressed in
impressive fashion that they feel welcomed and
comfortable in this school yet they still are reluctant
to attend conferences. The most fascinating responses
came from 10 respondents who claimed that they Never
have the opportunity to talk to their children's
teacher.

The third section of the questionnaire centered
around efforts to attract parents to become more
involved. The first goal was to see how parents felt
about having guest speakers come in for visits. By
bringing guest speakers into school and offering
practical workshops or question/answer sessions, the

hope was to inspire more involvement and enthusiasm on the part of the parents. The attitudinal response was received in a very positive light by all parties. The Hispanic respondents and parents from grade 1 showed the most interest in this idea. As a result of this response, the parent council is planning a May Open House featuring a police captain from the Drug Unit, who will address the school community. The meeting is also scheduled to be held at night. There will be ample opportunities for discussion and exchanges on the part of the parents. It will be interesting to see the parental attendance for this Open House event.

Presentation of specific topic films/videos was received with a little less excitement but still acceptable. The responses were interesting for their levels of distribution. The Hispanic respondents gave this the highest interest rate while parents with children in grade 1 were the only negative group. The presentation of timely topic films/videos and the opportunities to bring guest speakers into the school for the parents are attempts to help them in every way to help their children at home, give them new ideas, provide a learning experience for them, and offer concrete suggestions for bettering their communication abilities both at home and with the school.

The enticement of student awards/entertainment also recorded favorable responses. Parents are often pleasantly surprised and delighted by their children's talent and accomplishments. Parents at these events see their children in a different light, one more positive. Parents show their pride and the children can read this from the happy expressions reflected from their parent's face. Self-esteem levels are at the highest and most rewarding during these activities.

The opportunity to offer door prizes and or refreshments for the parents was received with "Some Interest." These enticement activities showed the lowest percentages of responses in attracting parents to the school. In fact, these two ideas had the largest "Not Interested" percentages of any suggestions. In reality, the attitudinal responses do not match up with the actions of the parents. In December 1990, for the first time, door prizes were awarded on Report Card Distribution Day. There was also an area set aside for refreshments. When the notices concerning Report Card procedures went home the two new ideas were highlighted. The parental participation level was very high and the two new ideas were positively received.

The final portion of the questionnaire centered on the social and economic factors which may impact

parental involvement. Safety was voted as the primary concern. Parental responses gave this issue an overwhelming 63.3 percent concern measurement. The largest clusters to show deep concern were the Hispanic and African American respondents. The groups indicating safety as not being a concern were the Asian and White respondents. Responses from grade 5 and grade 1 parents were the most dramatic in their concern. In reviewing the addresses of the student body it was discovered that the majority of student attending grades 1 and 5 live within walking distance to the school. These tabulations, expressing concern over safety, did not match up with the large percentage of parents selecting evening as the best time to hold school meetings. This inner city school is located in the heart of the city's high crime/murder/and drug zone. Parents do not let their children out after school. The maximum outside activity most of these students get is outdoor recess at school. The safety concern is well founded. When meetings are scheduled during he day, a police detail is assigned to the school. Trying to do anything with the safety issue certainly will be a challenge.

Transportation was seen as causing "Somewhat" a problem. The responses were significant in their distribution. The responses for transportation being a

major concern was 36 percent compared to "No Effect" felt by 39.2 percent of the respondents. The balance felt by both extremes was noteworthy, for transportation is often used as the reason parents cannot get involved with the school. They have no way of getting to the school. Respondents from the fifth grade expressed the most concern over transportation, they also showed the highest amount of neighborhood residents. Parents seem to be afraid to walk to this school during the day.

Finances showed a surprising "Little to No Effect" response rate from a school's population which ranks 85 percent of its student body eligible for Free/Reduced Lunches. The family composition of over 60 percent of the student body receives Aid For Dependent Children assistance. The pressures from society are deeply felt by the children in this inner city school. The family situations in this school are comprised mainly of female heads of households teen-aged mothers (who are still trying to complete their own education), broken homes, and fathers or other male relatives who are absent from home for various reasons.

Work schedules run parallel to the financial statistics which were presented. The majority of responses indicated that work had "Little Effect" upon parental involvement while the popular response was "No

Effect" at all. As previously noted over 85 percent of the families attending this inner city school receive A.F.D.C. assistance. The respondents who indicated that they worked also were quick to state that they would rearrange their schedules if an emergency came up concerning their child. They also indicated that if given two weeks notice about volunteering opportunities, they would be able to participate. This group was the most willing to comply with school schedules and make alternate arrangements for themselves in order to participate in school events.

Too Busy was another interesting excuse for not being involved. The majority of responses reported were for "Somewhat". The largest clusters to indicate Too Busy as a response were the Asians and Hispanics. The closeness between "Great Deal/Somewhat" 48.8 percent and "Little/No Effect" 51.2 percent was significant. Being Too Busy just might be the weakest reason of all. Maybe one can understand this reason after looking at the March 1990 Census Bureau study. According to this 1990 Census Survey there were 9.7 million single parents in the nation last year. Nearly all these single-parent households were headed by women (this was up 35 percent from 1980). Single-parent households were nearly three times more common among Blacks than Whites, however the growth of single-parent

families slowed among both Black and Whites. The number of divorced mothers grew slightly in 1990. The size of the American household was 2.63 people in 1990, down from 2.76 in 1980. The number of traditional families remained fairly stable, but the total number of households grew at a rapid pace. It was sad to note that respondents answering they were Too Busy to get involved with the school offered no alternatives. They just responded, "No."

Childcare was interesting for it produced the majority of "Little Effect" responses. Responses from parents with children in the third grade showed the highest percent (44.4 percent) for childcare concerns as compared to 59.3 percent of responses from parents with fourth graders claiming "No Effect" at all. The Hispanic respondents indicated the most concern over this issue while Whites displayed the least concern.

The impact of Language upon parental involvement in this school appears to be of "Little/No Effect" at all. The majority of respondents chose "Little Effect" while the popular response was "No Effect". These two combinations formed a 78.2 percent distribution disproving that language should be considered as a main hindrance to parental involvement in this inner city school.

With the large Hispanic population in the school, many parents claimed that language was the prime reason they could not get involved in the school. However, the overall distribution of 72.0 percent Hispanic responses claiming language was of "No Effect/Little Effect" seems to eliminate this as a major concern. It should still be considered and given priority for problems involving language issues are present.

Medical Reasons ar also given as excuses for non involvement. After tabulating these results it was found that 62.1 percent of "No effect" combined with 12.1 percent for "Little Effect" gave a total of 74.2 percent not being a major impacting problem. There was a 25.9 percent measurement expressing concern over Medical Reasons being a hindrance. Parents from grade 3 expressed the most concern over medical reasons impacting their involvement.

Completion of the questionnaire was overwhelmingly done by "Mothers". This significance level was interesting for it substantiated the literature reporting about the levels of involvement between mothers and fathers. In an article by Renato Espinoza, "Working Parents, Employers, and School" it was pointed out that only 3 percent of fathers take an active part in the education of their children, make time for sharing of educational experiences,or make the effort

to forge a working relationship with their child's school. The statistics produced from this research project showed a very close correlation to his figures. The results produced from this study showed that 4.8 percent of Fathers completed this questionnaire compared to 82.9 percent of Mothers. The response correlations were very close and on target.

Recommendations

Parent involvement programs should encourage parents to take on greater responsibility for their own child's education and help the school in a general manner. Programs to be effective must be long lasting and offer parents a variety of activities to keep them interested. When we, as educators, attempt to formulate plans for parent involvement we must consider all aspects of the families we are working with. With over 73 percent of all women with school-aged children working outside the home, and almost 25 percent of all children under eighteen living with a single parent many considerations must be offered.

We must organize a variety of activities to appeal to the vast interests the parents possess. From this parent questionnaire it was noted that Guest Speakers brought the most favorable responses. The second activity which seemed to attract parental attention was

the offer of having specific topic Films/Videos. These
activities offer parents a personal learning
experience. They would be given an opportunity to take
home a new skill, gain new knowledge about a subject,
expand on old skills, and be exposed to ideas or
concepts new to them or clear up misconceptions they
may have concerning specific topic. The traditional
parent involvement activities concerning parent-teacher
conferences, open houses, school plays, and award
ceremonies are just not bringing out the numbers of
parents the way they once did. The influences of
Safety, Transportation, Work Schedules, Medical
Reasons, and Childcare factors must all be considered
in planning school events. Time schedules on the part
of the school should rotate, so as to give all parents
an equal opportunity to attend meetings. Flexibility
on the school's side is extremely necessary.

Encouraging parents to visit the school during
Open House Days and making parents truly feel welcomed
is one way to forge a positive partnership. We must
help to build a sense of shared responsibility and
caring between parents and teachers. Keeping parents
informed of school practices and policies is a must.
Methods must be developed to establish active
parent-school councils, organize a network of parent
volunteers on a schedule basis, and develop parent

outreach programs. Phone communication networks can be set up and even run by parents informing other parents about important school activities. Attendance phone calls could be made by teachers letting parents know about their children and keeping them abreast of the classwork which was missed. Informational packets concerning timely topics of educational interest, newsletters or bulletins could be sent home on a regular schedule providing information abut the activities going on at the school. Parent call-in times for each teacher, and daily or weekly student reports could be sent home.

Research has shown that effective schools have children whose parents help them with homework and have a better overall attitude about education than children not receiving help from home (Bloom 1981). Studies have shown that student achievement does improve when parents get involved. Parents help by creating positive learning environments at home, parents can help by encouraging positive attitudes toward education, and parents can help by setting high expectations for their children's achievement (Henderson 1987). Home based parent involvement has a stronger effect on student achievement than more traditional forms of school based parent involvement. With all varieties of participation available, home

based parent involvement, e.g. tutoring, coordinating home learning activities with schoolwork, and providing enrichment activities all have a vital role to play (Epstein 1984). Basic recommendations in forming a family-school partnership include:

--Make parents feel welcome and needed

--Have frequent communication methods with parents

--Parents should be treated as collaborators in the education process

--Encourage parents to share in decision making

--All parents must be encouraged to get involved

--Principals must be open to parental ideas

--Encourage involvement from all aspects of the community

In Reginald Clark's, <u>Family Life and School Achievement: Why Poor Black Children Succeed and Fail</u> the focus was on certain facts helping success or failure. These attitudes included frequent parent-teacher communications initiated by the parent, parents stressing the importance and value of education, parents providing quality and quantity time or work study interaction between parent and child, and parents setting high standards and expectations for every member of the family.

The research project just completed demonstrated many of the aspects set forth above. This inner city

school has been one of the top 12 elementary schools in the city. Its students have received Math and Computer Achievement Awards the last three years. There are high expectations manifested throughout the entire school family.

Other recommendations in forming partnerships should offer the following as suggested by Dorothy Rich from The Forgotten Factor in School Success--The Family:

--provide family reinforcement skills

--provide for parent involvement at all levels
  assign educational tasks to the family

--provide family with practical school information

--provide for working parents and single mothers

--provide encouragement to all parents to
  participate

--provide various conference schedules

--provide for early detection of learning problems

--provide an open and welcome atmosphere for parents

This research project measured the home reinforcement levels by way of homework. This factored out to be "4+ Times Per Week". The suggestion here is that the Homework Contract Program in which parents must sign the homework papers of their children does work. This will get parents involved with what their

child is doing and also lets the child know that it will be checked by someone from home and not just the teacher. Teamwork can start right at this level. One very disappointing issue found in this home reinforcement issue was the lack of reading being done by both parents with their children and from children to parents. This level of response was "Once Per Week". A very disastrous result. This might lead to offering parents a literacy course or reading remediation opportunities for themselves. Possibly, parents are not reading with their children because they do not have the confidence to do so and do not want to be embarrassed.

Parents should be encouraged to participate in all school events. The best way to get parents involved is by inviting them to be field trip chaperones. schools always can use extra Lunch Monitors, Reading Aloud participants, fundraisers, classroom aides, and parent to parent volunteers. Parents should be encouraged to be Chairpersons of school events and school functions, and parents should be utilized as role models for the children.

Providing practical information can be done very easily between school and home. One method used by this inner city school begins in August before school opens and continues until the last day of school in

June. Parents/students receive a welcoming letter
before school opens in August-giving parents the
school's address, phone number, school hours, and also
any bus information which might be available. Then in
September, when school opens, a school information
packet is sent home containing the names of all the
staff, the rules and policies of the school, a code of
discipline contract, a homework contract, phone numbers
connected with the school's medical and dental
collaborative, a school calendar, and a Parent
Volunteer Request form. This provides basic
information which the parent can keep and refer to if
any questions arise. By sending this packet home
parents are immediately involved even if only on a
small scale.

Opportunities must be made available for working
out conference schedules with working parents. The
provisions for assisting parents with their diverse
work schedules should be handled by individual teachers
on a personal basis with the parent. Opportunities for
parent-teacher conferences should be arranged as close
as possible to the requested time made by the working
parent. Schools should have an Open Door policy for
its parents. Making parents feel welcomed and wanted
will eliminate the hostile feelings many teachers feel
when they know parents are coming to school. Parents

whose involvement is actively sought by teachers tend to report increased understanding of school programs and positive feelings about teachers and the school form. Teammates are created and enemies are eliminated.

A final recommendation would be for future researchers to do a larger, possibly district wide, version of this study. A comparison between district schools based upon various aspects present in each school would prove to be very interesting and worthwhile. Also, a study on why reading to children by parents at the first grade level is so poorly received. Why is this such a hardship? What can effectively be done to eliminate this reading problem?

Parents and teachers must begin to work with each other. The changes in our society highlighted by the erosion of the traditional and extended family, the plight and decline of our inner city neighborhoods, the increased exposure to violence our children face every day, and the unprecedented amount of stress being placed not only on our children but also on the family unit make this partnership mandatory. Parents and teachers must realize that we need each other, as allies, if our children are going to receive a successful education and become responsible adults.

A partnership with educators, initiated by either side, can provide students with a supportive and nurturing environment, but neither parent nor educator can effectively "go it alone" (Heid and Harris 1989).

APPENDIX A
PILOT SURVEY

SURVEY

(Pilot Study)

Zip Code _____

How many children do you currently have in this school?

_____

Please circle their grades:

KI   KII   1   2   3   4   5   Special Education

Languages spoken in your home (please circle)

English   Spanish   French   Haitian

Creole   Cambodian   Other _____

What language do you usually speak in your home?

_____

Are you a native born American?   Yes   no

If not, how many years have you lived in the United
States?   Please Circle

1 to 4 years   5 to 8 years   9 to 12 years

12 to 15 years   15 to 20 years   20 years or more

How long has your child/children been in the Boston
Public Schools?

1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10   years

How many schools has your child/children attended?

1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10   schools

Please read the following statements and circle the
answer that best describes how you feel about each.

1. School is very important to my child's future success.

    strongly agree   agree   disagree   strongly agree   no opinion

2. My child likes school.

    strongly agree   agree   disagree   strongly agree   no opinion

3. Parents are made to feel welcome in the school.

    strongly agree   agree   disagree   strongly agree   no opinion

4. It is important to visit the school.

    strongly agree   agree   disagree   strongly agree   no opinion

5. The school would benefit from having a group of parent volunteers.

    strongly agree   agree   disagree   strongly agree   no opinion

6. The school addresses the needs of minority students.

    strongly agree   agree   disagree   strongly agree   no opinion

7. The school addresses the needs of special education students.

    strongly agree   agree   disagree   strongly agree   no opinion

8. The teachers at the school are responsive to parents.

    strongly agree   agree   disagree   strongly agree   no opinion

Please read the following statements and circle the answer which best describers how you feel about each.

1. I help my children with their homework.

   often   sometimes   seldom   never   no opinion

2. I read to my child.

   often   sometimes   seldom   never   no opinion

3. My child reads to me.

   often   sometimes   seldom   never   no opinion

4. I Have opportunities to talk to my child's teacher.

   often   sometimes   seldom   never   no opinion

5. Did you attend the Open House meeting at the school this fall?

   Yes   No

6. Would you be interested in attending parent workshops in the school?

   Yes   No

7. What time of day would be most convenient for you to attend an open house?

   Morning   Afternoon   Evening

8. Do you usually attend the scheduled parent/teacher conferences?

   Yes   No

9. Do you feel that parental involvement in the school is important to your child's school performance?

   Yes   No

What influences your attendance at school functions?
Please look at the following items and let us know how
interested you would be attending meetings which
included the following presentations.

1. Interesting Speaker

    very interested   somewhat interested   not interested   no opinion

2. Film/Video Presentation

    very interested   somewhat interested   not interested   no opinion

3. Student Awards

    very interested   somewhat interested   not interested   no opinion

4. Refreshments

    very interested   somewhat interested   not interested   no opinion

5. Entertainment by the Children

    very interested   somewhat interested   not interested   no opinion

6. Parent/Teacher Conferences

    very interested   somewhat interested   not interested   no opinion

Many parents tell us that it is difficult for them to visit the school. Please let us know how the following items may interfere with your attendance at school functions.

1. Safety

   Often   Sometimes   Never   No Opinion

2. Transportation

   Often   Sometimes   Never   No Opinion

3. Finances

   Often   Sometimes   Never   No Opinion

4. Too Busy

   Often   Sometimes   Never   No Opinion

5. Work Schedule

   Often   Sometimes   Never   No Opinion

6. Child Care

   Often   Sometimes   Never   No Opinion

7. Language Barriers

   Often   Sometimes   Never   No Opinion

Would you like to see us organize a school newsletter? Yes   No

We value your opinion! What do you feel we could do to help parents and schools work together to help our children?

_____

_____

_____

_____

APPENDIX B

LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

Dear Participant,

My name is Frances Gamer and I am a public school teacher who is currently a doctoral student at the University of Massachusetts/Amherst. The area which my research is centering upon is parental involvement in an inner city elementary school. The attached questionnaire is concerned with identifying the attitudes and concerns parents have regarding the Home-School relationship. The results of this study will help us to evaluate the current Home-School connection and will be the basis for establishing and improving parental involvement programs.

Your willingness to participate in this study will contribute greatly towards identifying some of the concerns we have regarding this important matter. Every effort has been made to minimize the amount of time it will take you to complete this survey. You are being asked to reply to this questionnaire anonymously thus helping to guarantee the confidentiality of the responses. Be assured that under no circumstances will any identifiable data be given out.

It will be greatly appreciated if you would complete the enclosed questionnaire and return it in the attached envelope to your child's teacher before (date to be determined). Please feel free to make any suggestions you may have on improving parental involvement in this school.

The results of this survey will be made available to parents through the school's parent council.

Your consent to be part of this study will be assumed by this researcher upon receiving your completed questionnaire. Please feel free not to participate in this study if you do not understand its purpose or if you do not wish to be part of the project.

Thank You for your help and cooperation in this matter.

Sincerely yours

Frances Gamer
Doctoral Student
University of Massachusetts, Amherst, MA

APPENDIX C

PARENT SURVEY

PARENT SURVEY

Please complete a questionnaire for each child in your family who attends this school.

Grade Level _____   Male   Female   (Circle One)

How many children, including this child, do you currently have in this

school?_____

Languages spoken in your home (please circle all that apply)

English   Spanish   French   Haitian

Creole   Cambodian   Other _____

What language do you usually speak to your child?_____

How many schools has this child attended?

1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10   schools

Please read the following statements and circle the answer that best describes how you feel about each.

1. School is very important to my child's future success.

    strongly agree   agree   disagree   strongly agree   no opinion

2. My child likes school.

    strongly agree   agree   disagree   strongly agree   no opinion

3. Parents are made to feel welcome in the school.

    strongly agree   agree   disagree   strongly agree   no opinion

4. It is important to visit the school.

   strongly agree   agree   disagree   strongly agree   no opinion

5. Do you feel that parental involvement is important to your child's school performance?

   strongly agree   agree   disagree   strongly agree   no opinion

6. The school addresses the needs of minority students.

   strongly agree   agree   disagree   strongly agree   no opinion

7. The teachers at the school are responsive to parents.

   strongly agree   agree   disagree   strongly agree   no opinion

Please read the following statements and circle the answer which best describers how you feel about each.

1. I help my children with their homework.

   rarely   once per week   2-3 times per week   4-more times per week

2. I read to my child.

   rarely   once per week   2-3 times per week   4-more times per week

3. My child reads to me.

   rarely   once per week   2-3 times per week   4-more times per week

4. I have opportunities to talk to my child's teacher.

   rarely   once per week   2-3 times per week   4-more times per week

5. Do you attend the parent/teacher conferences?

   often   sometimes   seldom   never

6. What time of day would be most convenient for you to attend school functions?

Morning   Afternoon   Evening

What influences your attendance at school functions? Please look at the following items and let us know how interested you would be attending meetings which included the following presentations.

1. Guest Speaker (on topics such as drug education, childcare, discipline, etc.)

very interested   somewhat interested   not interested   no opinion

2. Film/Video Presentation (topics such as drug education, childcare, etc.)

very interested   somewhat interested   not interested   no opinion

3. Student Awards

very interested   somewhat interested   not interested   no opinion

4. Entertainment by the Children

very interested   somewhat interested   not interested   no opinion

5. Refreshments

very interested   somewhat interested   not interested   no opinion

6. Parent/Teacher Conferences

very interested   somewhat interested   not interested   no opinion

7. Door Prizes

very interested   somewhat interested   not interested   no opinion

At times it is difficult for parents to visit the school. Please let us know to what extent the following items may interfere with your attendance at school functions.

1. Safety

    great deal   somewhat   little   no effect

2. Transportation

    great deal   somewhat   little   no effect

3. Finances

    great deal   somewhat   little   no effect

4. Too Busy

    great deal   somewhat   little   no effect

5. Work Schedule

    great deal   somewhat   little   no effect

6. Child Care

    great deal   somewhat   little   no effect

7. Language Barriers

    great deal   somewhat   little   no effect

8. Health/Medical Reasons

    great deal   somewhat   little   no effect

We value your opinion! What do you feel could be done to help parents and the school work together to help our children?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Please indicate your race: (please circle)

African-American   White   Hispanic   American Indian   Asian

Other _____

Who completed this questionnaire? (please circle)

Mother   Father   Guardian   Brother/Sister   Other _____

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND EFFORT

APPENDIX D

PARENT SURVEY/SPANISH

Questionario

Por favor responda un questionario por cada nino en su familia que asiste a esta escuela.

Grado _____

Cuantos ninos, incluyendo este nino, tiene usted en la escuela, actualmente?

Idiomas que se habla en la casa (por favor, ponga un circulo en cada uno que coresponda)

Ingles   Espanol   Frances   Haitiano   Creolo

Cambodiano   Otro_____

En que idioma habla usted con su nino _____?

A cuantas escuelas ha asistido este nino?

1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10   escuelas

Por favor lea las siguientes oraciones y circule la respuesta que expresa mejor su opinion.

1. La escuela es muy importante para el exito del futuro de mi nino.

    Totalmente de acuerdo   de acuerdo   en desacuerdo

    no muy de acuerdo   sin opinion

2. A mi nino le gusta la escuela

    Totalmente de acuerdo   de acuerdo   en desacuerdo

    no muy de acuerdo   sin opinion

3. Los padres se sienten bienvenidos a la escuela.

   Totalmente de acuerdo   de acuerdo   en desacuerdo

   no muy de acuerdo   sin opinion

4. Es importante visitar la escuela.

   Totalmente de acuerdo   de acuerdo   en desacuerdo

   no muy de acuerdo   sin opinion

5. La participacion de los padres es muy importante para el exito de su nino en
   la escuela.

   Totalmente de acuerdo   de acuerdo   en desacuerdo

   no muy de acuerdo   sin opinion

6. La escuela tiene en cuenta las necesidades de las minorias.

   Totalmente de acuerdo   de acuerdo   en desacuerdo

   no muy de acuerdo   sin opinion

7. Los maestros en la esculea comunican bien con los padres.

   Totalmente de acuerdo   de acuerdo   en desacuerdo

   no muy de acuerdo   sin opinion

Por favor lee los siguientes oraciones y circule la respuesta que es mas
apropriada.

1. Ayudo a mis ninos con su tarea.

    rara vez   una vez a la semana   2-3 veces a la semana

    4 o mas veces a la semana

2. Leo a mi hijo.

    rara vez   una vez a la semana   2-3 veces a la semana

    4 o mas veces a la semana

3. Mi hijo me lee a mi.

    rara vez   una vez a la semana   2-3 veces a la semana

    4 o mas veces a la semana

4. Tengo oportunidades para hablar con la/el maestra/o de mi hijo.

    rara vez   una vez a la semana   2-3 veces a la semana

    4 o mas veces a la semana

5. Asiste Usted las conferencias de los padres y maestros?

    rara vez   una vez a la semana   2-3 veces a la semana

    4 o mas veces a la semana

6. Que hora del dia es mas conviente para asistir a las funciones de la escuela?

    Por la manana   Al mediodia   Por la tarde

Por favor lea la lista de las siguientes actividades y dejenos saber si esta
interesado en asistir a reuniones que incluyen las siguientes presentaciones.

1. Invitados para hablar (temas como educacion, cuidacion de los ninos,
   disciplina, etc.)

   muy interesado   medianamente interesado

   no interesado   no opinion

2. Presentacion de videos y peliculas (temas como educacion, cuidacion de los
   ninos, etc.).

   muy interesado   medianamente interesado

   no interesado   no opinion

3. Premios de los alumnos

   muy interesado   medianamente interesado

   no interesado   no opinion

4. Entretenimiento por los ninos

   muy interesado   medianamente interesado

   no interesado   no opinion

5. Refrescos

   muy interesado   medianamente interesado

   no interesado   no opinion

6. Conferencias de los padres y maestros

   muy interesado   medianamente interesado

   no interesado   no opinion

7. Regalos en la entrada

    muy interesado   medianamente interesado

    no interesado   no opinion

A veces es dificil para los padres visitar la escuela. Agradeceriamos nos dijera
hasta que punto las siguientes consideraciones pueden influir su asistencia a las
actividades escolares.

1. Seguridad

    mucho   medianamente   poco   sin efecto

2. Transportacion

    mucho   medianamente   poco   sin efecto

3. Dinero

    mucho   medianamente   poco   sin efecto

4. Demasiado ocupado

    mucho   medianamente   poco   sin efecto

5. Horario del trabajo

    mucho   medianamente   poco   sin efecto

6. Cuida a los ninos

    mucho   medianamente   poco   sin efecto

7. No puede entender ingles muy bien

    mucho   medianamente   poco   sin efecto

8. Razaones de Salud

    mucho   medianamente   poco   sin efecto

Su opinion es muy importante. Que cree usted que se puede hacer para ayudar a que los padres y la escuela trabajen juntos en beneficio de nuestros ninos?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Por favor indique su raza: (por favor ponga un circulo)

Africano-Americano   Blanco   Hispano
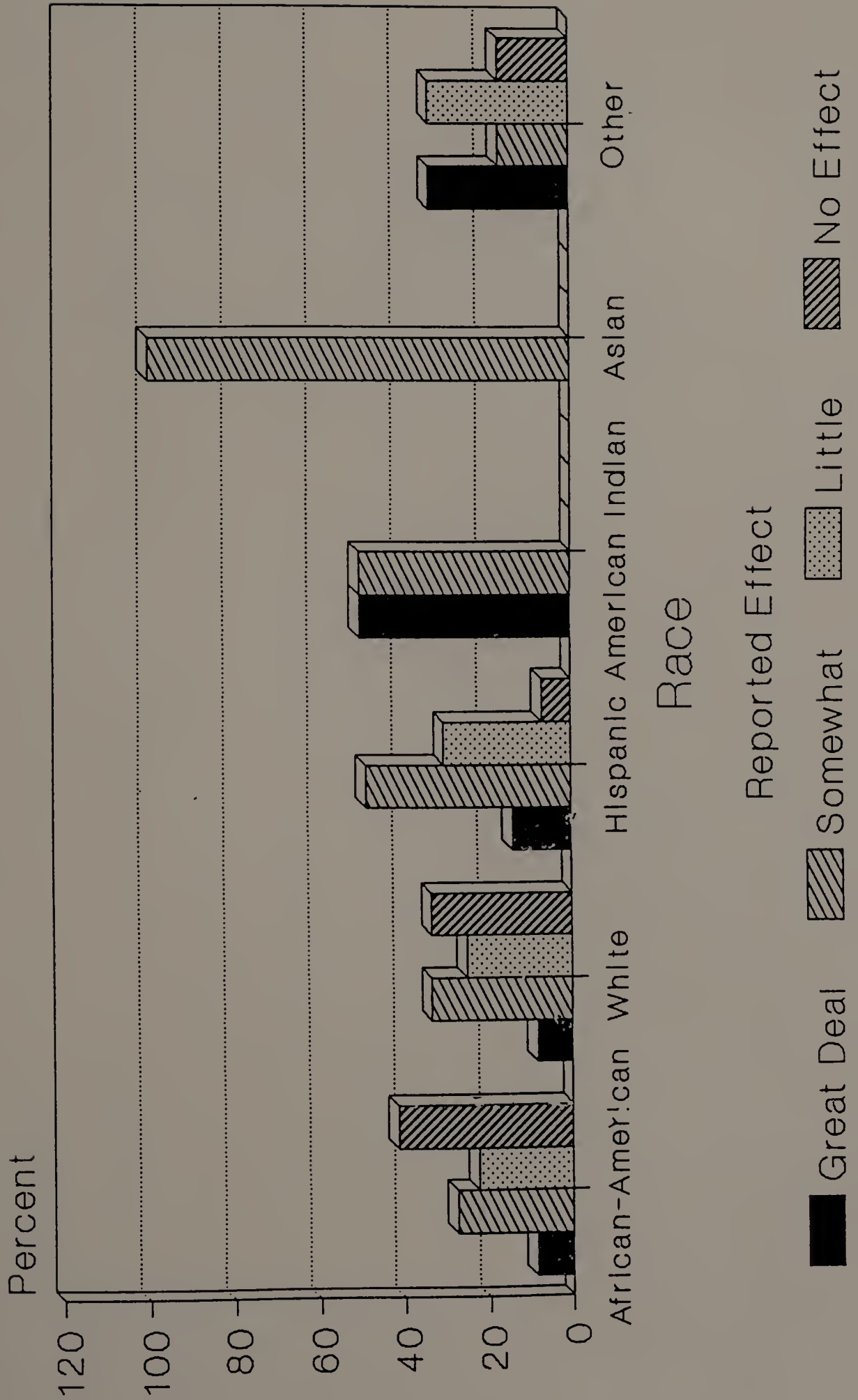
Indio Americano   Asiastico   Otro_____

Por favor indique quien conteste este questionario: (ponga un circulo)

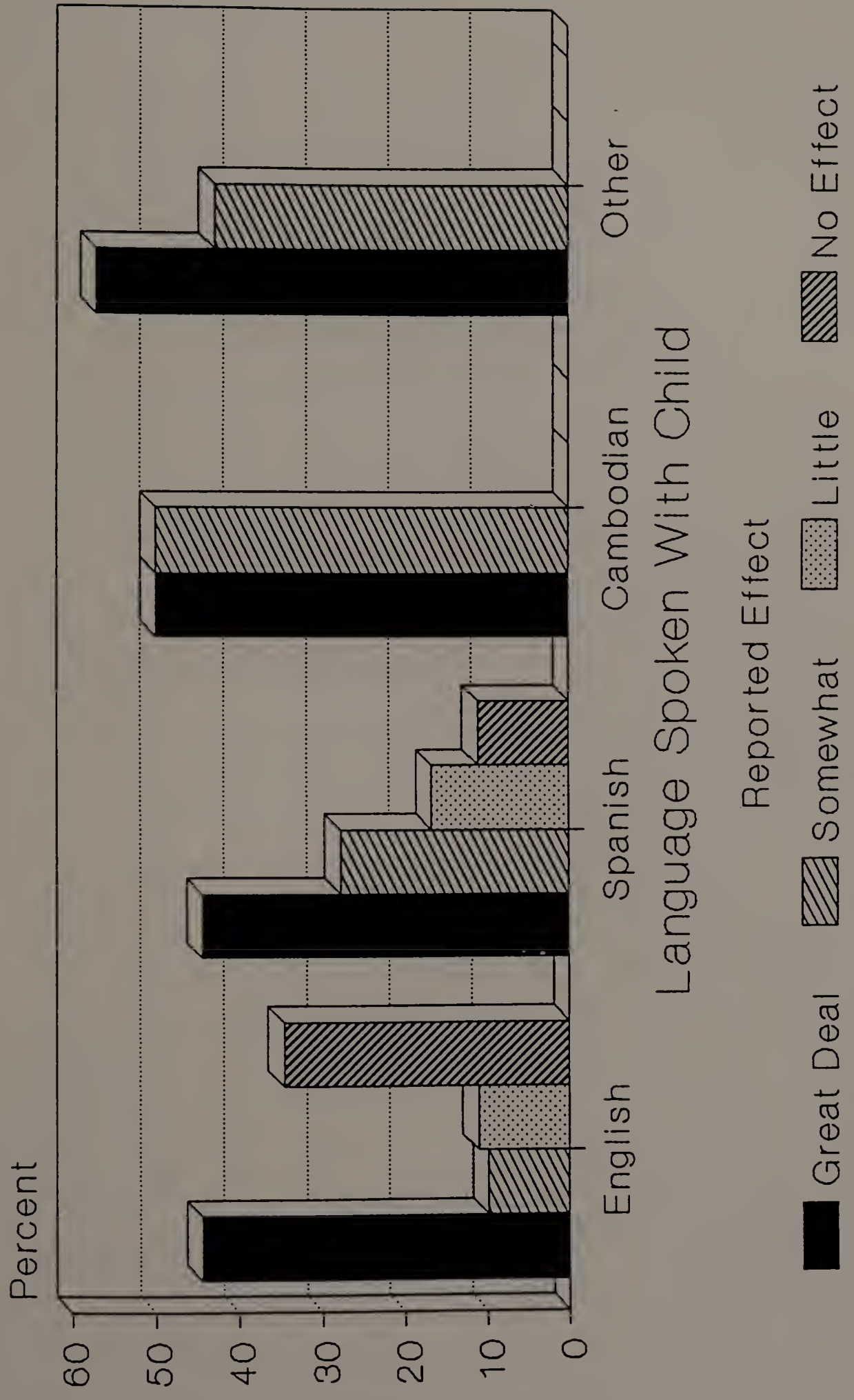Madre   Padre   Hermano   Hermana   Guardian   Otro_____

GRACIAS POR SU AYUDA
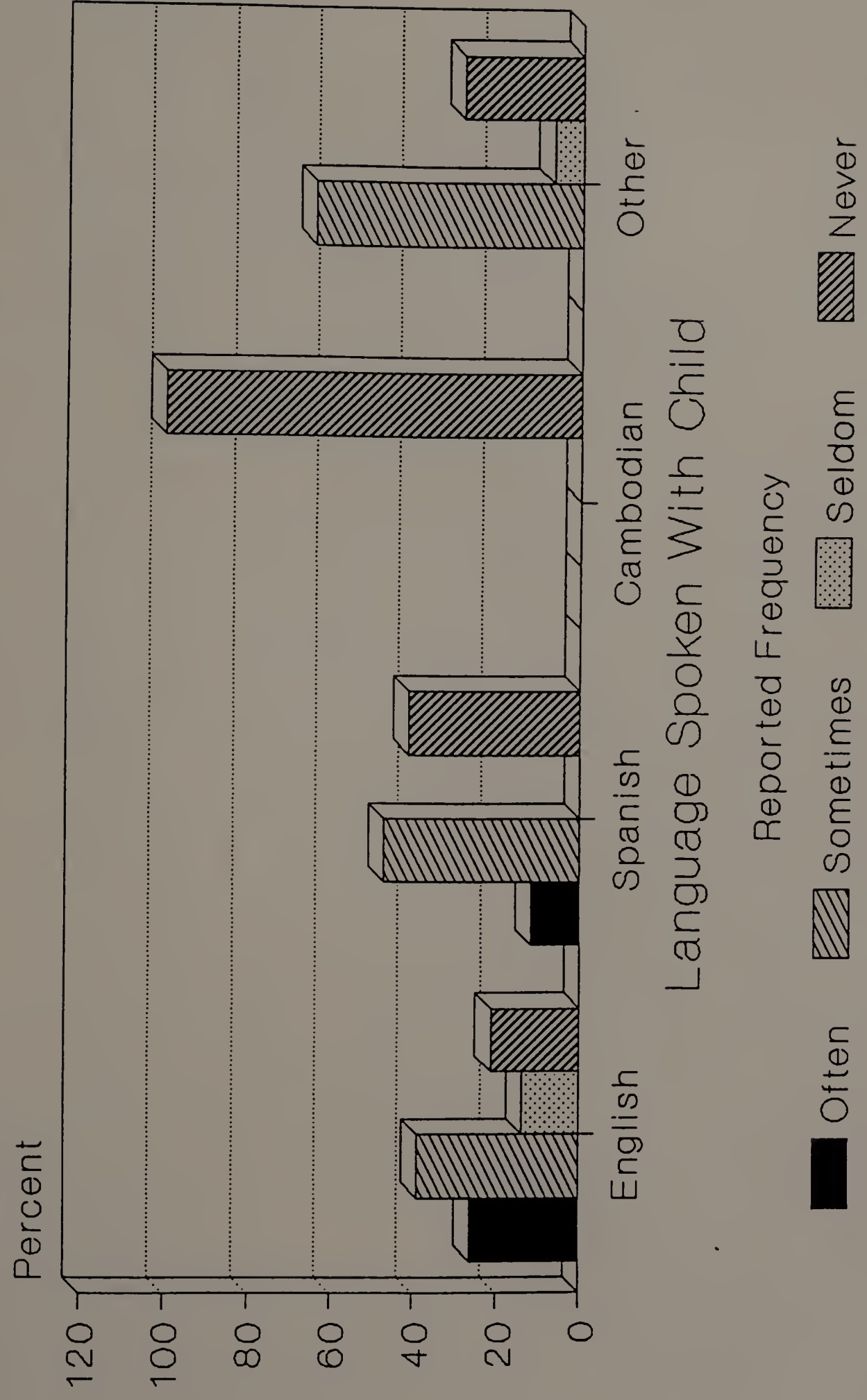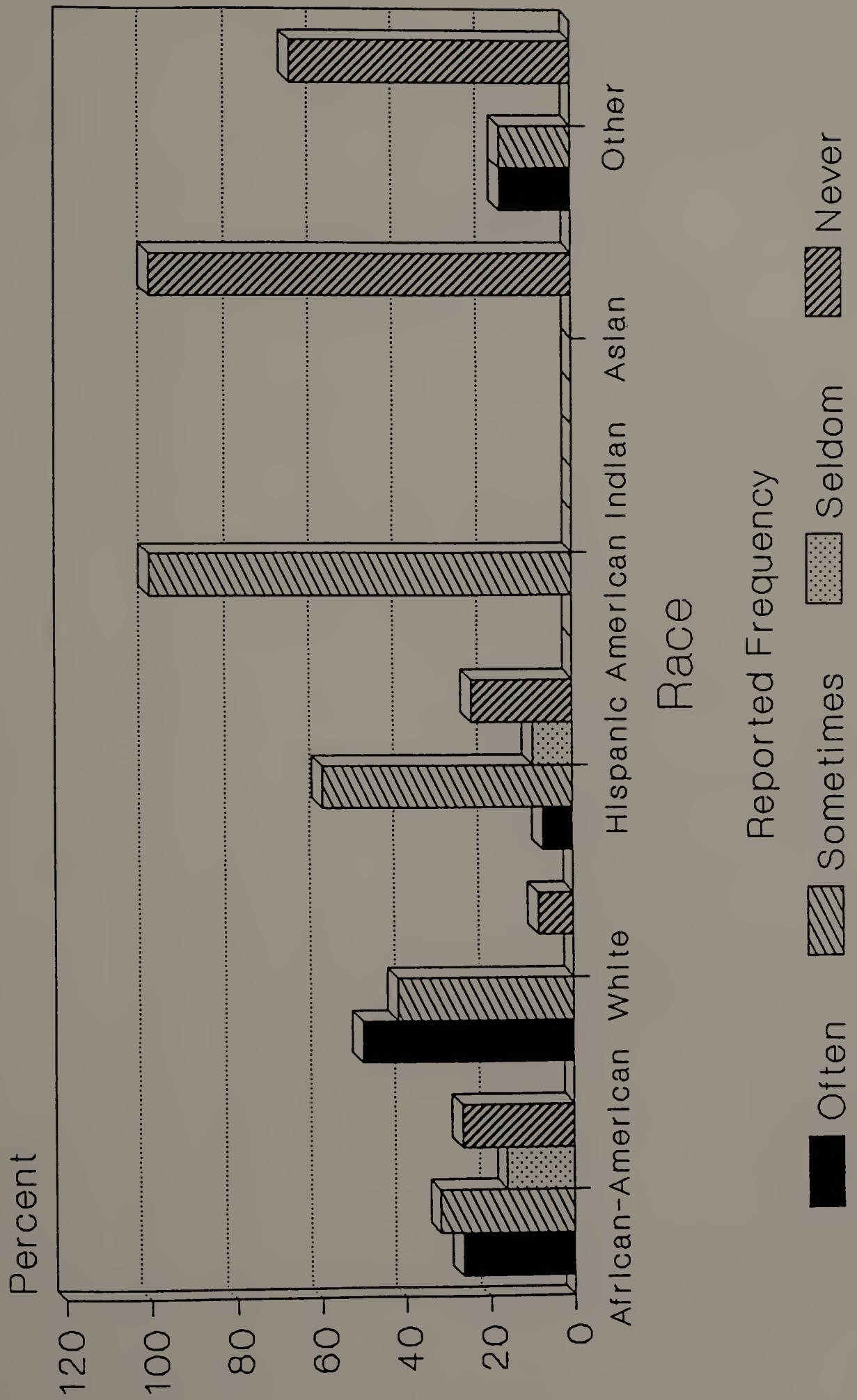
APPENDIX E

DATA TABLES

Attendance-Too Busy
By Race

Attendance-Safety
By Language Spoken With Child

Attend Parent-Teacher Conferences
By Language Spoken With Child

Percent

120 — 100 — 80 — 60 — 40 — 20 — 0

English   Spanish   Cambodian   Other

Language Spoken With Child

Reported Frequency

■ Often   ▨ Sometimes   ▤ Seldom   ▨ Never

Attend. Parent-Teacher Conferences By Race

I Read To My Child
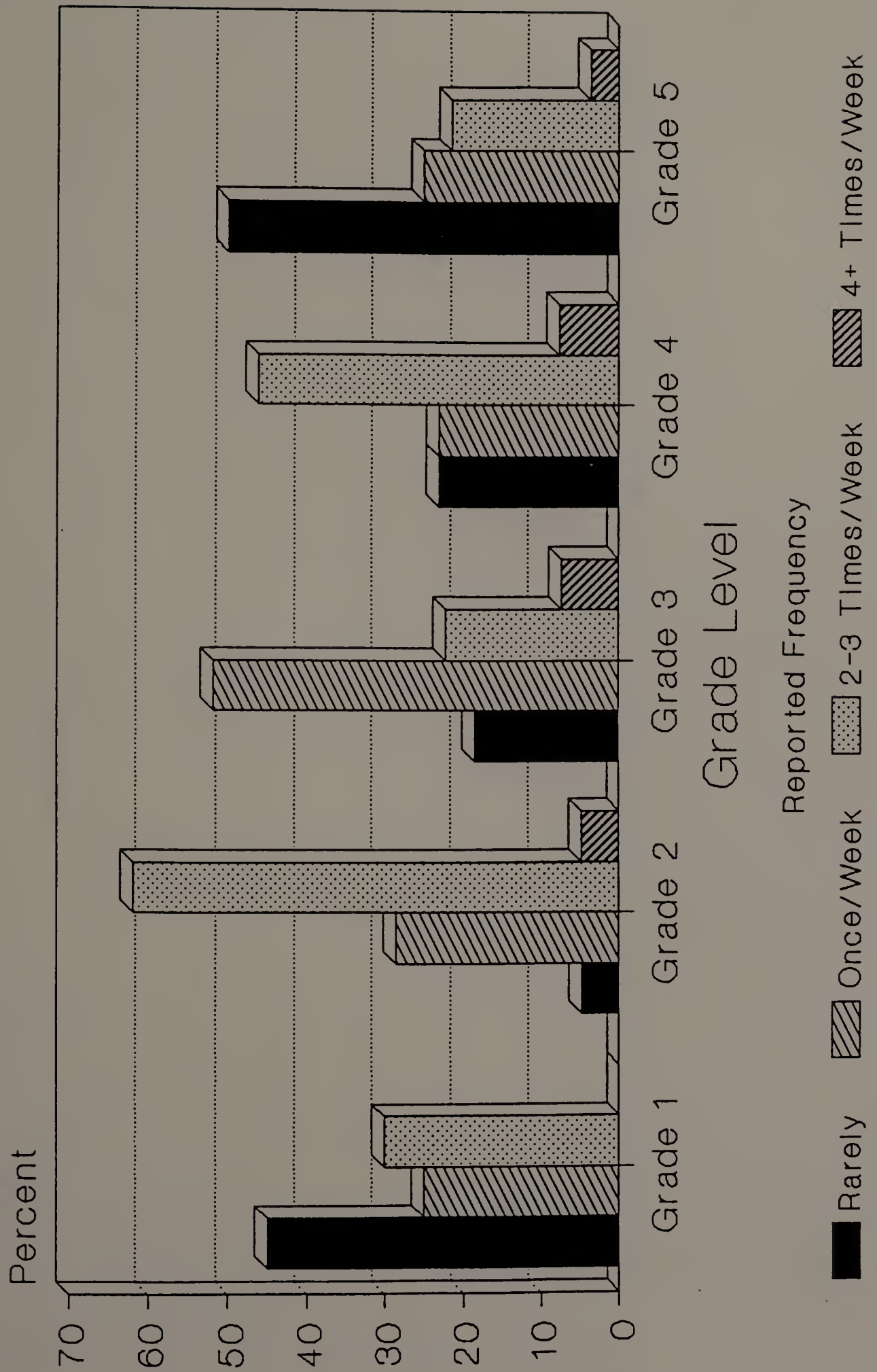
How Many Schools Child Attended

Percent

Grade Level

Number of Schools

One   Two   Three   Four   Five
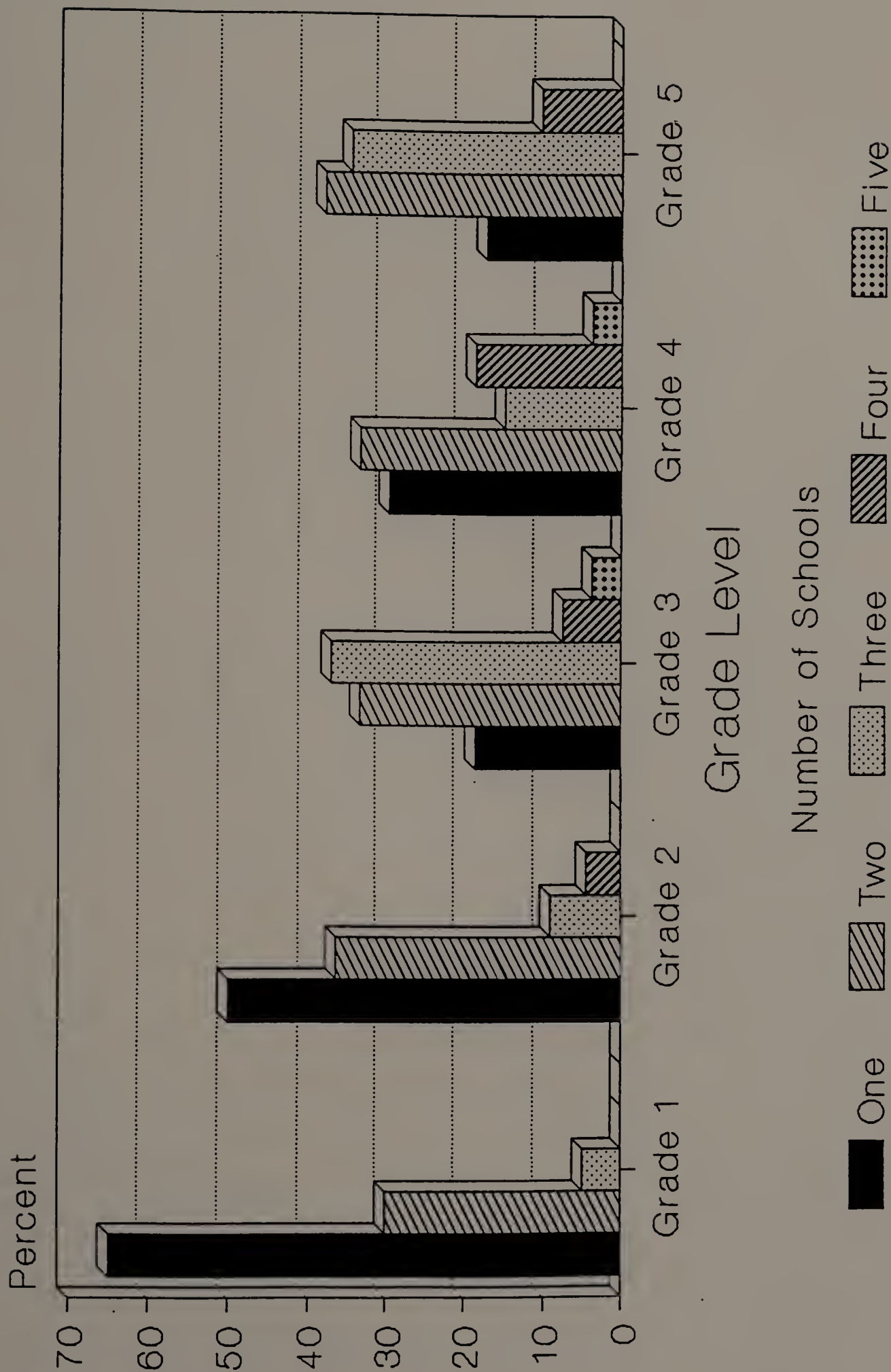
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