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BARRIERS TO PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN AN URBAN PAROCHIAL SCHOOL

A Dissertation Presented

by

KATHLEEN ANN McCARTHY MASTABY

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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BARRIERS TO PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN AN URBAN PAROCHIAL SCHOOL

A Dissertation Presented

by

KATHLEEN ANN McCARTHY MASTABY

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my husband George and my son Stephen. Their encouragement, understanding and love provided me with the support needed to complete this project and thus fulfill a lifelong dream.

"Rich is not how much you have, or where you are going, or even what you are. Rich is who you have beside you." (JIK II)

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ABSTRACT

BARRIERS TO PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN AN URBAN PAROCHIAL SCHOOL

MAY 1991

KATHLEEN ANN McCARTHY MASTABY, A.B. BOSTON COLLEGE

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Current literature and research in education underscores the importance that parent participation and involvement play in a child's academic progress and successful educational experience. The importance of involvement has been traced through all educational levels from preschool through high school and in both American and foreign academic settings.

American educational reform movements focus on efforts to restructure our schools to include all interested parties in the decision making process. Crucial to this restructuring is an active parental component. If schools are to overcome this crisis of public confidence they must work with the community, including its citizens and business members, to meet the unique individual needs of their setting.

No where is this involvement more crucial than in America's inner-city, urban neighborhoods. However, it is here where we have seen minimal parent-school contact. This study explored parental involvement practices in a multi-racial, multi-ethnic, inner city parochial school setting and attempted to identify and analyze the various barriers which prevent a more involvement role for our inner city parents even in this selective setting where the element of parental choice and monetary investment became evident.

The descriptive study utilized a questionnaire format to identify these barriers to participation and compare the responses across various racial groups including Hispanic, African American, Native American, White, and Asian American.

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CHAPTER I

DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY

Statement of the Problem

Current literature and research in education underscores the importance that parent participation and involvement play in a child's academic progress and successful educational experience. The importance of involvement has been traced through all educational levels from preschool through high school and in both American and foreign academic settings.

American educational reform movements focus on efforts to restructure our schools to include all interested parties in the decision making process. The collaborative model suggested by Ira Gordon (1976) in which all parties band together to achieve educational excellence has been continually cited as a path to reform in the urban school. Crucial to this restructuring is an active parental component. If schools are to overcome this crisis of public confidence they must work with the community, including its citizens and business members, to meet the unique individual needs of their setting.

No where is this involvement more crucial than in America's inner-city, urban neighborhoods. However, it is here where we have seen minimal parent-school contact. This study explored parental involvement practices in a multi-racial, multi-ethnic inner city parochial school setting and attempted to identify and analyze the various barriers which prevent a more involved role for our inner city parents even in this selective setting where the element of parental choice was evident.

The descriptive study utilized a questionnaire format to identify these barriers to participation and compared the responses across various lines including race, grade, and language spoken. Results targeted significant response differences within these groups.

Significance of the Study

A pilot study of this project was done in the fall of 1989 by myself and a group of colleagues in order to test its feasibility as a possible topic for dissertation. This pilot study was done with two classes in an urban elementary school and the results were used to plan parent programs in the targeted school.

Studies conducted in inner city schools in Washington, D.C. by such noted educators as Dorothy Rich and Phyllis Hobson traced academic growth by racially diverse inner city students when parent training and involvement practices were initiated. Dr.

James Comer and his colleagues at the Yale University Child Study Clinic worked with educators in the New Haven Public Schools in establishing a multi-service parent/child support network within targeted elementary schools. Their interventions have provided documentation that increased parent involvement and staff support does improve children's scores on standardized tests and increases rates of attendance. James Coleman and Thomas Hoffer in their book _Public and Private High Schools: The Impact of Communities_ found that students in Catholic high schools performed better than students from comparable backgrounds in public high schools. They speculate that the important component is the relationship of the school to the community which they serve.

Dorothy Rich devised a set of home learning activities for parents to use at home with their children in order to raise their reading achievement scores. Her study was conducted with 218 first grade students in predominantly African American Catholic schools in Washington, D.C. In her study the experimental group achieved higher scores in reading achievement tests than the control group. Epstein reinforces this belief. "If schools had to choose only one policy to stress, these results suggest that the most payoff for the most parents comes from teachers involving parents in helping their children learn at home" (Epstein 1984, 72).

With studies such as these documenting the importance of parental involvement the aim of this research was to determine and examine the actual barriers which exist within our parental population and to use this data in order to alter our current involvement practices, expand the types of involvement which we require, and to establish an awareness of the need to recognize the diversity of our students' and their families.

The knowledge gained by the pilot study was crucial in establishing successful involvement programs in the pilot school. Educators and administrators gained insight and awareness that allowed them to design diverse yet positive experiences for these inner city parents. Attendance at school functions increased dramatically when survey responses were used as a basis for planning and development.

With this knowledge and experience it is suggested that this study can be of great use and significance through its adaptability and distribution to other educators sensitive enough to be aware that we must know our school community intimately in order to unite in the fight to offer our children a quality education. Such knowledge will avoid "blaming" each other for weaknesses and develop a realization that it is only in partnership, in working together that we will begin to redefine and restructure our dated educational establishment.

This study could be replicated in both urban and suburban settings with some alteration, in order to determine the needs of the unique school setting. A study such as this would convey to parents that the administration cares about their needs, their parental opinions are of value to the school, and their input is crucial to the growth and development of the school and its programs. It indicates a desire to open and extend lines of communication and develop important partnerships with those whom they serve.

In addition, a survey such as this would give parents an opportunity to participate and communicate with the school even if they have not done so in the past. At the very least we will open doors which have been perceived as closed for too many years.

I have targeted an acknowledged and overwhelming problem and developed a practical tool to use as a basis for understanding the dilemma and ultimately creating alternatives to address the areas of concern.

An analysis of parent involvement practices both in the home and in the school supports the goals of effective schools research and current literature in the field. An awareness of parent needs by the school prior to program design is suggested by Comer and his colleagues in their New Haven project. In addition Lightfoot states

> Our visions of family-school relationships would be substantially transformed if researchers and educational practitioners would begin to recognize the powerful and critical role of family as educator. . . Children seem to learn and grow in schools where parents and teachers share similar visions and collaborate on guiding children forward. (Lightfoot, 1978, 171)

Studies by the National Catholic Educational Association (NCEA) have shown that Catholic schools are extremely effective in educating urban students of minority and low income families. Coleman's 1987 study _Public and Private Schools: Their Impact on Communities_ found that Catholic school students showed high achievement in reading, math, and science studies. His research indicates that when compared to public schools minority Catholic school students have both higher achievement levels and a much lower drop out rate. The 1989 NCEA publication _Ganley's Catholic Schools in America, 17th edition_ states

> Catholic schools, especially in urban areas, continued to serve increasing numbers of ethnic minority students. . . the percentage of ethnic minority students has more than doubled in all Catholic schools, for 10.8% in 1970-71 to 22.7% in 1988-89. Hispanic students in Catholic schools are 97% Catholic, black students are 64% non-Catholic. Seventy-six percent of minority enrollment is in Catholic elementary schools, 24% in secondary schools."

Currently the New England states (Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont) have 493 Catholic elementary schools, 115 Catholic secondary schools for a total of 608 Catholic schools serving over 168,000 students. This accounts for 6.9 percent of the Catholic schools and 6.6 percent of the Catholic school enrollment in the United States. (National Catholic Educational Association 1989, xvii-xviii). When looking at an analysis of the types of schools across the country we find that over 80 percent of the elementary schools are parish schools and over 40 percent of the schools are located in urban centers (National Catholic Educational Association 1989, xix-xx).

The setting for this study was an inner-city parochial school located in Boston, Massachusetts. Massachusetts, the ninth largest state in terms of Catholic school enrollment, had a Catholic school population of 86,200 students in 1989, and Boston a Catholic school population of 56,700 making it the 10th largest diocese in the United States in terms of Catholic school student enrollment (National Catholic Educational Association 1989, xxiv).

The school was a seventy-four old facility which currently houses a population of 220 students in grades one through eight. Students included Catholic and non-Catholic children who came from various racial and ethnic backgrounds. Black, White, Hispanic, and some Asian children made up the student body.

The school was a beautifully kept facility. It was located in an extremely depressed section of the city with many multifamily homes in various states of repair and disrepair. The neighborhood was unique in that there were lovely, well-kept homes and some so shoddy that one would question the safety of such structures. Black, Hispanic, and White families populated the area and live in harmony. However, there were pockets of drug dealing and crime within sight of the school and church grounds. Safety must be a concern both day and night for these parents, and children often played inside their homes so that watchful parents were able to ensure their safety.

All faculty members were White and only one teacher and the principal were from the religious community. No faculty members were fluent in Spanish, however, both the pastor and curate of the church did speak Spanish. Tuition was charged and out of parish students paid a higher fee than did parish members. Parents were able to reduce the tuition fees by providing 40 hours of volunteer service. Volunteer services included lunch parents, library parents, bingo workers, and CCD (Confraternity of Christian Doctrine) teachers.

Communication between the families and the school was provided through written notices from the principal, a monthly calendar which was sent by the office, and an eighth grade newsletter which was in the initial stage of development. A parent and student handbook was also distributed at the beginning of the year and clearly described the philosophy, administrative policies, code of discipline and requirements which must be met in order to attend the school.

Questions to be Discussed

The target area of research was the identification of specific barriers which hinder and prevent inner city, urban parents from involving themselves more intensively in the education of their children. This setting, an urban parochial school, was intriguing in that these parents had 1) chosen to send their children to this particular school rather than the local public schools and 2) these parents paid tuition to send their children to this school. Despite these factors parental participation and involvement were less than one would expect. The variables of parent choice and monetary investment appeared to have little influence on the intensity of parental participation.

Questions addressed through this research included the following:

1. Did urban parents in this setting feel that the school was open and available to them?
2. What were the parental attitudes regarding the importance of education?
3. What were the current practices of involvement both in the home and in the school site?
4. What specific school-based activities influenced parental attendance at school functions?
5. What were the environmental factors which impeded parental attendance and participation in school functions?
6. What additional concerns did these parents have regarding the schools' parent outreach efforts?
7. Were there response patterns which were unique to various ethnic and racial groups, grade levels or for male/female students?
8. Was a questionnaire such as this a practical tool for the administration to employ in the planning of parental involvement programs?

Definition of Terms

Attitude Scale. An attitude-measuring instrument the units of which have been experimentally determined and equated; designed to obtain a quantitative evaluation of an attitude; to be distinguished from an attitude questionnaire, in which there is no such rational equality of units.

Cluster. A group of contiguous elements of a statistical population, e.g. a group of people living in a single house, a consecutive run of observations in an ordered series, or a set of adjacent plots in one part of a field.

Cluster Analysis. A general approach to multivariate problems in which the aim is to see whether the individuals fall into groups or clusters.

Descriptive method. (res) general procedures employed in studies that have as their chief purpose the description of phenomena, in contrast to ascertaining what caused them or what their value and significance are (according to some, the term should be restricted to status studies, including simple surveys: according to others, the term is extended to include descriptions of change, as historical studies or growth studies).

Descriptive Statistics. A term used to denote statistical data of a descriptive kind or the methods of handling such data, as contrasted with theoretical statistics which, though dealing with practical data, usually involve some process of inference in probability for their interpretation.

Descriptive Survey. A (sample) survey where the principal objective is to estimate the basic statistical parameters (means, totals, ratios) of the population or its sub-divisions.

Desegregation. Any process of bringing non-white and white children into the same schools: involves biracial or multiracial classes, and in some cases, biracial or multiracial faculties and administration.

Diocese. In ecclesiastical use, an administrative area of church jurisdiction under the care of a bishop, divided into parishes: all territorial areas wherein the Roman Catholic, Angelican, Eastern Orthodox, and oriental Churches are located are so subdivided for purposes of church government.

Ethnic Group. A fairly distinct group, whether racial, national, or tribal.

Lay Teacher. A teacher in a religious school who is not a member of a sisterhood or a brotherhood or of the clergy.

Learning Environment. The setting and conditions that create an atmosphere for learning.

Minority Group. One of the groups classified according to race, religion or nationality whose membership is less than 50 percent of a given population.

Open Ended. Researcher is free to ask different questions of different respondents to permit grater latitude in the scope of responses.

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.

Parish. (1) An administrative unit of a diocese under the spiritual care of a priest (who is responsible in turn to the ordinary, that is, the diocesan bishop).

Parochial School. (1) Strictly, a school supported by a parish and serving the children of the parishioners; (2) loosely, a school conducted by some church or religious group usually without tax support: (3) (R.C. ed) an educational institution under the auspices of the Roman Catholic Church: may be at any level from kindergarten through secondary: usually characterized by open-admissions policy, that is attendance open to all regardless of race, creed, or nationality: a superintendent of education, appointed of race, creed, or nationality: a superintendent of education, appointed by the bishop of the diocese, with local pastor/board of education responsible for educational programs, staff, etcetera, of each school: faculty includes men and women of religious order, lay members of the Roman Catholic Church, and also non-Catholic personnel; curriculum parallels that of the public schools where demanded by state agencies, its content and methods being local or diocesan decisions.

Pilot Study. A preliminary study, generally conducted with a small group (or small groups), used in advance of a major or formal research project in order to try out techniques, procedures, methods, and/or instruments.

Population. In statistical usage, the term population is applied to any finite or infinite collection of individuals.

Public School. (1) A school, usually of elementary or secondary grade, organized under a school district of a stat, supported by tax revenues, administered by public officials, and open to all.

Questionnaire. A group or sequence of questions designed to elicit information upon a subject, or sequence of subjects, from an informant.

Racial Group. (1) A group of persons bound together by consciousness of membership in the same race; (2) less strictly, an aggregate of people belonging to a given race.

Reliability. (1) worthiness of dependence or trust: (2) (meas) the accuracy with which a measuring device measures something; the degree to which a test or other instrument of evaluation measures consistently whatever it does in fact measure.

Respondents. (1) any recipient of a questionnaire who actually replies to the questionnaire.

Sample, Incidental. A group used as a sample solely because it is readily available.

Sample, Representative. (1) A sample possessing the same characteristics as the population with reference to variable other than, but thought to be related to, the one under investigation: (2) sometimes used to refer to a stratified sample in which the subsample numbers are proportional to the size of the strata.

Socioeconomic Background. The background or environmental indicative of the social and economic status of an individual group.

Tuition. The amount of money charged by an educational institution for instruction, not including materials, books, or laboratory fees.

Urban School. A school in a concentrated population area, as opposed to a rural or village school.

Validity. (1) The quality of being grounded on truth or fact.

Sources: Dictionary of Education (3rd ed); Dictionary of Statistical Terms (5th ed).

Limitations of the Study

This setting was chosen for research due to the fact that the racial/ethnic population was reflective of that in the public schools. Many of the urban parochial schools in the Boston area are predominantly White due to the impact of public school desegregation during the early 1970s. In addition to this, many parochial schools are White due to the fact that Blacks have not traditionally been Catholic.

> It is important to keep in mind that the Catholic religion has been culturally entwined with some ethnic groups more than others. For example, the Black culture has not historically embraced Catholicism, the Indian and Oriental have somewhat, while the Hispanic culture has a Catholic tradition of many centuries. Also, Catholic schools naturally tend to service those who support them, since no taxation revenue, not even a share of their own constituents, are available to them. (Bredeweg 1985, 17)

One of the primary limitations of survey research is that a questionnaire is limited to the respondents willingness to participate in the study and to cooperate with the project. Since this questionnaire was distributed and collected in the school it was felt that the parents were more willing to return their responses in a prompt manner. This, of course, was influenced by the children's desire to meet the homeroom teacher's request to return the materials.

In addition, the responses are influenced by individual understandings and perceptions of the research topic. Recent media campaigns including television, radio, and newspapers have highlighted the concern for parental involvement and the need for the day to day interaction of the home and the school. The questionnaire was presented as a tool to aid in program development at the school. Questions were presented in a clear and concise manner and the vocabulary could be easily understood since no educational terms of jargon were used. The opportunity for input influenced responses. It must be remembered that these parents had already demonstrated their involvement by selecting this school setting and environment for their children rather than the public school option.

Another limitation to this type of research is the response rate, that is the number of responses which are actually returned for analysis. By having this questionnaire returned, in sealed envelopes, to the school itself it was felt that the response rate will improve. If the questionnaire were mailed and returned by mail the response rate would most probably be far less.

Utilizing a closed question format can also be an area of limitation. Respondents are asked very specific questions and then required to choose among highly structured responses. In addition, the scope of responses which the respondents would like to give are often more complex than the alternatives which are offered. In order to address this limitation an open response question was included at the end of the questionnaire to allow the respondents to voice their opinions are concerns on this topic.

The decision not to include a request for personal information (socioeconomic status, educational level of parents, family structure, marital status) was based upon the feeling that this type of information would be viewed as intrusive by the respondents and would thus bias the results obtained. Since the school is historically a symbol of authority combined with the further imposition of this school as a religious institution it is felt that individual respondents may feel threatened and unable to give sincere responses if confidentiality and anonymity were not assured.

Finally, a limitation of questionnaire/survey research is that often researchers are unsure who completed the questionnaire. However, a 1988 study by

Renato Espinoza, "Working Parents, Employers, and Schools," found that only 3% of the fathers in the study took on the responsibility of maintaining communication with the school. With this in mind a question regarding who completed the questionnaire was included at the end of the survey and allowed for responses including mother, father, guardian, brother, sister, or other, with the option of inserting who that "other" may have been.

Summary

The urban parochial school has been found to be an extremely successful educational institution when compared to the urban public school model. The advantages of these schools have been highlighted over the years and the success of their programs is intriguing to researchers in urban education.

The following chapter will highlight the relevant research in the area of urban education and parental involvement practices including authors such as Lightfoot, Comer, Epstein, and Gordon. In addition the field of urban parochial education will be reviewed and their role as effective schools will be examined.

Chapter 3 on the methodology and procedures utilized in the research will outline the format, population, and research design which was employed to examine the hindrances to parental involvement in this parochial setting. Examples of the questionnaire and a description of the qualitative and quantitative procedures utilized will be presented.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In this review of the literature I will attempt to present a summary of some of the most current research in the area of parental involvement and in the area of urban education. Research relating to the barriers between the inner city community and the traditional middle class bureaucracy of the educational institution will be reviewed. The second part of this chapter will examine the urban parochial school as a successful model in urban education for the education of minority and immigrant children since the nineteenth century and the beginning of the European immigration to the United States.

Urban Education/Parental Involvement

American society and American education are facing a period of re-evaluation and transition due to the rapid growth patterns and demands of the computer/technological age. No other period in our nation's history has seen such profound changes effecting every aspect of our lives. The last thirty years have changed our social and economic patterns so radically that mainstream America, and even more importantly those not in mainstream society, are faced with challenges, responsibilities and decisions which will set the pattern for their futures and which they must be equipped to intelligently handle.

Despite these changes, American education today reflects practices in place since Horace Mann. Relatively little has changed in terms of school calendar, curriculum, school governance and structure. The conflict between the traditional school model and the socio-economic demands upon American families of 1990 is most evident in the growing dissatisfaction in educational standards, illiteracy rates, and high drop-out rates in our urban schools and the criticisms voiced by industry in the quality of their work force. Consequently, school administration, parents, and industry are involved in heated debates centered on targeting weaknesses, evaluating programs, and designing appropriate reform measures.

Schools argue that they cannot do it all. Beside curriculum requirements they perform duties including providing transportation, meals, health programs, day care, social and support services. Time and resources are limited and educators resist and resent taking on additional responsibilities.

Industry complains that the emerging work force is not adequately prepared for the world of work as it exists in 1990. Prior to the onset of the technological age all citizens were able to provide for family needs regardless of educational attainment. There existed a wealth of jobs in industrial and service occupations. However, the jobs today require employees who are literate and able to solve problems and who are adaptable to the rapidly expanding computer-related job requirements. Consequently, they are forced, at great expense, to provide educational and often remedial programs for their work force.

Parents are caught in the eye of the storm. Socio-economic demands, changing family structures, and single parent family, rise in divorce rates, and the rapidly evolving standards of national and local mores have all had a tremendous impact on our children. Obviously, the children need more emotional and educational support than they are currently receiving but programs are expensive and schools are increasingly reluctant to assume what they perceive to be parental responsibilities.

Instead of working at cross purposes and pointing the finger of blame, parents and schools must realize that they must develop working partnerships in order to provide mutual support and assistance. There exists a wealth of literature in this area and with current trends of school reform targeting a model of school based management involving parents and schools, educators would be well advised to become familiar with authors and organizations supporting these alliances.

Educators such as James Comer, Dorothy Rich, Joyce Epstein and Ira Gordon have long advocated the cooperation of parents and educators as a means of educational reform. Organizations such as the PTA, the National Committee for Citizens in Education, and the Home and School Institute all offer resources to both parents and schools who value this partnership.

The research is clear. Parental involvement in a child's early educational experiences will have a positive effect on the child's achievement. Schools, especially urban schools must become aware of this connection and then take steps to assure that such involvement can happen. The literature tells us that there is a correlation between economic and educational levels and parental involvement. This is probably not difficulty to rationalize. In urban schools we are dealing with a population of families who are not your stereotypical middle class family. Our families come from diverse backgrounds. They encompass differences in racial, ethnic, economic, and cultural environments yet they all converge on the urban school with the dream of education as a means to success.

Attention must be paid to the expectations of our citizenship and the reality of what we are able to do with the available resources. The problems of education are not just the problems of the school but ar a reflection of the problems of the surrounding community, the city, the state, and the country as a whole. Support for educational programs must come from all areas concerned because we all will be effected by its shortcomings.

With these factors in mind the literature presents us with a framework for establishing an involvement programs which will deal with the realities of the issue and develop programs which will serve the needs of educators.

Notable among the authors is Ira Gordon, one of the most prolific writers on this subject. In his writings Mr. Gordon presents us with models for parental involvement. His assumption is that the "behavior of parents and other family members influences child learning" (Gordon, 1979, 4). Given this premise, four models of involvement are suggested:

> Parent Impact Model--assumes that the behavior of parents and other family members influences the child's learning. The goal of the model is to improve the family's capabilities to provide a home learning environment.
>
> Comprehensive Services Model--assumes that the child's health, nutrition, social and psychological development influences learning. Its goal is to provide non-academic services and information to the family which will allow the child to be more "able" to learn.

> School Impact Model--assume that if schools are moe responsible to parents, this will develop better achievement in the children. This is a more basic model and emphasizes communication and interaction between the home and the school.
>
> Community Impact Model--assumes that everything in the child's life relates to his education. The goal is to unite all agencies and to adapt them to meet these diverse needs. (Gordon, 1979, 6-13)

These suggestions are related to Mr. Gordon's belief that there are three sets of factors which influence intellectual behavior and personality development. These are demographic factors, cognitive factors, and emotional factors (Gordon, 1979, 5). Through the suggested service models he feels that schools will best be able to provide programs which will support and nurture young learners.

Much of the research in parental involvement can be related to the theories of Ira Gordon. Researchers such as Dorothy Rich and James Comer, have drawn on his models for involvement. Dorothy Rich reflects the Parent Impact Model in her emphasis on the home and the family as the primary teachers of the child (Rich, 1985, 1988). James Comer's work in the New Haven Public Schools is tied to the Comprehensive Services model which unites all parties and agencies in the educational structure (Comer, 1980).

A successful parent involvement program developed by Phyllis J. Hobson was a component of a public school

Chapter I program (Hobson 1979, 41-45). Title I, now known as Chapter I, is a nationally funded compensatory education program which has as one of its components a mandate for parental involvement and participation which reflects Ira Gordon's School Impact Model. The author is an administrator in the District of Columbia. A study of these Title I students found that they "demonstrated significantly higher achievement when parents became directly involved in the educational program of their children" (Hobson, 1979, 41).

Five factors that contributed to the success of this program were the following:

1. explore with parents what they want the school to accomplish
2. devise opportunities for parents to get involved that are practical and meaningful
3. keep reaching out to parents with warmth and sensitivity
4. develop an ongoing training program in which parents and staff are both teachers and learners
5. acknowledge that sharing power with parents is not abdication of one's professional leadership role

The Parental Involvement Program in the District of Columbia included diverse opportunities for parents to show interest and participation. Included were Parent Advisory Councils, Parent-Partner Volunteer Corps, Parent Awareness Conferences, Parent Education Traineeships, a Chorus, and opportunities for home activities. Not all participation centered on academic or advisory roles. Parents were able to participate in cultural, recreational and educational activities. These diverse programs provided a non-threatening atmosphere which is often needed in an urban educational setting. The underlying goal, and in this it was successful, was that they were able to develop a spirit of mutual respect and cooperation with a shared goal of servicing the children of the District (Hobson, 1979).

Another program which reflects the participation models suggested by Ira Gordon is highlighted by the Home and School Institute's founder Dorothy Rich. Dorothy Rich is a popular author and lecturer in the area of parental involvement. She proposes practical, hands-on, daily activity-oriented interaction between parents and children to underscore and reinforce learning.

The Home and School Institute in Washington, D.C. is dedicated to strengthening the bonds between the home and the school to work together to develop strong skills, interactive families, and cooperative learning experiences which will underscore but not supplant the child's classroom learning experiences (Rich 1985, 1988).

The Home and School Institute takes a "nondeficit" approach to learning. It assumes that all homes are able to provide meaningful learning experiences for children and that parents, with guidance, are able to perform the tasks even in the poorest household. This is a "parents as tutors" model 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."

One of the strategies which the Institute suggests is a series of "Home Learning Recipes" which provides specific, low-cost learning activities for the child and parent to perform at home. The model assumes that the parent is the child's first teacher and the most important teacher the child will ever have. It stresses positive and varied learning experiences in the home, with the family. A respect and support for education as well as development of a positive self image and self confidence for both parent and student is an ultimate goal of the program.

This model reflects Ira Gordon's Parent Impact Model and appeals to the basic motivation for parents to become involved in the educational process, that is, to help their children do better in school. The effects of this model are: 1) increased motivation of the child, 2) increased skill development in the child, and 3) an improvement in the self-image of the parents. In addition, this model reflects a program which creates a foundation of support and involvement for other forms of parental interaction and involvement. The focus changes from an approach where we no longer are concerned with "what needs to be fixed" but instead "what can we build on" (Rich 1979, 40).

The program offers the following seven characteristics for developing a school′s program in this model. In building on the basic ability of the family the school works towards the Community Impact Model suggested by Gordon.

1. Parent participation is most widespread and sustained when parents view their participation as directly linked to the achievement of their children. The intrinsic reward and motivation for the parents is the success experienced by their children.
2. Parent/community involvement programs need to include the opportunity for families to supplement and reinforce the development of academic skills with work in the home. This

allows for participation of parents who are not always able to attend school meetings.

3. Involvement programs should provide for various modes of participation.
4. Involvement opportunities need to exist at all levels of schooling. This includes the middle and high school years too.
5. The impetus for parent/community involvement has focused on federally funded compensatory programs. Strategies which involve the whole community ensure broader support.
6. Parent/community involvement programs are more effective if active support and cooperation is gained from school boards, community agencies, and professional organizations.
7. Parent-community involvement needs to be viewed as a legitimate activity of the schools and as an integral part of its delivery of services, not just an add-on (Rich, 1979, 36-37).

Implementation of such a program would require that parents and educators accept new roles. They must work together to share new ideas and skills. The focus of the school would change from being child-centered to being family centered. Teachers would build partnerships with families in order to address mutual needs, concerns and goals.

Support of parents as educators of their children can be found in a doctoral dissertation by Florence Brown Herman (1981) in which she designed a tutoring program to actively involve parents in their children's reading instruction. Goals included reinforcement of skills, increase motivation, improve interest in school, and foster a positive home/school relationship. Results indicated that there was a significant improvement in the performance of children who had strong parental participation compared with those parents who demonstrated weak participation patterns.

Another program designed to support home learning activities is described in a graduate study conducted by Janice Schnobrich (1986) in which she utilized homework as a tool to improve student achievement and to improve parental involvement in the daily educational routine of their children. Workshops on techniques and activities as well as a homework manual were provided by the researcher. Parents were enthusiastic about the project, however attendance at the workshops was a problem. Again the issue of parent schedules and daily life pressures influences the ability to participate.

Both parents and school administrators have come to realize that their roles must be cooperative and are developing models which will assist in a cooperative approach to managing and governing schools in order to meet the needs of all involved.

Formal programs of parent participation have been in place in our schools for years. The most noted program in the United States is the PTA, Parent Teacher Association. It is the oldest and largest organization working on behalf of children and youth in this country (Cuthright 1989, ix). The National Congress of Parents and Teachers, as the PTA is officially known, supports the premise that parents are the child′s most important educator and advocates a stronger and more involved parent role in the schools. However, there is an evolving role of parent and citizen participation in local education and the impact of such changes on school districts will hopefully encourage and support educational programs which will meet the diverse needs of the individual school population. Recent developments in parent and citizen participation have resulted from movements such as school decentralization, federally mandated parent advisory councils, parent/citizen councils mandated by state or local school officials, child advocacy organizations, Citizen advisory councils mandated by court ordered desegregation plans, court decisions, changes in the national PTA and some local PTA′s (Steinberg 1979).

A handbook which would be most useful to administrators interested in developing parent programs which are respectful of the rights and needs of the community is published by the National Committee for Citizens in Education in Columbia Maryland. Anne Henderson, Carl Marburger and Theodora Ooms are authors of Beyond the Bakesale: An Educator's Guide to Working With Parents which should be required reading for every school principal.

Anne Henderson's book is based upon the belief and research that emphasizes the importance of parent participation in the education of young children. Families and schools must look beyond their traditional roles and examine their interaction in light of society as it exists at this time. Traditional roles are no longer adequate and the separation of parents and educational professionals prevents children from gaining the most from our educational institutions.

The traditional role of parents--organizing bake sales and like activities--is no longer appropriate. Schools have found that they are not able to meet students' needs in a vacuum. Parents must work with educational professionals to meet the diverse needs of the youngsters of the 90s. This handbook was written to give educators advice and direction in establishing constructive and meaningful school/parent partnerships.

One interesting point the authors make is the distinction between participation and involvement. Participation means to enjoy, or suffer with others, to have a share in common with others. Involvement means to cause to be inextricably associated or concerned; to engross or occupy absorbingly. It is involvement that we need for it implies a deep sense of commitment (Henderson, et.al. 1986). Five types of parent involvement are outlined in the text.

Partners: Parents performing basic obligations for their child's education and social development.

Collaborators and Problem Solvers: Parents reinforcing the school's efforts with their child and helping to solve problems.

Audience: Parents attending and appreciating the school's (and their child's) performance and productions.

Supporters: Parents providing volunteer assistance to teachers, the parent organization, and to other parents.

Advisors and/or Co-decision Makers: Parents providing input on school policy and program through membership in ad hoc or permanent governance bodies (Henderson et.al. 1986, 2-3).

This book provides advice, practices, and guidelines which schools and principals can use to develop better understandings and lines of communication between the home and the school. A step by step format for building parent involvement is also suggested. Barriers to effective school/parent communication are presented and includes such issues as lack of time on the part of the parents and the teachers, lack of transportation for some parents, distance between home and school, neighborhood safety issues, employment problems including inflexible work schedules and lack of child care.

Schools and parental organizations must begin to address these issues since such problems will only become more severe in the future. Schools must survey their parents in order to develop unique methods of sharing and cooperating which will address the needs of their unique school community. Principals and teachers may need to develop inservice programs and training activities which will assist all parties in developing a deeper understanding of these issues.

Continuing this theme of involvement as the ultimate goal of parent programs Dorothy Rich's book, Megaskills: How Families Can Help Children Succeed in School and Beyond, is a volume which is currently being read by many concerned parents who would like to assist their children's learning using practical, easy methods.

Dorothy Rich suggests a catalyst for teaching today's children. She refers to Megaskills. She feels that for children to learn and keep learning basic skills at school, they need to learn another important set of basic skills in the home. These are the megaskills--a child's inner engines of learning. Though they are reinforced in the classroom, they get their power from the home. The home is an integral part of her educational philosophy. Here the children will develop long lasting skills and impressions. Here the child has their most important teacher and role model.

In her book she provides home based activities, "recipes" which will help develop "megaskills" in children. These skills include confidence, motivation, effort, responsibility, initiative, perseverance, caring, teamwork, common sense and problem solving skills (Rich 1988, 4). These play strong roles in determining a child's success in school and in the world of work and family beyond. The theme of this "home learning lab" was the basis for her doctoral dissertation (1976) completed on her work in the inner-city Catholic schools of Washington, D.C. These recipes have been duplicated in a number of school systems across the country and her organization provides training programs to implement this approach.

The book contains activities to address and build upon each of the above skills in a way that involves parents and children so that families can learn to work together and play together in constructive, meaningful activities which will strengthen both academic and family life. Parents are the first and best teachers that a child will have and every family has something to offer in the way of learning no matter how poor, disadvantaged or busy they may be.

This book has much to offer to both parents and teachers. Too often urban educators do not acknowledge the strengths and abilities which the parents of their students possess. This non-deficit approach is of particular interest to these professionals as they develop homework for their students.

Another parent organization which provides information and support for parents in the National Committee for Citizens in Education which offers newsletters, handbooks, and research reports which support the efforts of individual parents and parent groups in forming collaborations with the schools which serve their communities. Their publication, _The Evidence Continues to Grow_ (Henderson 1987), provides an overview of current research and writings on the benefits of involvement and provides strong documentation of the value of such efforts.

This report contains summaries of recent studies designed to support the theory that parent involvement improves student achievement. When parents take an active role in their child's education the child will do better in school and the school itself will become a better place. Programs designed to enhance parent participation and involvement in the daily educational tasks of the child will produce students who perform better, get better grades, and have more stable school environments (Henderson 1989, 1).

Some of the major benefits of parent participation are higher grades and test scores, long-term academic achievement, positive attitudes and behaviors, more successful programs and more effective schools. The studies in this report show educators that parents are a valuable and relatively untapped resource which we must use if we are to meet the many demands of the more complicated children we meet each day. Schools and home cannot and should not remain separated. As the school takes on more of the parents' responsibilities (feeding, day care, health) the parents must in turn support, enhance, and expand the learning that takes place in the classroom.

There is no one best model for parent involvement for each school must develop their own unique design. However, teaches must realize that when thee studies are presented there is an overwhelming documentation that parents want to be involved in their child's education in some way. We must help them to find the best and most suitable way for them. The roles must be variable and well planned. Educators need parents as much as parents need strong supportive schools. The turf battles must end.

In Ms. Henderson's summary she itemizes seven important facts which may be learned from the studies presented:

1. The family provides the primary educational environment.
2. Involving parents in their children's formal education improves student achievement.
3. Parent involvement is most effective when it is comprehensive, long-lasting, and well-planned.
4. The benefits are not confined to early childhood or the elementary level: there are strong effects from involving parents continuously throughout high school.
5. Involving parents in their own children's education at home is not enough. To ensure the quality of schools as institutions serving the community, parents must be involved at all levels in the school.

6. Children from low-income and minority families have the most to gain when schools involve parents. Parents do not have to be well-educated to help.
7. We cannot look at the school and the home in isolation from one another; we must see how they interconnect with each other and with the world at large (Henderson 1987, 9-10).

Rhoda McShane Becher (1984) also presents an extensive review of the current literature on the role of parents in the development and education of their children. Methods of parent training are documented. Several family "process variables"--ways of behaving--are related to school achievement. Children with high achievement scores have parents with high expectations for them, who respond to and interact with them frequently, and who see themselves as "teachers" of their children.

Parent education programs, especially those training low-income parents to work with their children, are effective in improving how well children use language skills, perform on tests, and behave in school. They also produce positive effects on the parents' teaching style, the way they interact with their children, and the home learning environment. Most effective programs emphasized the importance of the parent, the need for a close relationship between parent and teacher, and structured the concrete tasks for parents, as well as a long term approach to the problem.

Parents developed more positive attitudes toward the school and the teachers, fostered community support for the programs, became more active in community affairs, improved their feelings of self-confidence. Teachers became more student centered and student oriented, devoted more time to teaching, became more innovative, and more proficient in their professional activities. Finally, students increased their academic and cognitive development.

In studying successful young people Benjamin Bloom in his book Developing Talent in Young People targeted a group of talented young professionals who are highly successful in their fields--mathematics, research, music, sports, and other arts and sciences. The research showed the underlying common characteristic of their educational experience was enthusiastic and involved parents. The "process variables" mentioned by Becher are underscored by this study.

These interviews were held with the young people themselves and with their families. Although all participants varied widely in background, ethnic grouping, race, socioeconomic status they all indicated a lifelong support by their parents. This support included constant and direct parent involvement in their general education, specialized lessons, competitions, and in fact for any educational endeavor which attracted them. James Comer presents similar evidence in his writings about his early family life. Comer again presents documentation of the process variables cited by Becher.

In all cases the children surpassed the parents' expertise in the target area but the support and encouragement continued as they sought to master and achieve their goals. Parents reflected an attitude that any goal the child selected could be within their reach.

Joyce Epstein has written many articles on the importance of parental involvement in the educational process and is currently one of the leading researchers in the field. Ms. Epstein finds that the research proves that there is consistent evidence that parent's encouragement, activities, interest at home and their participation at school affect their children's achievement, even after the students' ability and family socioeconomic status is taken into account (Epstein 1983).

This finding is important to us in our research regarding parent involvement in urban schools. If teachers take this to heart then schools would do all they could to support better parent/teacher relationships.

In her study "The Effects on Student Achievement of Teachers' Practices of Parental Involvement" (Epstein 1987) she examines fall and spring test scores of students in classrooms of teachers who varied in their emphasis on parental involvement. An analysis of the test scores indicated that parents who participated in home learning activities influenced changes in reading achievement. However, such a relationship was not found for math achievement. Parents felt that they learned more during the year than they previously knew about their child's instructional program.

The report concluded that students gain in personal and academic development if their families emphasize schooling, let their children know they do, and do so continually over the school years. This theme continues throughout her research.

Clearly the most prolific researcher in the areas of parental involvement practices, Dr. Epstein, directs the Effective Middle Schools Program at the Center for Research on elementary and Middle Schools at Johns Hopkins University. Her research has investigated many aspects of the parental involvement question including the relation to student reactions (Epstein, 1982), principals (Epstein, 1985), teacher practices (Epstein, 1986), and parental perceptions (Epstein, 1989). She has presented us with a wealth of material which is crucial to the development of appropriate involvement programs. Her research suggests that parents are more involved at school and home when they feel that the school has made an effort to establish a strong parental involvement program. Parents want to be involved, want the schools to provide them with more information regarding programs, curriculum, and administration. This research holds true for inner-city schools as well. "The implication is that all schools--including inner-city schools--can develop more comprehensive programs of parent involvement to help more families become knowledgeable partners in their children's education (Epstein, 1989, 10).

Parents' levels of involvement are related to the specific types of programs and practices that have been established to encourage and support involvement and to assist and guide parents in methods and practices which they may employ in the home to reinforce learning. "The data is clear that the schools' practices to inform and to involve parents are more important than parent education, family size marital status, and even grade level in determining whether inner-city parents stay involved with their children's education through the middle grades (Epstein, 1989, 14).

She targets five important points in this are:

1. School and family connections must take a developmental course
2. Families are changing
3. Schools that are similar may differ in their parental involvement
4. Parent involvement requires site specific development and leadership
5. Family requests for involvement are constant (Epstein, 1988, 58-59).

One of the country's leading authors and a popular speaker on parental involvement programs is Dr. James Comer from Yale University. In his book School Power he documents such efforts.

Dr. Comer proposed a long-term intervention plan for the New Haven, Connecticut Public Schools which highlighted increased opportunities for parental involvement in the organization and management of two inner city schools. This program was initiated as part of a five year plan between the city schools and the Yale University Child Study Center. Goals of the program included the following:

1. To modify the social and psychological climate of the school in a way which would facilitate learning.
2. To improve the achievement of basic skills at a statistically significant level.
3. To raise motivation for learning, mastery and achievement, to increase the academic and occupational aspirations of each child.
4. To develop patterns of shared responsibility and decision making among parents and staff.
5. To develop an organizational relationship between child development and clinical services and the public schools.

Committees were established in each of the targeted schools and included a governance body at the school which included administration, teachers, parents, support staff. A school committee with elected parent representatives who selected staff, established curriculum, and evaluated the program. Finally, a pupil personnel team provided necessary services for teachers and students.

Inservice programs were held for parents and teachers in order to allow them to begin to work together. Parents were trained to work as aides in the schools. Teacher training programs and parent participation programs were held three days per week.

During the five years of the study both participating schools attained the best attendance records in the city, noted improvement in student behaviors, reported better parent/staff interactions, and near grade level academic performance by the students.

Dr. Comer is a popular lecturer on this program and on the importance of parental involvement and highlights the importance of his mother in his own success and in that of his siblings. This reflects the work of Bloom (1985). Representatives from the New Haven schools which were involved in the study speak glowingly of the success of the program and how they have continued to develop the model even though the initial experiment has ended. The success of the program serves as a beacon for us as urban educators.

An examination of the role and character of family/school partnerships and related educational practices has been presented by Dr. Sara Lawrence Lightfoot from Harvard University in her book Worlds Apart: Relationships Between Families and Schools (1978). Dr. Lightfoot presents urban educators with many unique areas of inquiry which have direct impact on how we interact with both our parents and our students. In particular, she examines how schools must realize the conflict between mothers and teachers in terms of the child as a possession of each and how the schools of America must come to terms with the exclusionary practices which have direct impact on minority groups.

The transition from home to school has traditionally been difficult for a number of reasons. Often children come to school reflecting the negative school experiences of their parents. Willard Waller is credited with his premise that parents′ negative views of school arise out of a "crystallization" of their childhood memories of oppression and fear in relation to the all-powerful teacher. Thus their apprehensions include these negative recollections of their parents, their own fear of the unknown, and the stories presented to them by their older peers and siblings.

Another factor in the home/school turf war is the concern of mothers about giving their children over to another female adult who will now serve as a role model, divert the child′s attentions away from mother, and the underlying theme as the child as a possession--a possession of the mother and of the teacher. The teacher is almost viewed as the "other women" in a relationship.

We must be aware of the negative image of women in American society. Women were not taught formally in the early colonial days. Education was not viewed as necessary for their role in life. It was not until the Civil War that women became a force in education. However, the negative cultural role of women continues even into the twentieth century. Even as women began to enter the work force their jobs were not viewed as important or necessary. Traditional nurturing roles such as nurses and teachers were considered appropriate occupations. This negative view lives on as we continue to blame educational and social decay on women and teachers.

Women fear the schools and teachers as another means of "judging" their performance. Skill in parenting is judged by how well you have prepared your child for school. It is the place where mothers receive their first public evaluation. As the child moves on into schooling the mother feels abandoned, the "empty nest" syndrome.

However, by becoming aware of these maternal feelings, the school could capitalize on a source of strength and enthusiasm. Parents are the first and most important teachers and the resources that parent power will give the school are endless. Developing a mutual respect between mothers and teachers with the child at the center of the relationship will serve to support educational programs, reinforce the importance of learning, and give each side a staunch ally in the educational process.

Urban schools must examine the role of parents even more carefully. In order for schools to successfully teach Black and minority children they will have to be aware of the importance of Black family life, culture and experience. This would include parent involvement and participation on a daily basis not just during Black History Month or on Dr. King's Birthday. "The continuous presence of Black parents brings sources of identification for children that are real and reachable, that are strong and vulnerable, and that reveal the scars and endurance of human struggle in this society (Lightfoot 1978, 178).

Educators and parents must view the child as the central and most important person in their lives. 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 develop successful partnership programs.

> Schools will only become comfortable and productive environments of learning when the cultural and historical presence of Black families and communities are infused into the daily interactions and educational processes of children. When children see a piece of themselves and their experience in the adults that teach them and feel a sense of constancy between home and school, then they are likely to make a much

> smoother and productive transition from one to another. (Lightfoot, 1978, 175)

Dr. Lightfoot's research regarding the school's role in developing parent partnerships is reinforced by the research of Epstein (1983 1989), Epstein and Dauber (1989) and Ascher (1987). All highlight the need for schools to develop lines of openness and communication between the institution and the parents who entrust their children to such institutions. Urban parents are victims in this power play due to teachers' perceptions and prejudices based upon lack of understanding and differing class status. Ascher states that

> . . . the fragile links that have long existed between the schools and poor and minority parents have also been make more tenuous by periodic suspicion and understanding on both sides--with school staff often overwhelmed by bouts of futility, and parents equally often filled with resentment. While school administrators and teacher shave often seen these parents as failing to provide their children with the intellectual and motivational prerequisites for successful learning, the parents (themselves often undereducated by prevailing standards) have viewed teachers and schools with a mix of awe and anger. . . (Ascher 1987, 2)

Before urban partnerships can be established educators must take a long, hard look at themselves and at the community which they are serving. It is easy to say that we strive for increased parental involvement but in order to develop a strong and trusting relationship without parents we must come to a better understanding of the children and community which we serve. Unless we develop such insight we will not be able to understand the needs of the community and the programs which will encourage support, participation, and involvement.

In his writings William Julius Wilson presents an analysis of the Black culture in the United States which presents an historical perspective and an analysis of future trends in urban America. An awareness of these issues is crucial to understanding and working with urban students and their families. The relationship between racial and economic issues cannot be overlooked. The deepening and widening differences among poor, middle, and upper levels of African Americans in the 1990s is at the focal point of the struggle for political and social position. The differences between the classes is widening and it appears there is no end in sight (Wilson 1980).

The rising concern for the "underclass", those who lack the education, training, skills, and language to move into mainstream society should be a priority of educators. The tendency to blame the victim and not acknowledge the social, economic, and political injustices which have led to the development of this problem must be addressed and drastic measure taken to remediate this growth problem (Wilson, 1987).

Traditional educational programs and traditional school administrative practices have not been successful in the urban school. The American dream of progress has always been firmly based in the support of public education as the path to upward mobility. However, a study by Reynolds Farley and Walter Allen (1989) based upon an analysis of the 1980 national census results indicates that American education suffers from an "independent race effect" which leaves African Americans at a disadvantage. Results show that African Americans and Whites have almost equal percentages enrolled in the schools however, African American children are more likely to attend public schools while more Whites attend parochial, church affiliated schools. This is especially true in urban areas. A superficial analysis of the data indicates that gaps are closing while careful scrutiny reveals that Americans of different races and ethnic backgrounds are not receiving "comparable" educations. Public support of public schools in terms of interest, funding, and participation has slipped and is approaching a state of crisis. Private and parochial schools are thriving while White enrollment in urban school districts has declined steadily (Farley and Allen, 1989).

The children left behind are increasingly from the underclass and from families of new immigrants who must struggle with the increasingly apathy of local governments and wealthier citizens. These students face a host of problems and challenges as do the educational institutions which have traditionally been there to serve them. In order to best meet the needs of these children the schools must make very effort to develop school, community, parent, and business partnerships which will give the children and their neighborhoods a strong and supportive educational system.

This theme of partnership advocated by Drs. Lightfoot and Comer is continued by Byrd Jones and Robert Maloy in their book Partnerships for Improving Schools. Here we are able to reflect on the Community Impact Model advocated by Ira Gordon. The authors encourage schools to form partnerships with community and businesses in addition to parents.

As we approach the twenty-first century we must acknowledge the rapid changes that have transpired during the last decade and the even greater changes that we will face in social structures, government, education and industry of the future. As we reflect on our position we must acknowledge the interdependence of our lives and institutions. Massive reforms are needed to prepare productive citizens for the twenty-first century.

One avenue of potential change is the suggestion that educators look to community, parental, university, and business for collaborative programs. Educators have traditionally viewed the school as their domain and have a pervasive distrust of outsiders becoming involved in what they view as their territory. Collaboration will not come easily.

Outsiders often view school staff members as uncooperative and rigid and teachers view themselves as isolated and not respected as professionals. Teachers have learned to be hesitant about embracing change. Their roles have changed little but their daily list of demands and requirements has multiplied. The ongoing criticisms of schools and teachers provides little motivation and self respect. "Innovations threaten someone′s sense of prestige. Modifying existing behaviors, introducing new programs, or involving other participants all generate resistance from those who are comfortable with old ways and existing distributions of authority." (Jones and Maloy 1988, 33)

Despite these facts we know that teachers are dedicated,hard-working, enthusiastic professionals who need opportunities for interaction, sharing, communication and decision-making and when giving these opportunities are capable of great change. They need empowerment. Collaboration can give empowerment to teachers.

Drs. Jones and Maloy suggest that partnerships can bring new perspectives to school related issues and problems. Working together allows for exploration of new issues, new perspectives, and new solutions. They suggest that an analysis of the multiple realities of an institution and partnership can lead to a strong collaboration. Defining school problems in ill-structured terms leads to new and alternative solutions. These lead to new understandings and self-assessment of the school setting using reflexive thinking.

Partnerships between the University of Massachusetts/Amherst and various school districts are reviewed in the text. Roosevelt, New York, Boston, Worcester, Greenfield, and Lawrence, Massachusetts programs are cited. School improvement partnerships were initiated in various forms in each school district in response to the rapid changes in the respective school systems' student population, desegregation, and the racial/ethnic/cultural diversity of the students being served. The MESTEP (Math, English, Science, Technology Education Project) is also cited as a project for the preparation of science and mathematics teachers at a time when few with these skills were interested in teaching as a profession. This program links the local school districts, industry, and the university in a very innovative and unique partnership designed to support public education partnership themes.

Partnerships are a vehicle, a means for educational systems to develop to meet the needs of our future. School partnerships must develop slowly and carefully with guidelines of mutual trust, respect, sharing and cooperation. Dr. Comer and his partners in New Haven voiced these same concerns. The difficult beginnings of their project support these words of caution. All parties must be viewed as vital and important members of the group. Each must respect the opinions, expertise, and resources of the other members.

Common features of interactive partnerships between schools and organizations include: involvement of new resources, promotion of a sharing of information, seeking greater utilization of community resources, reduction of the isolation of the school community, encouragement of decision-making and problem-solving, and assurances that they are voluntary, cooperative and flexible.

The critical points in school partnerships include:

- identification of the diverse interests of the partner
- agreeing on shared activities
- implementing joint programs
- planning for future efforts

Improvements in schools will begin as teachers become more willing to share their personal and professional concerns with others, as schools view their dilemmas in terms of ill-structured problems and all parties begin to turn away from dated and traditional avenues of resolution to more creative, alternative methods of problem solving.

Summary

Criticizing urban educational institutions is currently a popular pastime in the media. Such criticisms are not unfounded, however, too often individuals are blamed for circumstances which are completely out of their control. True urban educators spend time and effort developing the skill and understanding of the cultural phenomena which are so much a part of education today. Blaming and finger pointing will not change the trend. Only insight, understanding, and a desire to encompass change will support the drive to make our urban schools an extension of the desire that exists in each one of us to offer our children a bright and limitless tomorrow.

The next part of this chapter will present the history and philosophy of the urban parochial school model in the United States. Research in this area will be presented and examples of successful programs will be reviewed.

Urban Education/Catholic Schools

In the midst of the outrage in the quality of America's public schools we are reminded of the success of the Catholic parochial schools network in the United States and its record of success in our urban neighborhoods.

A surface reaction to the success of these schools would include discussions about the ability to select students, expel or remove students who don't comply with standards, a clientele of predominantly middle class students, students with no special education requirements. There exists a wealth of research, touching on these subjects which yields surprising results.

The fact is that these schools are extremely successful in urban neighborhoods. A 1979 study directed by the Catholic League for Religious and Civil

Rights (Cibulka et. al. 1982) focused on the service record of parochial schools in inner city neighborhoods in New York, Newark, Washington, D.C., Detroit, Chicago, Milwaukee, New Orleans, and Los Angeles. The data provided information on the racial, ethnic, religious, and socioeconomic backgrounds of the students being serviced.

Four themes of the report were 1) the quality of education offered to minority children of low socioeconomic status, 2) the sacrifices made by parents and staff to provide this type of education, 3) the positive school climate, 4) the future of these schools (O'Brien and Zewe 1981, 11).

Schools surveyed had minority populations of 70 percent and were targeted as Title I schools by the federal government, meeting standards to receive antipoverty funds. Despite the fact that these families were already experiencing financial hardship the parents were able to sacrifice in order to meet tuition payments ranging for $300 to $750 with a median of approximately $350 (O'Brien and Zewe 1981, 11).

Income levels were below the national median income level for American families which was approximately $20,000 in 1978. Half of the families in the survey reported incomes of $10,000, 72 percent incomes of less than $15,000. In addition, they had larger families, more single parent families and are faced with the same urban challenges as their public school counterparts yet they feel that the quality of education which their children receive is well worth such sacrifices (Cibulka, et. al. 1982, 34-37).

High on their list of reasons for selecting parochial education was the quality of the schools and their track record for academic achievement. The theme of religious and moral standards was very important, especially important when we consider the deterioration of these standards in our current society (Cibulka et. al. 1982, 66-73).

An often cited example of a success inner city parochial school is Holy Angels School in Chicago, the largest all African American Roman Catholic school in the United States. In a recent Journal of Negro Education (Spring 1989) article, "Holy Angles: Pocket of Excellence," Portia Shields documents the history and school climate of this most effective urban institution. As with many of the nation′s urban parochial schools, Holy Angels was established by immigrants almost one hundred years ago and has gone through transformations throughout its history. Periods of affluence and decline which have paralelled most urban communities have also touched Holy Angles until it now services a predominantly inner-city, welfare population.

Despite these barriers the school is noted for its high academic standards, strong disciplinary code, intense parental involvement demands, and dedicated teaching staff. The role of families is particularly important. "Holy Angels accepts families rather than individuals." Families are seen as an integral component in a child's success or failure. The cooperation and support of the family unit is expected and even mandated. Report cards must be picked up by parents, monthly school meetings are required as are regular conferences with classroom teachers. Parents are held responsible for overseeing nightly homework assignments and are required to sign homework to verify that they have reviewed the work (Shields 1989, 206).

In addition, parents are instructed in how to provide an atmosphere and environment for learning in their homes. Parents must prohibit their children from viewing television and from outside play during the school week. Such practices are required to emphasize the importance of study and concentration of one's efforts on schoolwork.

Although many may find these restrictions prohibitive, the school rewards its parents by giving them positive feedback in the form of parent certificates, medals, and awards as their children achieve. Parents even go up to the stage with their children at graduation.

The success of the schools is underscored by its long waiting list (over 1,000 children), by its high rate of college attendance (80 percent) and by the number of former graduates, now parents, who send their children to the school.

Faculty members include nuns, lay teachers, and instructors from a teacher volunteer program. The principal, Fr. Paul Smith, is an innovative leader who recruits teachers from around the country. Teachers are trained in an "excellence doctrine" which underscores the theme that all children can learn despite their environmental difficulties. The pupil-teacher ratio is higher than public schools and is currently 37-1. Still the students achieve.

Classes are held for twelve months of the year with a short August vacation. Extended day provisions are available to meet the needs of working parents. Remedial classes are required on Saturday for students who need extra help or who are inattentive during regular class time. Children also do volunteer work with the elderly.

The success of the program is indisputable. The cooperative nature and partnership with the family are the groundwork and foundation on which this program is built.

> . . . total family involvement and commitment are non-negotiable at Holy Angels, and the school's leadership makes absolutely no excuses for its strict policies. Holy Angels demands excellence, expects excellence, and achieves optimum effort from its faculty, parents, and students. It is this thoroughly engaged partnership that makes the difference (Shields 1989, 210).

Effective schools research would corroborate the success of such an institution. Purkey and Smith (1983) in"Effective Schools: A Review," targeted four process variables for effective schools:

1. collaborative planning and congenial relationships
2. sense of community
3. clear goals and high expectations commonly shared
4. order and discipline

In addition, the following organization and structural variables were noted:

1. school-site management
2. instructional leadership
3. staff stability
4. curriculum articulation and organization
5. schoolwide staff development
6. parental involvement and support
7. schoolwide recognition of academic success
8. maximized learning time
9. district support

Holy Angels reflects the components of the research and underscores the importance of these strategies. In Effective Catholic Schools: An Exploration (1984) an executive summary sponsored by the National Center for Research in Total Catholic Education of the National Catholic Educational Association the authors found that Catholic schools were able to do a great deal with very limited resources. However, the strongest achievements are the ability to build a sense of community, human relations, social justice and racial harmony. They stress the worth of the individual and a belief that the meaning of life encompasses more than self interest in a material world. "It is the orientation toward personal goodness that binds together the culture of the Catholic school and ultimately makes it work as a social institution" (Bryk et al. 1984, 102).

A doctoral dissertation by Mary Leanne Welch (1988) supports the effective Catholic school research. Her study determined and compared the perceptions of administrators, teachers, and parents in terms of the role of the Catholic school in relation to anticipated student outcomes and behaviors. Conclusions indicated a desire to develop positive self worth and self esteem as one of the most important goals of this educational system.

In addition, Holy Angels appears to reflect Dorothy Rich's "non-deficit" approach to learning (Rich 1988). All families are able to offer learning experiences despite limitation of economics or environment. Rev. James P. Lyke, auxiliary bishop of Cleveland, reflects this in his article "Sharing the Gifts of the Black Community." (1987) He is a product of a single-parent, welfare mother who chose Catholic schools as a means of achieving a good education for her children and a vehicle for social movement.

He credits urban Catholic schools as a model learning centers which offer an educational philosophy and curriculum which "responds to the deepest aspirations of parents and society itself." He feels that these schools offer a sense of community to inner city neighborhoods reflective of traditional family and cultural values. This sense of traditional values and strong community ties is also reflected in the work and writings of James Comer (1980) and Lightfoot (1978). Dr. Comer feels that this connection, this sense of belonging, is crucial to the child's development (Comer 1980).

The seven "gifts" highlighted by Rev. Lyke are:

1. the gift of Black culture and values informed by faith
2. Scripture's centrality to Black lives

3. freedom rooted in truth
4. reconciliation and the task to labor for justice
5. spirituality
6. family kinship
7. ecumenism, a deepening awareness of other religions

The school incorporates these goals into its setting and provides a "religious grounding" which our urban communities so need. These strengths of the Black inner city community underscore human values and self-esteem regardless of socioeconomic background and racial/ethnic differences.

Catholic schools in our inner cities offer hope. They respond to parents′ hope to give their children the education which will enable them to escape the bonds of poverty and make their way in the world of the 21st century. Catholic schools have traditionally served the urban poor. Initially, they were established by immigrant groups of German, Irish, and Italians trying to acclimate themselves to a new environment (Ford 1979). Today these schools continue to serve urban immigrant populations and the economically deprived. The theme of positive school climate and belief in the basic ability of each child to achieve is crucial in overcoming the barriers of poverty and hopelessness felt by our "underclass" inner city neighborhoods. It is interesting to note that in the year 1983-84 11.1 percent of the students attending Catholic Schools were not Catholic (Bredeweg 1985, 11). This is an increase of 8.4 percent since the 1969-70 school year.

St. Peter's school in lower Manhattan, established in 1800, was America's first inner city Catholic school and the Church's tradition of educating the urban poor has continued since that time (Ford 1979, 9). These schools continue to serve the needs of the community in a way which the public schools have thus far been incapable of achieving.

An Inner City Private Elementary Schools: A Study (1982) Cibulka, O'Brien and Zewe argue that parents are attracted to parochial schools not because they feel the public schools are bad but, that the parochial schools are better. In addition, the responsiveness of these schools to parents needs and concerns is superior. Three forms of responsiveness are targeted: anticipatory responsiveness, demand responsiveness, and structural responsiveness (Cibulka et. al. 1982, 74-81).

Anticipatory responsiveness is the inclination of the administration to act according to the preferences of its constituents whether those preferences are clearly expressed or not. It can be a "shared preference"--common attitudes about common goals or it can be reprisal avoidance, acting due to the anticipation of negative consequences if they do not. Demand responsiveness occurs when constituents express their desires thus placing demands on the school. The demands are clearly expressed and responses expected usually related to immediate problems. Structural responsiveness refers to the decision making mechanisms established to advise or make formal decisions in the form of committees or parent councils (Cibulka et. al. 1982, 76-80).

Private schools are able to be more responsive due to the fact that they rely and are dependent upon their parents and the tuition they pay for their very existence. Each parish school responds to the particular needs of their parish, neighborhood, and school population, thus incorporating the diverse needs of their racial/ethnic/socioeconomic populations (Cibulka, et. al. 1982, 99).

Shared preferences in this survey included an emphasis on moral values, religious instruction, emphasis on homework, racial history and pride and a belief that parent choice in schools is important. In addition a belief that minority children can receive a quality education and a belief that parents are able to trust teachers and that parents should visit the child's class were held by more than 50 percent of the respondents (Cibulka et. al. 1982, 147-168).

Demand responsiveness received a high score in 80 percent of the responses. The majority of parents believe that the schools responded to expressed parental wishes. The feeling that schools require parents to be more involved with a child's education than public schools is held by over 90 percent of the respondents (Cibulka et. al. 1982, 79-80).

This parental perception of responsiveness creates an atmosphere of loyalty and commitment to the schools and its success. The open and responsive school climate allows parents an opportunity and willingness to become involved. The respect shown to parents, their ideas, and opinions is very reassuring and reinforcing to them and allows an open and ongoing exchange and cooperation. It reinforces a climate of "mutual strength and commitment where both parents and school officials bring clear expectations to the schools and where these expectations are commonly adhered to" (Cibulka et. al. 1982, 81).

Factors influencing parental choice of a Catholic school were targeted in doctoral research by John Calareo (1989). The purpose of his study was to identify the rationale for the choice of Catholic schools by administrators, faculty, and parents.

Findings concluded that Catholic schools were valued most highly for their records of academic achievement not solely for religious education by all parties--parents, administrators, and teachers. Values education, religious instruction, strong discipline, and the personal attention received by students were all considered of secondary importance in deciding upon Catholic education.

Many believe that it is easier to involve private school parents due to the previously mentioned factors of school choice and their financial commitment of tuition. A study of parental involvement practices in five inner city Catholic secondary schools looked at this problem and found that these factors were not directly linked to involvement levels. Schools in Los Angeles, New York, St. Louis, Philadelphia, and the District of Columbia were studied (Bauch 1987).

This study, conducted by Patricia A. Bauch of the Catholic University of America, found that most of these parents do not become involved in the school and even parents who were active participated infrequently. The highest levels of involvement were for tasks and activities directly related to academic growth and progress. schools with a strong academic focus have better parental involvement. Degrees and percentages of involvement may not be as important as the form of involvement.

Findings of the study include the following (in summary):

-- The form of parent involvement in these schools was centered primarily on the child's school progress.

-- The amount of parent involvement in these schools is not high.

-- Schools with strong teaching traditions may be perceived by families and schools as requiring less parent involvement.

-- Schools that are focused more academically are likely to have higher levels of parent involvement than those that are more custodial in their orientation.

-- Black parents in these black schools appeared to be more actively involved, in spite of the high number of working mothers, single parent families, and different religious affiliation.

> -- School size and level of parent education facilitate parent involvement. A combination of parent and school factors seem to influence parent involvement. (Bauch 1989, 82)

Summary

Catholic schools in the inner city have established a track record of successful educational practices servicing the very students who are failing so badly in the public school system. The personal and financial sacrifices which parents endure to afford this education for their children is evident. The Catholic school is a path to educational achievement and future success is recognized by both Catholic and non-Catholics alike. High academic standards are upheld even though substantially less money is spent on materials and salaries. Dedicated teachers toil at a fraction of the salary of their public school counterparts. The shared sense of mission, satisfaction, and success underwrites their dedication.

The survey of the literature presented forms a foundation and framework for a deeper and more involved exploration of many of the factors presented on this topic. The ideas, theories, and findings of these authors peeks our interest and curiosity about the varied aspects of this theme. Again and again, in study after study, we find that these noted researchers advocate a more formal, thoughtful, organized and conscientious approach by principals and administrators in the development of school-parent programs. An awareness of who your parents are, their needs, desires, limitations and capabilities is crucial to planning. Without this insight schools will not hold an accurate view of their total school community. The purpose of this research is to assist in the development of this knowledge by providing a tool which will assist educators in programs development and thus provide a basis for further study.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODS

Research Methodology

A descriptive study utilizing a questionnaire format was the instrument used to determine the barriers which prevent parents in an urban parochial school from becoming more involved and active in their child's educational experience.

Descriptive research presents facts or current conditions concerning the nature of a group of persons, number of objects, or a class of events, and may involve procedures of induction, analysis classification, enumeration, or measurement (Good 1972, 208). Descriptive survey studies secure evidence concerning an existing condition, identify standards or norms in which to compare present conditions in order to plan the next step, and to determine how to make the next step.

Survey experts generally agree that studies should be quantitative, requiring standardized information from or about the population under study. However, variations may be present as to who the subjects are, how they wee selected, what data is to be collected and in what way, and how the data is to be analyzed. The aim is to produce studies of high quality keeping in mind the following concepts:

1. the research report has a distinctive form, definite population, goals to be attained, and appropriate technical details
2. original observations have been taken
3. work proceeds with care and consideration
4. data is summarized in a systematic way
5. usefulness of the data gathered as applied to future work. (Good 1972, 120)

Research Design

This questionnaire was a document which consisted of a number of questions designed to gather specific information which is targeted by the researcher and her research project. The respondent was required to answer the questions by himself, without the aid of the researcher. The responses were then analyzed for comparisons between groups, frequencies of responses, and response patterns which were of particular interest.

In devising the parental questionnaire used to survey the population the following were considered:

-- the respondents can read and understand the questions or items

-- the respondents possesses the information to answer the questions

-- the respondent is willing to answer the questions honestly (Wolf 1990, 374)

The design phase addressed the following questions concerning parental barriers and analyzed the responses in a concrete and measurable fashion:

1. Did urban parents in this setting feel that the schools is open and available to them?
2. What were the parental attitudes regarding the importance of education?
3. What were the current practices of involvement both in the home and in the school?
4. What specific school-based activities influenced parental attendance at school-based function?
5. What were the environmental factors which impede parental attendance and participation in school functions?
6. What additional concerns did these parents have regarding the school′s parent outreach efforts?
7. Were there response patterns which were unique to various ethnic and racial groups, grade levels or for male/female students?

8. Was a questionnaire such as this a practical tool for the administration to employ in the planning of parental involvement programs?

Based upon a pilot study given in the fall of 1989 the format and reliability of this questionnaire were appropriate to proceed with a more in depth study.

Pilot Study

In order to pre-test this project a pilot study was developed and administered to two classes in an urban elementary school in Boston, Massachusetts. This study was conducted with colleagues Frances Gamer and Robert Gaudet and the resulting survey designed collaboratively. The demographic breakdown of the population was approximately 93 percent minority with the non-White population being mostly Hispanic and African-American, with some Asians. Respondents were not asked to identify themselves by name or sex, but given the school population, most of the respondents were relatively young mothers.

The survey instrument consisted of 38 questions that could be answered easily and quickly. Respondents were asked anonymously to provide basic information concerning the number of children in the school, length of time in the system, language spoken at home, children's grade levels, and such. The actual questions dealt with parents' attitudes about the school, its teachers, the value of education, and the level of parents interaction with their children. A copy of this pilot questionnaire has been included.

In order to collect data, the surveys were sent home with the children to be given to the parents. Forty-eight surveys were distributed with forty being returned for a rate of 83.3 percent. Surveys were sent home in the language spoken by the parents as indicated on the school records. The data gathered seemed to represent honest answers to questions, especially since no identifying personal information was requested of the respondents.

The key areas identified in the survey as posing barriers to more parental participation are consistent with what is written in the literature and with teachers' observations over time. Some revision of the questionnaire was suggested as a result of the pilot project. Based upon results of this pilot study the decision was made to revise the questionnaire by removing some personal information questions, rearrange and regroup items, and to clarify vocabulary and responses.

Selection of Subjects

In this study the target setting was an inner-city parochial elementary school servicing White, African-American, Hispanic, and Asian students. The population referred to the students in grades one through eight in an urban parochial elementary school located in Boston, Massachusetts during the winter of 1990. The parents of these first through eighth grade parochial school students were the ultimate target. This population was chosen due to its ethnic and racial diversity and its location in an inner-city neighborhood.

The choices made in determining the process for this sample fit the following criteria for population selection:

1. objective
2. measurability
3. usability and worth
4. economy

In this study, objective referred to the overall purpose of the project under consideration. Measurability meant that the non-probabilistic sampling method would allow for computation of valid responses or sampling error. Usability meant that the procedures developed in this study could actually be carried out.

Economy referred to the productive use of the limited resources for data collection in order to complete the research project.

The population of the school was 220 students in grades one through eight. This breaks down to the following:

Black	44
White	70
Hispanic	91
Other	15

The school meets the federal guidelines for antipoverty funding under Chapter I and fifty children in the school were serviced in this program. All students in the school received questionnaires.

Instrumentation

As previously stated, the survey is the most widely used tool for obtaining descriptive and evaluation information in education. Here the primary concern was for a usable tool designed to analyze a problem currently existing and in making a contribution to the development of knowledge in the field of education.

The relationship the researcher has towards the population and problem being studied will have implications towards its success. Questions were designed through professional experience and library research in the field. In addition the questionnaire was reviewed with colleagues who currently teach in urban school systems and with the principal of the school being targeted. The resulting questionnaire was designed collaboratively with fellow graduate students. Each question was constructed with a clear idea of the attitudes and outcomes to be obtained.

The questionnaire was written in specific terms, avoiding complex or technical terms. Every attempt was made to minimize misunderstandings as to the intent of the questions,to clearly state meanings of the questions, eliminate bias in the answers, to minimize response time, to avoid embarrassing the respondents, and to present a clear sense of purpose. In order to insure confidentiality no identifying personal data such as names, addresses, homeroom numbers, family income, socioeconomic status, parental level of education, religious affiliation or employment was requested.

The attempt was made to present the questionnaire in a professional manner in order to facilitate responses. A letter of transmittal accompanied the questionnaire to underscore the seriousness and the purpose of this study and to validate the time and energy required of the respondents. The confidentiality of the responses was ensured and an expression of appreciation for their participation was included.

Questions were arranged in an orderly and systematic fashion. Questions were grouped into categories addressing parental feelings about the specific school, the opportunities which they had for involvement, the specific school practices which they attended, and the individual barriers which prohibited their active participation in the school community. Questions were categorized and arranged on a single page without continuation to the next page in order to cut down on frustration and confusion.

The survey consisted of 9 background questions, 28 closed questions with a corresponding 5 point attitudinal scale, and 1 open-ended question. The closed question format was designed to facilitate the tabulation of responses on the attitudinal scale. These questions are most appropriate when the researcher's objective is to classify the respondent, when there is little question as to the adequacy of the respondent information, when the respondent's opinions are well structured, when there are no major barriers to communication, and when the researcher is informed about the respondents. These closed questions provided responses on an attitudinal scale providing a structure of possible responses corresponding to a five-point rating scale. An open-ended question was included at the end of the questionnaire in order to allow parents to voice individual concerns and opinions.

It must be noted that the questionnaire was translated to meet the needs of the parents. School records indicated the language of preference for each student's family.

Procedures/Collection of Data

Questionnaires were distributed through the school administrative office to the homeroom teachers. Teachers distributed the envelopes containing the surveys to each child in their class. Envelopes included a letter of transmittal, the actual survey, and a return envelope. A return date was clearly indicated and reinforced by the homeroom teachers. As an incentive for return each child would receive a colored marking pencil when the envelope was returned to the office.

The time frame would encompass seven (7) school days. It was given out on Tuesday and was collected seven days later. The target was the second week in February. The following timeline was used:

February 1, 1991	Delivery of questionnaires to school
February 5, 1991	Distribution of questionnaires by homeroom teachers
February 6, through February 15, 1991	Collection of questionnaires by the office
February 15, 1991	Collection of questionnaires by researcher

The objective of this questionnaire was to allow parents to indicate to the school the various forms of involvement which they were able to maintain in the complex world of the 1990s. This involvement may be as simple as getting the children ready for school, assisting with homework, reading to the children, or taking an active role in the many programs which schools have to offer. It also allowed parents to indicate to the administration what areas are problematic for them and it allowed the school community an opportunity to address these issues.

Data Analysis

Data analysis begins from the time the questionnaire is distributed until the production of the final written document. The initial stages of gathering the data were the indicated dates in February. There were daily collections of all questionnaires. This process was continued for the dates specified. Each day a follow-up opportunity was given to replace any lost or damaged questionnaires.

This questionnaire was constructed and trial tested during the pilot study conducted in 1989-90 which was previously mentioned. The results of descriptive statistics from this pilot project seem to support the reliability and validity of this instrument and the justification of its use in this research project. Although every effort was made to ensure all safeguards a limitation of survey research is the issue of reliability and validity of the non-experimental study.

Analysis of closed questions utilized an attitudinal scale based upon a Likert model which had zero as an anchor point and had all responses relative to this initial point (Ellis 1968, 254). This scale is a ranking system of attitudes based upon weighted number responses. The data coding sheet appropriately coded questions with attitudinal responses. All data was then analyzed based upon statistical relevance to the major problem of parental barriers in an urban parochial elementary school.

Descriptive studies focus upon answering questions of fact based upon the data obtained from measurement techniques. Analysis was conducted using the SPSS-X

(Statistical Package for the Social Sciences-Version 10) computer software package. This analytic system supplied statistical procedures such as:

-- analysis of variables,

-- t-test computation, used to determine whether two means, proportions or correlation coefficients differ significantly from each other (Borg & Gall 1989, 356)

-- cross tabulation, frequencies between the variables produced from nominal, ordinal, or interval data (Ellis 1968, 152)

-- chi-square analysis, analytic presentation of data showing whether two or more variables are statistically independent or just what strength or form their relationships may be comprised of.

The analysis of the parent survey included:

1. Frequencies for each question for the whole sample of families in the school.
2. Frequencies and percentages for each question subgrouped by:
   a. race/ethnic group
   b. English-speaking vs. non-English speaking
   c. grade

These tables were formatted so that the subgroupings would be across the top and a question's responses will be along the rows. Each cell contained the count of people of the column's subgroup who circled a particular answer, the column percent (the percent of the subgroup who gave the answer), the row percent (the percent of those giving the answer who were in the subgroup), and the expected frequency (the number expected to be in the cell if there was no relationship between the subgroup and the answer to the question).

For each table a chi square statistic was calculated, evaluating the likelihood that the pattern of answers for the subgroups could have been found by chance. This test evaluates, for example, whether apparent differences in responses for different ethnic groups are within random variation or likely to be real ethnic differences.

Summary

A review of current educational literature underscores the need for an increased level of parental participation while school-based professionals in the field (also prevalent in the literature) cite a distinct lack of participation by parents. The objective of this research was to measure the target group's concern and attitudes in this area of inquiry and to use this data as tool for school-based program development as well as to add to the current research in the field of education. Even though other studies have attempted to address parental participation and involvement it is hoped that the objectives of this study will stimulate further inquiry and research in this most timely topic. In addition, this hands on tool may be adapted for practical application in urban school based settings of today. By using the results of research obtained in this study future collaborations will be looked upon in a more positive light than in the negative manner which is prevalent today.

The next chapter will review the research data focusing on the most interesting responses and response patterns as obtained from this questionnaire. Significant findings will be highlighted. Chapter V will present a summary of the study, an analysis of the specific strengths and weakness of the research as assessed by the researcher and finally recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER IV

DATA ANALYSIS

Chapter IV will now present an analysis of the data gathered through the methods and procedures described in the previous chapter. Through this analysis a picture of the school community and school climate will be developed. Initially, the responses will allow us to calculate a rate of return (response rate) and a breakdown of these returns by race, language and grade level. An analysis of who in the home completed the questionnaire will be presented and finally the crosstabulation of questionnaire responses by the variables of grade level, language and race will be tabulated. Significant results will be discussed.

School-Wide Returns

Completed questionnaires were collected on February 15, 1991 and included 187 responses for grades one through eight. Tallies for each class were as follows:

Grade One	33
Grade Two	18
Grade Three	28
Grade Four	29
Grade Five	24
Grade Six	18

Grade Seven	17
Grade Eight	20
TOTAL	187

This gives us a return of 187/222 questionnaires which may be calculated to a return rate of 84.2 percent of the questionnaires. The returns may be further analyzed in terms of the racial composition of the respondents. This summary is as follows:

African American	25
White	65
Hispanic	68
American Indian	1
Asian	7
Other	16

In addition this may be summarized in terms of the racial percentages of the returned questionnaires. Utilizing the SPSS-X data analysis these percentages may be calculated as valid percentages, that is percentages based upon the actual number of respondents who answered this item. Thus the five respondents who did not answer this question are not included in the percentages. These valid percentages are:

African American	13.7%
White	35.7%
Hispanic	37.4%

American Indian	.5%
Asian	3.8%
Other	8.8%

One interesting question asked the participants who in the household completed the questionnaire. Various options were offered to the respondents. The summary is as follows:

Mother	147
Father	24
Guardian	2
Brother/Sister	5
Other	6

This represents the following valid percentages, again based upon the SPSS-X data analysis:

Mother	79.5%
Father	13.0%
Guardian	1.1%
Brother/Sister	2.7%
Other	3.2%

These valid percentages represent the actual percentages based upon responses to this item, not based upon returns, since 2 questionnaires contained no response to this item.

Crosstabulations

Crosstabulations of the questionnaire responses were calculated by the variables of grade, race and language spoken. Analysis of these responses will be discussed in terms of the four cells which comprised the body of the questionnaire. The four cells include:

CELL A	Parental appraisal of the school experience and climate
CELL B	Parent interaction with the school and individual child
CELL C	Influences to attendance at school functions
CELL D	Barriers to attendance at school functions

Each of these cells will be discussed and analyzed in terms of response patterns, significant or outstanding response percentages, and responses which may be held significant when the chi-square analysis is applied, that is, questions which have a calculated significance of <.05.

Crosstabulations by Grade

Crosstabulations of questionnaire responses were calculated in terms of the grade level of the respondents' child. Significant results obtained by a Chi Square analysis level of less than .05 will be indicated.

Cell A

Seven questions were presented in this section of the questionnaire. Each question contained a response scale ranging from no opinion, strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree, with a point value of 0 for "no opinion" to 4 for "strongly disagree".

An overall view of the response to this section, in terms of grade level, indicated that parents either strongly agreed or agreed with all statements in this cell. The one exception was for the question referring to the school's attempt to address the needs of minority students. On this item 24 percent of the respondents answered "no opinion" when we analyzed the school-wide response. When viewed as a grade level response we find the following percentages:

Grade one	36.4%
Grade two	27.8%
Grade three	28.6%
Grade four	20.7%
Grade five	12.5%
Grade six	11.1%
Grade seven	11.8%
Grade eight	35.0%

Question two in this cell, "My child likes school," contained significant responses. Analysis of this question found a .004 level of significance. Only one response out of the 187 responses replied that they strongly disagreed with this statement and only 5 responded that they disagreed. The majority of responses, 95.7 percent stated that they either agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. Responses were as follows:

	Agree	Strongly Agree
Grade one	18.2%	78.8%
Grade two	77.8%	22.2%
Grade three	39.3%	57.1%
Grade four	65.5%	34.5%
Grade five	45.8%	54.2%
Grade six	72.2%	22.2%
Grade seven	70.6%	17.6%
Grade eight	65.0%	20.0%

With such strong responses to this question we may anticipate that parents will respond positively to items which directly relate to the school experience and school climate. If parents feel that their children are happy with school they will feel positively about the curriculum, staff, and standards of the particular school.

These overall positive responses would infer that this school has done much to set a positive tone for the importance of the role of the school in this community. Another strongly positive statement is underscored in the question "School is important to my child's future success." In this question 89 percent of all the respondents in each grade answered that they "strongly agreed" with this statement. Over 95 percent of the school-wide responses were in this "strongly agree" category.

Parents continued this positive response pattern when asked whether they felt welcomed at the school. The responses were as follows:

	Agree	Strongly Agree
Grade one	45.5%	51.5%
Grade two	33.3%	55.6%
Grade three	35.7%	64.3%
Grade four	31.0%	65.6%
Grade five	41.7%	58.3%
Grade six	55.6%	44.4%
Grade seven	52.9%	47.1%
Grade eight	65.0%	35.0%

Parents across the grades indicated that they felt that it was important to visit the school with only two parents in the whole school disagreeing with this statement and six parents indicating no opinion on the question. At each grade level over 91 percent of the parents indicated that visiting the school was an important effort for parents. Only one seventh grade parent disagreed with this statement.

Continuing this strong positive statement was the response to the item "Parental involvement is important." On this item negative responses were indicated by one first grade parent, one fifth grade parent, two sixth grade parents and one eighth grade parent, or 2.6 percent of the school. An additional 6 parents (3.2 percent) indicated that they had no opinion on this item. Thus, 94.1 percent of the parents school-wide gave positive responses.

Across the grades the responses were as follows:

	Agree	Strongly Agree
Grade one	36.4%	60.6%
Grade two	44.4%	50.0%
Grade three	28.6%	67.9%
Grade four	34.5%	65.5%
Grade five	37.5%	58.3%
Grade six	27.8%	50.0%
Grade seven	41.2%	52.9%
Grade eight	50.0%	40.0%

The last question in this cell investigated the parent-teacher relationship in the building. Again we have a strongly positive statement, however there were 16 (8.6 percent) responses of "no opinion" school wide. Only 1 parent in grade eight disagreed with the item. Responses were as follows:

	Agree	Strongly Agree
Grade one	60.6%	30.3%
Grade two	61.1%	22.2%
Grade three	60.7%	28.6%
Grade four	69.0%	27.6%
Grade five	54.2%	37.5%
Grade six	61.1%	33.3%
Grade seven	76.5%	23.5%
Grade eight	60.0%	20.0%

Based upon the results of the questions in this section it is obvious that this school has done much to foster positive attitudes in both its students and parents in terms of the importance of school and parent involvement in the home and school support network. It is important to note here that these parents have chosen this particular school instead of the local public schools, two of which are within walking distance of this building. The element of choice should be investigated to determine what role this plays in the learning environment and attitude of the home.

Cell B

The questions in this second section deal with the parent/child interaction in terms of academic support and encouragement. Parents were asked if they assisted children with homework, if they read with their children, and their interaction with the individual teacher and the school. Responses were on a scale consisting of "rarely", "once per week", "2-3 times per week", and "4 or more times per week." Each value was assigned a point from 1 for "rarely" to 4 for "4 or more times per week." Given the responses in the previous section one would expect that these responses would reflect strong and supportive practices on the part of parents. However, this was not always the case.

The first question in this cell inquired as to how often parents helped their children with their homework assignments. Responses in this section were varied and often surprising. Especially surprising was a 58.8 percent "rarely" response by sixth grade parents. Percentages of "rarely" responses were quite high for grades six, seven, and eight with grade seven's response 31.3 percent and grade eight's response 40 percent. The lower grades, one through 5, received high responses in the "4 or more times per week" category with over a 20 point drop in these response percentages for grades 6 through 8. One would expect that the students in the lower grades would need parental assistance with homework assignments. However, the responses for the middle school grades reflect nationwide trends of parental interaction, that is, parents in this age group tend to be less involved with their children's homework especially in the areas of reading and math (Dauber and Epstein 1989). These "rarely" responses are quite interesting:

	Rarely
Grade one	6.5%
Grade two	11.8%
Grade three	11.1%
Grade four	3.4%
Grade five	8.3%
Grade six	58.8%
Grade seven	31.3%
Grade eight	40.0%

In contract to this parents in grades one through five helped their children a great deal with homework responding in high percentages for the response of "4 or more times per week."

	4 or more times per week
Grade one	61.3%
Grade two	70.6%
Grade three	48.1%
Grade four	62.2%
Grade five	45.8%

Grade six	23.5%
Grade seven	18.9%
Grade eight	25.0%

The chi square statistic calculated for this item was 58.8 and the significance level was .00.

Two questions in this Cell dealt with the amount of time which is spent with these children to support reading skills. Parents were asked how often they read to their child, and on another question how often their child reads to them. One would expect that parents who have expressed such strong support of education would show high levels of involvement in the reading process.

Question 2 referred to the effort parents make to read to their child. Responses continued on the scale of rarely to 4 or more times per week. Given the positive responses in Cell A it would be expected that parents, especially in the lower grades, as in the previous question, would make a real effort to read to their children. However, 48.6 percent of the parents responded that they "rarely" read to their child. This does allow that 51.4 percent do read to their children from 2 to 4 more times per week. As would be expected the responses in the "rarely" category were quite high in grades four through eight ranging from 48.3 percent to 82.4 percent. The significance level calculated for this item was an extremely significant .00.

In direct relation to this item is question 3 which inquired as to how often children read to their parents. Of the parents who responded 54.4 percent stated that children read to them from "2-3" or "4 or more times per week." As would be expected in light of the previous question, responses of "rarely" were highest in grades 6, 7, and 8. The level of significance calculated for this item was .0007. Responses in grades one through five indicated that parents made a real effort to have children read to them at home. Total percentages for responses of 2 to 4 or more times per week were as follows:

Grade one	65.5%
Grade two	94.5%
Grade three	60.7%
Grade four	51.7%
Grade five	66.6%
Grade six	16.7%
Grade seven	37.6%
Grade eight	30.0%

Interaction with the school was analyzed in terms of parents opportunities to talk with the teachers, the ability to attend parent-teacher conferences, and the most opportune time to schedule school functions.

Parents indicated that they had opportunities to talk with teachers at least once per month or once per term. Across the grades there was a tendency to meet with teachers once per term, which would correspond with the post-report card parent-teacher conferences. Seven parents responded that they never had such an opportunity and two parents indicated that they only met with teachers once per year.

The school has scheduled parent-teacher conferences to correspond with the report card schedule. Question 5 leads us into the main concern of this study, the traditional parent teacher conference attendance. Of those responding, 87.2 percent of the parents responded "often" or "sometimes" when asked if they attended these scheduled meetings. This indicates that parents are anxious and concerned about how their children are doing and supports the item regarding the importance of education in the child's future success. Responses in this "often" category were as follows:

Grade one	57.6%
Grade two	77.8%
Grade three	50.0%
Grade four	62.1%
Grade five	70.8%

Grade six	61.1%
Grade seven	58.8%
Grade eight	45.0%

This item had a chi-square value of 42.0 and a significance level of .0041.

The last question in this cell ask parents when they would like the school to schedule parent-teacher conferences and school-based parental activities. Over 50 percent of all parents at all grade levels indicated that the evening was the best time for them to attend such functions.

The results of questions in this section indicated that parents are quite interested in their children's education and academic performance. Direct interaction with the child's learning appears to decrease as the child advances in grade and the reasons for this decline would provide an interesting area for future study. These parents have indicated that they make a real effort to interact with both the school and with the specific homeroom teacher. A survey to teachers regarding how they feel about these same questions could prove interesting.

Cell C

Cell C deals with the question of what variables might influence an increased level of parental participation at school functions and would be useful to the individual school as a basis for future program planning. Guest speakers, films, student awards, entertainment by the children, refreshments, teacher conferences, and door prizes were presented as possible incentives. An overall analysis of this cell indicates that student centered issues and presentations were the best incentive. Parents enjoy seeing their children receive awards or present some form of entertainment. Also, meeting with the teachers was very important to them and supports the responses in the previous section.

The first item investigated the role of a guest speaker. Of those responding, 85 percent indicated that they would be very interested or somewhat interested if the school invited a speaker on various topics of interest such as drug education, childcare, discipline. Responses across the grades were fairly consistent. Six parents indicated that they were not interested and 22 responded "no opinion".

The presentation of a film or video on a relevant topic yielded similar responses. The majority of responses fell into the very interested (40.1 percent) and somewhat interested categories (42.8 percent). With the number of video presentations currently available this information could be useful in future program planning.

Student award presentations, as expected, were a strong incentive for parental attendance. Seventy percent of parents indicated that they would be "very interested" in attending such presentations. Grade level responses were as follows:

Grade one	69.7%
Grade two	55.6%
Grade three	71.4%
Grade four	86.2%
Grade five	66.7%
Grade six	66.7%
Grade seven	82.4%
Grade eight	55.0%

Interestingly, 2 parents (1 in grade one, and 1 in grade six) indicated that they were not interested (1.1 percent of the school population) and 6 indicated they had no opinion (3.2 percent of the respondents). Such presentations would have to include awards which did not center solely on academic achievement.

Student entertainment at all grade levels is a good method of drawing parents into the school. One hundred thirty nine parents (74.3 percent) responded that they were very interested in attending functions with this theme. Responses of "somewhat interested" accounted for an additional 22.5 percent. This indicates that 96.8 percent of the parents would attend with entertainment by their children. Only 1 parent indicated that they would not be interested and that was a first grade parent. Also the highest number of "no opinion" responses was also in grade on where 3 parents or 9.1 percent of the class gave this response.

In support of the item in the previous cell parent teacher conferences were also a high incentive with 80.7 percent indicating that they were very interested and an additional 13.9 percent somewhat interested. Grades 2, 4 and 6 showed the highest percentages in this area.

Door prizes and refreshments receive marginal support. Both receive high responses in the categories of "no opinion" and "not interested." Over 33.3 percent of the second and fifth grade respondents indicated that refreshment held no interest for them. Over 45 percent of the second and fifth grade parents responded that they were not interested in door prizes.

Conclusions from this section emphasize the value of choosing parent presentations which have a direct relationship to the child and his academic social growth.

Cell D

The fourth section of questions involved an analysis of those barriers which parents found played a role in their attendance at school functions. Issues of safety, transportation, finance, schedules of work and family life, as well as child care issues were presented. Finally the ongoing issue of the existing language barriers was examined.

As previously mentioned in Chapter I, the school is located in an inner city urban area and its surrounding neighborhood has a high crime rate. Despite this, responses across the grades generally indicated that this played no role in whether they were able to attend school functions. Contrasting responses were as follows:

	No Effect	Great Deal
Grade one	63.3%	10.0%
Grade two	64.7%	17.6%
Grade three	46.4%	32.1%
Grade four	65.5%	13.8%
Grade five	41.7%	16.7%

Grade six	33.3%	50.0%
Grade seven	41.2%	23.5%
Grade eight	47.4%	47.4%

We see a wide range of responses for this question. The chi-square calculation for this item was 33.4 and the significance level was .0411, indicating that there is a high level of significance in the responses to this question.

Likewise, transportation issues were not a concern for 60.4 percent of the respondents with all grades giving high responses of "no effect" for this question. This may be true due to the fact that the majority of students live in this parish and thus are within walking distance of the church and the school. Finances played little or no role in parental ability to attend scheduled activities. Over 50 percent of respondents at all grade levels indicated that this was not a major concern for them and thus responded "no effect." The remainder of the respondents indicated some level of concern but the highest number of those indicating that this was a major barrier was 5 in grades three, six and eight.

The hectic style of family life, parental responsibilities and work schedules all affected parental attendance. Work schedules seemed to play the most important role with over 73 percent of the parents responding "a great deal" or "somewhat" to this question. Combined percentages for these responses were:

Grade one	77.4%
Grade two	68.6%
Grade three	78.5%
Grade four	58.6%
Grade five	87.5%
Grade six	61.2%
Grade seven	60.6%
Grade eight	84.2%

An even 50 percent of the parents indicated that childcare was not an issue. Higher percentages occurred in grades four through eight as might be expected. Often parents of students in this age level view the children as mature enough to sit for younger siblings or feel that the children are able to care for themselves. The school could alleviate the concerns of parents by providing some form of childcare at the school during events. Older students could be utilized and supervised by volunteer adults.

With a large population of non-English speaking parents one would anticipate that the language barrier would produce a strong response in the category of "a great deal." This question is best analyzed in terms of crosstabulations by language spoken and will be addressed in that section of this paper. In terms of schoolwide responses however, almost 80 percent of all respondents and over 77 percent of all respondents in grades one through seven indicated that language barriers were not an issue. The percentage dropped to 52.6 percent in grade eight where 26.3 percent of the respondents felt that this was a real concern.

Medical problems were not an issue for 70.9 percent of the respondents although 21.7 percent of the fifth grade parents and 21.1 percent of the eighth grade parents felt it played a significant role. Thirteen parents in the school indicated that medical problems presented such a barrier and it is hoped that they make such concerns known to the teachers so that provisions may be made to meet individual needs.

Crosstabulations by Language

One of the greatest obstacles faced by our inner city populations in their daily life is the issue of language. As the immigrant population in our large urban areas grows, more and more of the children serviced will not consider English their primary language and will come from homes where no one speaks, reads, or writes in English. How do schools address these concerns? How do these parents feel about their role in their chosen educational institution? How can schools alter their traditional routines to include these students and their parents? These are some of the questions which we will attempt to address.

This section of data analysis will examine the responses to the survey administered to this school in terms of the language spoken with the individual child in the home. Although English is the predominant language spoken in this setting there does indeed exist a number of families who could be aided by some acknowledgement of the language issue. Their day to day relationship with the school, their children, and the parent outreach efforts will be examined and compared to English speaking respondents.

An analysis of languages spoken in the home with these students is as follows:

	Students	Valid Percent
English	122	67.0%
Spanish	32	17.6%
Creole	1	.5%
Other	27	14.8%

Other here refers to parents who may have checked two or more languages, each of which would have included a language other than English or who may have indicted an Asian or African language. The valid percent refers to the percentage of participants who actually answered this item since 5 respondents did not complete this question.

Clearly, and as expected, English is spoken by the majority of students and their families. However, this means that 33 percent or one third of the school population faces some challenge when interacting with the traditional school bureaucracy where no faculty member possesses skill in a foreign language. Such a concern is difficult for a small private school to address when faced with limited budgets and available resources. However, due to this the researcher is able to perhaps obtain a clearer picture of parental attitudes and feelings than in a public school where court orders and mandated programs address the very issue of language.

The crosstabulation of race by language provided much information. White respondents all spoke English with their children. Eighty-eight percent of the African American parents also spoke English while one spoke Creole and two indicated that they spoke another language. Seventeen percent of the Hispanic parents spoke English with their children while 47 percent spoke Spanish and 35 percent indicated"other" which includes use of both languages. American Indian parents and Asian parents all spoke English and of the parents who did not fit into the above distribution, all spoke English. Ten parents refused to answer this question. The school traditionally asks non-English speaking parents to bring an interpreter with them for conferences or utilizes an older student as an assistant. There appeared to be no method for written communication which specifically addressed the needs of non-English speaking parents and families.

As previously stated, questionnaires were predominantly completed by mothers of the students. Sixty nine percent of these mother spoke English, 16.2 percent spoke Spanish and 14.1 percent spoke another language for a total of 78.9 percent being completed by mothers. Twenty-two percent of those questionnaires stating that another language was spoken were completed by fathers. This question computed to a chi-square statistic of 40.7 and a strong significance level of .0003.

Cell A

The importance of school was underscored by all responding parents. Ninety-five percent of the parents strongly agreed that school was important to the child's success in the future. Ninety-five percent of the English speaking parents and ninety percent of the Hispanic parents also gave this strongly positive statement. No parents of any language group disagreed with this statement.

All groups, regardless of language, felt that their child liked school. At least 90 percent in each group agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. This gives a very positive comment on how this school functions on a day to day basis. Only four English speaking parents and one Spanish-speaking parent showed any level of disagreement with this statement. The bottom line here is that this school stresses positive feelings toward school and education.

Do these parents feel welcome in the school? Again we find positive responses. Only 1 parent, an English speaking parent disagreed with this statement. Three English speaking parents responded with "no opinion" but all other responses were "agree" or "strongly agree." High praise for an urban school. In connection to this question the statement "It is important for parents to visit the school" also drew strong responses from each language group. Over 88 percent of all language groups either agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. Teachers were viewed as responsive to parents needs by all groups.

Parental involvement was important to all language groups. Ninety two percent of the English and 100 percent of the Spanish and Creole respondents either agreed or strongly agreed to the importance of this interaction. Interestingly one English speaking parent strongly disagreed and 3 others disagreed that parental involvement was important. These were the only negative responses and a further investigation of the reasons for such responses would be very interesting.

The question of minority relations was briefly touched by the inquiry as to whether the school addressed the needs of these students. One hundred percent of those strongly disagreeing with this statement were English speaking. Seventy-one percent agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. A high level of English speaking respondents, (19 parents or 23.8 percent) had no opinion on this statement as did 12.5 percent of the Hispanic and 33.3 percent of those categorized as other. This item had one of the highest levels of no opinion in the survey.

Cell B

Direct parental interaction in terms of homework and reading was significant. Over 45 percent of all parents helped their children with homework four or more times per week. Despite this high percentage, 38.7 percent of the Spanish speaking parents stated that they rarely helped their children as did 25 percent of the parents stated that they rarely helped their children as did 25 percent of the parents who spoke languages included in the category labeled "other." This would seem to indicate one area of concern where language difficulties should be addressed. This item yielded a chi-square value of 22.1 and a significance level of .0085 indicating that these responses are highly significant to researchers.

When parents were asked if they read to their children a surprising number indicated that they rarely do. Responses were as follows:

	Rarely
English	46.3%
Spanish	54.8%
Other	48.1%

Eighty six respondents replied that they rarely read to their children. This calculates to 47.8 percent of the school. The chi-square value of this item was 17.6 and the significance level was .0391.

Responses to whether children read to their parents was almost evenly spread across the possible choices with no heavy dominance towards any one group or responses. However, 34.4 percent of the Spanish speaking parents replied that they rarely had their children read to them as did 26.1 percent of the English speaking parents. Language barriers must be considered as impacting on these last two questions as may work and family responsibilities.

Parent and teacher relations were examined in terms of opportunities to talk to teachers and parental attendance at scheduled parent-teacher conferences. The tradition of a parent/teacher conference once per term is the usual method of communication and was the predominant response of all groups. Responses included:

	Once per term
English	52.2%
Spanish	65.6%
Creole	100.0%
Other	72.7%

Some parents indicated that they never had the opportunity to talk to the teachers. Of these 9.4 percent were Spanish speaking and 3.5 percent English speaking.

In conjunction with this question, 60 percent of the parents stated that they often attended scheduled conferences. Sixty five percent of English speaking parents, 44 percent of Spanish speaking parents, and 59 percent of "others" gave this response. This was complemented by the response "sometimes" which, when added to the "often" category tells us that at least 85 percent of the parents, regardless of language, utilize this method of parent/teacher communication.

As in our analysis of responses by grades the overwhelming majority of parents in all language categories favor scheduling school functions in the evening hours. At least 69 percent of all respondents chose this alternative. Evening hours were chosen by the following percentages of respondents:

English	75.0%
Spanish	71.9%
Other	69.2%

The only Creole respondent selected the morning hours. The safety factor of the neighborhood appears to play a small role when scheduling meetings. It may be suggested that childcare and work schedules override these safety factor. Experience supports the fact that teachers do not favor evening meetings and this could be substantiated by polling the school's staff.

Cell C

When we examined what brought parents to school, responses indicated that speakers, films, student awards, and student entertainment programs all sparked interest levels for these language groups. Responses among the groups were very similar. It appears that refreshments, and door prizes do not have a great influence and both questions drew high responses in "no opinion" and "not interested" categories. Examples are as follows:

Door Prizes	English	Spanish	Creole	Other
no opinion	21.3%	40.6%	100.0%	25.9%
not interested	29.5%	21.9%	0.0%	37.0%

Refreshments	English	Spanish	Creole	Other
no opinion	18.0%	9.4%	0.0%	14.8%
not interested	22.1%	25.0%	0.0%	22.2%

On the other hand presentations which are child-centered awards entertainment, and conferences were strong attendance influences. Responses are as follows:

Student Awards	English	Spanish	Creole	Other
very interested	65.6%	71.9%	100.0%	85.2%
somewhat interested	30.3%	21.9%	0.0%	11.1%
TOTALS	95.9%	93.8%	100.0%	96.3%

Child Entertain	English	Spanish	Creole	Other
very interested	78.7%	62.5%	100.0%	66.7%
somewhat interested	18.9%	28.1%	0.0%	33.3%
TOTALS	97.6%	90.6%	100.0%	100.0%

Conferences	English	Spanish	Creole	Other
very interested	80.3%	78.1%	100.0%	85.2%
somewhat interested	12.3%	18.8%	0.0%	14.8%
TOTALS	92.6%	96.9%	100.0%	100.0%

Based on these strong response figures educators should attempt to provide programs that capitalize and include these items. Parents' pride in their children and their achievements cannot be overlooked. Attempts should be made to include all children in some form so that none feel excluded.

Cell D

The section on specific attendance barriers was very interesting and produced results which had significant research findings. When the variables were crosstabulated with language spoken with the child we view a picture which has implications for program planning and change.

The issue of safety was and has been one of the traditional excuses given by both parents and teachers for low parental attendance at school-based functions. Here we are able to see significant differences between response patterns based upon language differences. Sixty one percent of the English speaking respondents felt that safety was not an issue at all while 48.3

percent and 37.0 percent of the Spanish and other respondents respectively felt that it was a great problem. Ten participants did not even answer this question. When we look at the school-wide analysis we see that 50.8 percent did not see safety as a problem however. The chi-square analysis of this problem had a value of 24.4 and the significance level was .0004.

Transportation was not a concern in attendance decisions and a full 60 percent of the respondents answered that transportation had no effect on their attendance patterns. Responses were as follows:

	No Effect	Little
English	65.3%	14.0%
Spanish	51.7%	3.4%
Other	44.4%	33.3%

It appears from these results that transportation is an issue for Spanish speaking parents. Interestingly enough most of the Spanish speaking parents live in the immediate vicinity of the school. This would be an area where further research could explain the response pattern. The chi-square analysis for this item was 17.5 and the significance level was .0076.

Work schedules and daily life demands were significant deterrents to participation especially for parents speaking languages other than English. The following figures illustrate this point.

Too Busy	English	Spanish	Other
great deal	10.8%	35.7%	32.1%
somewhat	33.3%	35.7%	50.0%
TOTALS	44.1%	71.4%	73.1%

Work Schedules	English	Spanish	Other
great deal	33.9%	43.3%	38.5%
somewhat	38.0%	23.3%	50.0%
TOTALS	71.9%	66.6%	88.5%

The chi-square statistic for the "too busy" responses was 17.3 with a significance level of .0081.

In this cell the analysis of language barriers and attendance patterns is most important. The overall school analysis indicates that 79.5 percent felt that language has no effect. However, this includes a population which is 69 percent English speaking. When we look at those parents who do not speak English as a primary language we would expect to find different results. The following are the responses for these groups:

	Spanish	Other
great deal	34.5%	7.7%
somewhat	13.8%	7.7%
little	10.3%	7.7%
no effect	41.4%	76.9%

The population of parents who fall into the "other" category feel strongly that these barriers do not play a significant role. However, the Spanish dominant parents have mixed responses. Their responses indicate that just over 1/3 of them find it a problem but the remainder are not overwhelmed by the issue. The school must take steps to assist these parents with some formal network of support such as a parent volunteer program or use of some local support agency. The value of the chi-square statistic for this item was 40.8 percent and the significance level was 0.00.

Crosstabulations by Race

Crosstabulations of questionnaire items were conducted by the variable of the respondents′ race. For the purposes of this analysis the races included African-American, White, Hispanic, American Indian, Asian and Other. The designation of "Other" includes African and others who felt that they did not fit into the categories offered as responses.

The following is the racial breakdown of respondents to this questionnaire:

African American	25 returns	13.7%
White	65	35.7%
Hispanic	68	37.4%
American Indian	1	.5%

Asian	7	3.8%
Other	16	8.8%

Cell A

These questions which analyzed parental interaction with both the school and the child, produced responses which infer strong support of the school and its programs by all races. Over 99.5% of all races at this school responded that school was important to the child's future success. The lone respondent representing the .5 percent difference responded "no opinion." This overwhelmingly affirms the belief by parents of all racial and ethnic groups that school is an important factor in their quest for success in adult life. In addition, over 95 percent of all races felt that their children like school with Asian parents giving the high school of 100 percent.

Only one parent, from the "Other" category or .05 percent, felt that the parents were not welcomed at the school and 3.1 percent of the White parents had no opinion. Overwhelmingly, all races felt that they were welcomed. The following gives an overview of these positive responses:

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Total
African American	48.0%	52.0%	100.0%
White	66.2%	30.8%	97.0%
Hispanic	47.1%	52.9%	100.0%
American Indian	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Asian	71.4%	28.6%	100.0%
Other	37.5%	56.3%	93.8%

Given these positive statements we may compare those figures with those given for the importance of parents visiting the school:

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Total
African American	52.0%	40.0%	92.0%
White	61.5%	35.4%	96.9%
Hispanic	69.1%	25.0%	94.1%
American Indian	0.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Asian	28.6%	71.4%	100.0%
Other	81.2%	18.8%	100.0%

Only one White and one Hispanic parent disagreed with this statement and two African American, one White, and three Hispanic parents had no opinion.

The importance of parental involvement was also given strong positive responses by all groups:

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Total
African American	48.0%	44.0%	92.0%
White	58.5%	33.8%	92.3%
Hispanic	63.2%	35.3%	98.5%

American Indian	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Asian	28.6%	71.4%	100.0%
Other	62.5%	31.3%	93.8%

Three White parents and one African American parent disagreed for only a 2.2 percent rate of disagreement. If we are to believe these figures our parent involvement programs should be thriving. However, these figures only assess how parents feel about these items not how they actually respond and participate on a day to day basis. Their actual practices will be assessed later in this section.

The single item on the questionnaire which inquires about racial concerns at this school is the statement: "The school addresses the needs of minority students." The following are the responses for each racial group:

	no opi.	str.agree	agree	disagree	str.disagree
Afr.Amer.	24.0%	16.0%	56.0%	4.0%	0.0%
White	15.4%	30.8%	47.7%	4.6%	1.5%
Hispanic	20.6%	10.3%	66.2%	2.9%	.0%
Amer.Ind.	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Asian	57.1%	14.3%	14.3%	0.0%	14.3%
Other	43.8%	18.8%	25.0%	0.0%	12.5%

This item drew a wide range of responses and a high rate of "no opinion" responses (a full 24.1% of the responses school-wide were in this category). These "no opinion" responses included the following percentages of each category:

No Opinion	Number of Responses	% of Responses/Group
African American	6	24.0%
White	10	15.4%
Hispanic	14	20.6%
American Indian	1	100.0%
Asian	4	57.1%
Other	7	43.8%

These represent high percentages for each of the ethnic minority groups. This item calculated to a chi-square value of 42.0 and a significance level of .0028. The question of why so many respondents chose the "no opinion" option on this subject could be addressed in future investigations by the parent council.

Only one parent felt that teachers were not responsive to parents. One hundred percent of the Asian parents agreed that the teachers were attentive to parents. Twenty percent of the African American and 10.3 percent of the Hispanic parents had no opinion. All others felt positively on this item with over 56 percent of all respondents in each racial group responding to the "agree" option.

All parents have expressed extremely positive opinions of the school and its teachers and have underscored the importance of education by their responses in this cell. The role of education as a path to future success is a belief which is supported by African American, White, Hispanic, Asian, and American Indian racial groups. Traditionally Americans have viewed education as a key to future success and this appears to be true in urban America of 1990. Whether these response patterns were supported in the more focused activities and questions presented in Cell B will be determined in this next section.

Cell B

The day to day interaction among the home, the school and the particular racial groups was examined in this series of statements. Analysis of how each racial group responded to the statements presented was examined to determine if real differences existed among ethnic groups represented in this school.

The first statement, "I help my child with their homework," give us an interesting picture of parent participation and interaction with children within the home. Homework is viewed as one of the more traditional methods of parental involvement. This particular item had a chi-square value of 29.3 and a significance level of .0146. Ten participants did not respond to this question. Over half of the parents in each racial group helped children with homework 2/3 times per week or 4 or more times per week. Just over 28% of Hispanic parents and 42.9 percent of Asian parents responded that they rarely helped their child. More positive responses included:

	2-3 times/week	4 or more times/week
African American	32.0%	48.0%
White	25.0%	46.9%
Hispanic	17.9%	52.2%
American Indian	100.0%	0.0%
Asian	42.9%	14.3%
Other	30.8%	46.2%

These percentages indicate a fairly strong level of parental interest in supporting the educational goals of the school. Given language barriers and work schedules these percentages are strong and the chi-square calculation of the significance level is indicative of the value of these responses to the researcher.

When asked about reading practices with the child within the home one is able to see just how much time parents have available to them. Each racial group responded by more than 44 percent that they rarely read to their children. These percentages increased a great deal when we also include those who responded once per week.

	rarely	once per week
African American	44.0%	28.0%
White	48.4%	26.6%
Hispanic	47.8%	14.9%
American Indian	.0%	100.0%
Asian	71.4%	14.3%
Other	50.0%	25.0%

Across the groups these percentages were high. We find a total of at least 60 percent for each group, even for those not hindered by language barriers. It should be noted that when these responses were analyzed by grade level we found higher "rarely" percentages in the higher grades.

Corresponding to this question, the item "My child reads to me" showed more widespread responses. Again we see a high "rarely" response in the Asian category (57.1%). In the Other group 20 percent responded "rarely" and responses were evenly spread at 26.7 percent for all other response options. The range of responses was as follows:

	rarely	1/wk	2/3 wk	4+/wk
African American	16.7%	25.0%	41.7%	16.7%
White	26.6%	18.8%	31.3%	23.4%
Hispanic	23.9%	19.4%	26.9%	29.9%

American Indian	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Asian	57.1%	0.0%	28.0%	14.3%
Other	20.0%	26.7%	26.7%	26.7%

Although these parents voiced strong support for education there appears to be some barriers in their ability to support reading efforts with their children within the home. Investigation as to why they responded in this manner would be suggested.

Opportunities for parent-teacher contact were again most common in the once per term tendency except for African American parents, 40 percent of whom also responded once per month. Over 20 percent of the African American and 23 percent of the White parents indicated that they were able to talk with teachers once per week.

	once/wk	once/month	once/term
African American	20.0%	40.0%	32.0%
White	23.3%	21.7%	52.3%
Hispanic	9.5%	14.3%	68.3%
American Indian	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Asian	0.0%	14.3%	85.7%
Other	12.5%	25.0%	56.3%

Fifteen respondents did not answer this question. Seven stated that they never talk with teachers and two said once per year. These indicate a high level of contact and would indicate that scheduled parent conferences (once per term), which will be discussed next, would be well attended. Teacher monitoring and tracking of such contact would provide interesting documentation as to the accuracy of responses.

A highly significant level of .004 was calculated for the item inquiring about attendance at parent-teacher conferences. Fourteen respondents (7.7 percent) stated that they never attend such scheduled conferences and another nine stated that they seldom attend. Five respondents did not answer this question.

	often	sometimes	seldom	never
African American	44.0%	40.0%	8.0%	8.0%
White	76.9%	10.8%	3.1%	9.2%
Hispanic	57.4%	32.4%	7.4%	2.9%
American Indian	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Asian	14.3%	57.1%	0.0%	28.6%
Other	50.0%	43.8%	0.0%	6.3%

It should be noted that there is only one American Indian accounting for the 100 percent "never" response. Keeping this in mind, responses had a distinctly positive tendency. Over 70 percent of all respondents made a real effort to attend scheduled conferences. White, Black, Hispanic and Other parents indicate highest percentages of attendance. Asian parents had the highest percentage of non-attendance along with the lone American Indian respondent. Actual attendance figures could be compared to these responses and would provide very interesting analysis. This could be a goal of future research efforts.

As in previous crosstabulations, over 62 percent of each group indicated that evening was the best time for the school to schedule meetings. One hundred percent of Indian and Asian parents chose evening meetings. Approximately 13 percent of the African American, White, and Hispanic parent chose morning meetings as did 20 percent of the Others. Responses included:

	Morning	Afternoon	Evening
African American	12.5%	16.7%	62.5%
White	13.8%	6.2%	72.3%
Hispanic	13.4%	7.5%	76.1%
American Indian	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Asian	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Other	20.0%	13.3%	66.7%

Responses in this cell indicate that parents support the efforts of the school in terms of contact but that their efforts to provide daily interaction and support of learning activities within the home are hampered by other factors which could be analyzed by further investigation. Such investigation could include the request for such personal data as work schedules, family structure, parental level of educational attainment, and family size. All of these would provide deeper insight into these responses.

Cell C

An analysis of how various racial groups may be drawn to the school was analyzed in this section. Options ranged from no opinion, very interested, somewhat interested, to not interested.

Films and video presentations would seem to be an interesting method of enticing parents to meetings. However, high percentages (16 percent) of African American Parents responded "no opinion" while White parents responded in an almost equal percent (16.9 percent) to the "not interested" option. The remainder of responses indicated some level of interest:

	very interested	somewhat interested
African American	28.0%	52.0%
White	29.2%	44.6%
Hispanic	51.5%	38.2%
American Indian	100.0%	0.0%
Asian	42.9%	50.0%
Other	37.5%	50.0%

Hispanic parents appear to be the most interested as did the single American Indian respondent. Respondents may have reacted stronger if a specific theme had been suggested or offered as an additional option or clarifying response in order to target specific interests in this area of parent training or parent education.

In previous sections I have indicated a strong response preference for items which included child-centered activities and this response continues in the analysis of parental attendance at presentations featuring student awards. The only negative or non-committed responses were from 5.9 percent of the Hispanic parents (no opinion) and 3.1 percent of the WHit parents (not interested). The remaining respondents were very interested (69.8 percent school wide) in such presentations.

	very interested	somewhat interested
African American	64.0%	36.0%
White	64.6%	32.3%
Hispanic	77.9%	16.2%
American Indian	100.0%	0.0%
Asian	57.1%	42.9%
Other	68.8%	18.8%

Over 57 percent of all groups were very interested, including an almost equal percentage of African American, White, and Other parents. Hispanics indicated the strongest response of the larger racial groups as did the American Indian respondent who had indicated fairly negative responses to previous items which included attendance at school and other interactive activities.

Over 62 percent of all respondents re-affirmed this child centered activity theme by their responses to the item on entertainment by the children. Only one parent (White) in the school was not interested and 5 parents (1 White, 3 Hispanic, and 1 Other) voiced "no opinion." Asian and White parents indicated the highest interest levels.

	very interested	somewhat interested
African American	64.0%	36.0%
White	83.1%	13.8%
Hispanic	67.6%	27.9%
American Indian	100.0%	0.0%
Asian	100.0%	0.0%
Other	62.5%	31.3%

When we look at the combination of scores we find that 100 percent of the African American, Asian, American Indian, and at least 90 percent of each other groups would support these activities. Efforts to include entertainment centered around ethnic holidays and customs could do much to support the integrated goals of this school and to provide deeper understanding of the various cultures represented in this building.

Also this school may draw on religious themes as a basis for such practices.

Only 110 parents in the school indicated any level of interested in refreshments as a means to draw parents into the school. Seventy two parents indicated disinterest either by selecting "no opinion" or "not interested."

	no opinion	very interested	somewhat interested	not interested
African American	8.0%	12.0%	68.0%	12.0%
White	18.5%	13.8%	38.5%	29.2%
Hispanic	14.7%	16.2%	47.1%	22.1%
American Indian	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Asian	28.6%	42.9%	4.3%	14.3%
Other	12.5%	25.0%	31.3%	31.3%

Five participants did not respond to this item.

A significance level of .0000 was calculated for the item asking parents if they attend presentations involving parent-teacher conferences. Previous questions indicated strong support for this form of interaction. Results in this section are highly significant to the researcher. Only 7 parents school-wide indicated that they had no opinion on this issue and 3 were not interested. Five respondents did not answer this item. Of the remaining respondents 147 were very interested in parent-teacher conferences and indicated that this would be a method to draw parents to school. For all ethnic groups, except the American Indian, the highest level of response was in the very interested category.

	very interested	somewhat interested
African American	72.0%	24.0%
White	81.5%	12.3%
Hispanic	83.8%	14.7%
American Indian	0.0%	0.0%
Asian	71.4%	0.0%
Other	87.5%	6.3%

This again underscores the incorporation of a child centered theme (awards, entertainment, grades, conferences) to secure high levels of parental attendance at school functions.

The question on the use of door prizes had a significance level of .0190 when analyzed. Parents were asked if they would be interested in attending if door prizes were offered. Responses of no opinion and not interested were quite high across the racial lines. One hundred eleven respondents chose these categories! Responses for these two categories were as follows:

	no opinion	not interested	Total
African American	12.0%	32.0%	44.0%
White	15.4%	38.5%	53.9%
Hispanic	38.2%	25.0%	63.2%
American Indian	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Asian	49.2%	14.3%	57.2%
Other	12.5%	31.3%	43.8%

Over half of the White, Hispanic, Asian and American Indian parents were not influenced by door prizes and African American and Other followed close behind. More positive responses included and 11.5 percent school-wide of "very interested" and 33.3 percent school-wide of "somewhat interested."

	very interested	somewhat interested	Total
African American	8.0%	48.0%	56.0%
White	10.8%	35.4%	46.2%
Hispanic	10.3%	25.5%	35.8%
American Indian	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Asian	42.9%	0.0%	42.9%
Other	12.5%	43.8%	66.3%

Clearly Asian parents displayed the strongest response in the "very interested" category. However, the 42.9 percent "very interested" was equal to the 42.9 percent of "no opinion" and "not interested" by this same group! Door prizes in themselves will not be a strong incentive but may be paired with other suggestions to increase attendance.

Cell D

Cell D examines the barriers to participation as expressed by these racial groups. The aim was to determine if real ethnic differences could be targeted as areas for examination and program improvement.

A high significance level of .0034 was found in an analysis of racial groups and the perception of safety as a factor in parental attendance patterns. Responses varied widely among racial groups:

	great deal	somewhat	little	no effect
African American	29.2%	4.2%	4.2%	62.5%
White	6.2%	20.0%	10.8%	63.1%
Hispanic	36.9%	9.2%	15.4%	38.5%
American Indian	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Asian	28.6%	0.0%	42.9%	28.6%
Other	26.7%	6.7%	6.7%	60.0%

Over 60 percent of African Americans, Whites, American Indians and Others felt that safety was not a factor. Hispanic respondents showed a slight tendency toward safety as playing a slight or no role while just over 45 percent felt that it was a factor. Just a few responses would have made this an even split. It should be noted here that 10 parents did not answer this item and, in fact, this whole cell had at least 10 non-respondents to each item, the highest non-response rate in any section of this questionnaire.

Transportation was also not a concern of most groups although Asian parents indicated the concern more than other groups with 57.1 percent indicating some level of difficulty. The proximity to the school of respondents was not investigated since no addresses or zip codes were requested but this factor could be an issue. Methods of transportation or the need to walk long distances would clarify responses.

Another high significance level (.0154) was found in the item concerned with the effect of finances on attendance patterns. The American Indian respondent indicated that finances were a major problem while only 3 percent of the White parents indicated "a great deal" as a response. Thirty-eight percent of Hispanic and 28 percent of Asians stated that finances played no role. Sixty percent of White respondents and 65 percent of African Americans responded that finances had no effect on their attendance. Responses were split across the school in general. Fifty percent of parents responded "no effect" and 50 percent indicated various levels of concern.

	great deal	somewhat	little	no effect
African American	17.4%	8.7%	8.7%	65.2%
White	3.1%	13.8%	23.1%	60.0%
Hispanic	20.6%	14.3%	27.0%	38.1%
American Indian	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Asian	28.6%	42.9%	0.0%	28.6%
Other	20.0%	20.0%	13.3%	46.7%

There were 13 non-respondents to this item.

More than half of the parents (school-wide) indicated that they were "too busy" to attend school functions. African Americans, Whites and Asians appeared to be able to find more time and to adjust their lives and schedules to meet the school's needs. Hispanic and Others had the most concern with this issue with 86.6 percent of the Others responding in "a great deal" or "somewhat" categories and 64.5 percent of Hispanics similarly responding. Fifteen parents did not respond to this item.

Work schedules support these concerns. All racial groups indicated high levels of concern in this item. One hundred percent of American Indian and 71.4 percent of Other respondents indicated that work schedules were an issue of concern by responding "a great deal." School-wide, 72.9 percent indicated responses of "a great deal" or "somewhat" almost evenly divided. Less than 17 percent of the parents in each groups indicated that work schedules played no role in their participation/attendance decisions. Responses indicating the strong role that work plays are as follows:

	great deal	somewhat	total
African American	25.0%	45.8%	70.0%
White	29.2%	41.5%	70.7%
Hispanic	38.5%	36.9%	75.4%
American Indian	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Asian	71.4%	14.3%	85.7%
Other	46.7%	20.0%	66.7%

Although all groups highlighted this concern, an analysis of job type and work hours would shed light on the problem. If employers feel the schools are failing, they should analyze their own practices in terms of the support they offer to working parents.

Over half of the majority of groups indicated that child care was not an issue. The American Indian respondent felt it was a great problem. Over 70 percent of each group stated that it played little or no effect. Perhaps extended families, older siblings, or one parent is able to provide the necessary care. Likewise, medical reasons were not cited as a great concern. Hispanics indicated the highest concern at 27.9 percent total of responses of "a great deal" and "somewhat" combined. All other groups responded with less than 20 percent in these response categories. Sixteen participants did not respond to this item.

The issue of language barriers produced a chi-square value of 39.7 and a significance level of .0005. This indicates highly important results for this research. Hispanic parents indicated the most concern regarding this issue with almost 19 percent indicating that language barriers mattered a great deal in their attendance patterns. No other language group indicated a concern approaching this level. Interestingly, African American responses included 4.2 percent for "a great deal" and 8.3 percent for "somewhat." An examination of these responses would be most interesting. Does the issue of Black dialect/Black English play a role here or is its use of educational "jargon" by the professional staff? Also it should be noted that 11 participants did not respond to this item.

	great deal	somewhat	little	no effect
African American	4.2%	8.3%	0.0%	87.5%
White	0.0%	3.1%	6.2%	90.8%
Hispanic	18.8%	9.4%	7.8%	64.1%
American Indian	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Asian	0.0%	0.0%	42.9%	57.1%
Other	6.7%	0.0%	0.0%	93.3%

The high level of non-response in this section is indicative of the necessity of further analysis and research. Although we see striking similarities in responses across the races we do see areas of difference and concern for educators who may be planning parent programs in the school. It is obvious that without the understanding gleaned from such a survey it would be difficulty for administrators to adequately meet the needs of their particular educational setting. Issues of race, child care, language, finances, work schedules and safety all play a role in parents' ability to join the school staff and work together to assist the educational and social growth of these children.

Summary

The results of this survey include many significant findings which may be useful to educators in this school and in other settings when they address the issues of program design, parental involvement issues and school-based management teams. Unique differences may be found in the questionnaire responses when analyzed by grade levels, languages spoken with the students, and by race of the respondents. Although there are differences educators must be aware that all parents love their children and want the best for them.

They are proud of their children and their children's achievements both educational and social and educators would be wise to underscore this pride and use it as a tool to assist parents in involvement practices which may be based both at the individual school and within the home itself.

This survey underscores the finding that parents believe in the strength and purpose of this school. They believe that education is a road to future success. However, they are not always sure of how they should support such efforts. Schools often speak of the lack of parental participation. However, this is often based upon how often parents visit the school, participate in fundraising activities, and interact on school councils and administrative panels. This is often not easy for urban parents who are faced with the day to day struggle of survival against insurmountable odds.

Significant research findings were found in the following items:

Crosstabulation by grade

Item	Chi-square value	Significance level
"My child likes school"	60.2	.0004
"I help my child with their homework"	58.8	.0000

"I read to my child"	59.0	.0000
"My child reads to me"	47.9	.0007
"Do you attend parent/ teacher conferences?"	42.0	.0041
Attendance/Safety	33.4	.0411

Crosstabulations by language

Item	Chi-square value	Significance level
"Who completed questionnaire?"	40.7	.0003
"I help my child with their homework"	22.1	.0085
"I read to my child"	17.6	.0391
Attendance/Safety	24.4	.0004
Attendance/Transportation	17.5	.0076
Attendance/Too Busy	17.3	.0081
Attendance/Language	40.8	.0000
Attendance/Medical	30.0	.0003

Crosstabulations by race

Item	Chi-square value	Significance level
"The school addresses the needs of minority students"	42.0	.0028
"I help my child with their homework"	29.3	.0146
"Do you attend parent/ teacher conferences?"	40.4	.004
Presentations/Parent-Teacher Conferences	79.5	.0000

Presentations/Door Prizes	28.4	.0190
Attendance/Safety	33.9	.0034
Attendance/Finances	29.1	.0154
Barriers/Language	39.7	.0005

Educators must take pains to keep parents informed both through the use of newsletters and individual contact. If educators make clear their expectations, take time to provide explanation and assistance, they will be rewarded with parents who make the extra effort. This may take time but over time such efforts will be successful. In addition, educators must understand the levels of involvement and must realize that each parent will participate in a manner which is comfortable for them. Supporting homework activities, getting the children dress, fed and ready for school, buying raffle tickets, paying tuition on time, and supporting school fund raising efforts all are methods of parental involvement and must be recognized as being valuable contributions to the success of the child and the school.

The next chapter will present a summary of the results of this research, an analysis of specific strengths and weaknesses, as well as recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Chapter V presents a summary of the study and findings of Chapter IV. This summary will include a discussion of the specific strengths and weaknesses of this study and recommendations for alteration of the research tool in order to achieve more precise results and findings. Finally, recommendations for future research will be presented.

Summary of the Study

The data presented in Chapter IV will now be summarized in terms of the response patterns which may be found within each cell of the questionnaire. This will include correlations and discrepancies which may be found among the target variables of grade, language, and race. Through this summary the questions targeted by the study will be addressed. The following were the questions under investigation:

1. Did urban parents in this setting feel that the school is open and available to them?
2. What were the parental attitudes regarding the importance of education?
3. What were the current practices of involvement both in the home and in the school?

4. What specific school-based activities influenced parental attendance at school-based functions?
5. What were the environmental factors which impeded parental attendance and participation in school functions?
6. What additional concerns did these parents have regarding the school's parent outreach efforts?
7. Were there response patterns which were unique to various ethnic and racial groups, grade levels, or for male/female students?
8. Was a questionnaire such as this a practical tool for the administration to employ in the planning of parental involvement programs?

These questions will be discussed in terms of the response patterns contained in each cell of the questionnaire.

Cell A

Cell A was comprised of questions which were designed to analyze the relationship of parents to the school in terms of their support of the educational process, goals, and mission of the targeted school.

All grades, races and language groups expressed positive responses in support of the climate and sense of community in the school. Over 95 percent of all groups felt that school was important to the child's future success. And in support of this an overwhelming 95 percent of all respondents felt that their children liked school.

Parents of all groups felt they were welcomed at the school. Only one parent disagreed with this statement. School-wide over 95 percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. African American, Hispanic, American Indian, and Asian parents responded with 100 percent positive opinions while conflicting responses came from White and Other categories. Such strong responses cannot be overlooked and will have strong implications on student progress, success, and support.

The importance of visiting the school was upheld by 88 percent of all parents and parent involvement was supported by 94 percent of the respondents. Teachers were viewed as responsive to the needs of parents by over 83 percent of respondents. These figures would indicate a strong and active involvement program or at least the desire to assist the goals of the school.

The issue of school-minority relations was addressed in one question. School-wide 70 percent of the parents felt that the school was responsive to the needs of minority students. However, this item drew a high number of "no opinion" responses. It would be assumed that these "no opinion" statements would come from White parents, however these high responses were found in American Indian, Asian and Other categories.

Responses in this cell indicate a strong supportive parent community which believes in the traditional value of education. The school and staff received affirmation in terms of all variables. It should be mentioned that there is a monetary investment in this educational program. Do parents feel more satisfied when they pay for education? The element of choice must also be considered. These parents have chosen this school from many possibilities. They will not choose or remain in a school where they disagree with the policies, are dissatisfied with the educational standards, and feel uncomfortable with the staff and administration. Public school parents do not have this luxury. In light of these issues the school receives high praise from all respondents.

Cell B

The responses in this cell analyzed interaction between parents and children in terms of direct support of education and interaction between parents and the school itself. Over 40 percent of Asian parents indicated that they were rarely able to help their children with homework. In all other groups over 70 percent indicated that they helped at some level. Support was more evident in lower grades and tapered off in Grades six, seven and eight.

Reading efforts indicated that 44 percent of each racial group rarely read to their children. Again Asian parents indicated the lowest level of such interaction with over 71 percent stating that they rarely read to their children. High percentages were indicated in all racial and language groups in terms of the inability to read to students. Language barriers play a role in this question and in the corresponding question of whether children read to their parents. Asian parents again had low interactive responses, twice the percentage of "rarely" responses of any other group. Again we find higher levels of support in grades one through five.

All groups, grades, languages, and races indicate a preference for evening meetings at the school. All groups, except American Indian, attended scheduled parent conferences on a fairly regular basis and indicated that they had ample opportunities to meet with teachers although most indicated a scheduled which corresponded to the report card distribution.

Although these parents have indicated a strong support for the educational aims and goals of the school, their actual support in terms of day to day practical application of their expressed beliefs is less than would be expected. They have indicated strong parent-teacher interaction schedules but this has not been tracked by the school and is not perceived to be this strong by the administration and staff.

Cell C

In this section the variables influencing attendance at school functions were presented. The overwhelming preference is for activities which directly involve the children in terms of grades, entertainment, and awards. These student-centered issues drew high percentages in all grade levels, racial and language group respondents. Films and videos also received positive responses.

Student awards were strongly supported by all grade levels. School-wide, 70 percent of parents indicated that they were very interested in this activity. When analyzed in terms of the race and language of the respondents over 90 percent of all respondents were supportive of such activities.

Entertainment by students also received positive responses by all groups. Over 90 percent of all grades, language groups and races responded at high levels of interest. In contract to this, high numbers of "no opinion" and "not interested" responses were given for door prizes and refreshments. Asian respondents were evenly split on their interest in door prizes with 42.9 percent interested and 42.9 percent indicating responses of "not interested" and "no opinion." Over 60 percent of the other groups responded that they were not interested in door prizes. From 30 percent to 40 percent indicated no interest in refreshments which indicates that this might be paired with something else to increase attendance, for example, student entertainment with a pot lunch supper or an ethnic theme presented by the children complete with ethnic foods. School-wide seventy two parents responded "no opinion" and "not interested" to the refreshment option.

Guest speakers were also supported, however this support did not approach the high percentages achieved in the more child-centered items. Over 80 percent of all races, except American Indian, indicated some level of interest. Responses were fairly consistent across grades, races and language groups.

Cell D

The strongest discrepancies between groups were found in Cell D where specific barriers which prevent attendance at school function were analyzed. Factors of safety, finance, work schedules, child care, and daily life routines were analyzed. In addition, language barriers were assessed.

Safety factors were not a concern for 60 percent of African Americans, Whites, an American Indian respondents. In contrast, Hispanic respondents indicated that this was a great concern as did 50 percent of the sixth grade parents. Almost half of the non-English speakers indicated a great concern for safety.

Over 60 percent of school-wide responses indicated transportation was not a concern although 57 percent of Asians indicated some difficulty. This concern was also expressed by Spanish speaking respondents. Proximity to the school would play a role in this due to access to public transportation and the need to walk long distances to the school.

Finances were considered a major problem by the American Indian respondent and Hispanics and Asians indicated some level of concern. In contrast, only 3 percent of White respondents indicated that this was a concern, by far the lowest percentage. Over 60 percent of African Americans and Whites stated that finances played no role at all in their attendance decisions.

The demands of life in 1990 appear to impact interaction and participation patterns. Work schedules were a great concern for 73 percent of the parents school wide. In this analysis 71 percent of Asians responded "a great deal." One hundred percent of American Indians also responded with this option. All grade levels and language groups reflected this concern.

English speaking parents indicated the lowest concern in the "Too Busy" category while Spanish and Others, both of which would include non-English speakers,indicated levels of concern averaging 70 percent. Child care school-wide was split 50/50 in responses with half indicating some level of concern and half indicating no level of concern. Over 70 percent of each group responded that childcare was not a problem. Medical concerns were not an issue school-wide. Hispanics indicated the highest percentage at 28 percent. On a grade level analysis 20 percent of the fifth and eighth grade parents stated that this concern played a significant role.

This issue of language was, of course, greatest for non-English speakers. Seventy-seven percent of all respondents in grades one through seven indicated language was not an issue while 21 percent of fifth and eighth grade parents felt it played a significant role. Interestingly some English speaking parents indicated levels of concern with this issue. An investigation of this would be very interesting. Sixty percent of

Spanish dominant parents indicated some level of concern as would be expected. The fact that the school does not provide for this need would, of course, magnify the issue.

One issue of great concern to the researcher was the high rate of non-response in this particular cell. Non-responses ranged from ten to seventeen, the highest levels in the study. The reasons for this reluctance to answer these questions is intriguing. One can only speculate on reasons for such action on the part of participants.

Strengths and Weaknesses of the Study

As in any study there exist strengths and weaknesses which the researcher observes throughout the period of conducting and analyzing the actual study. In retrospect one finds adjustments, alterations and inclusions which may have clarified and strengthened the resulting data and thus produced more accurate and significant results. Research is an ongoing effort, and future studies are planned with knowledge acquired through personal and professional insight and experience which continues to enhance one′s work.

The most apparent strength of this study was the sense of cooperation and willingness to participate as demonstrated by the high response rate of 84.4 percent of the school population. Only 33 parents did not return their questionnaires. The decision to distribute and return the questionnaires through the school's administrative offices had a definite impact on this response rate. Had the researcher utilized a mailing list and distributed and collected the questionnaires in this manner the response rate would be assumed to be far less. Parents who missed the deadline actually mailed the questionnaires to the University where they finally found their way back to the researcher. Such cooperation is remarkable and says much about the parents who are involved in this school setting.

The extremely positive responses in Cell A indicate that these parents are very supportive of the school mission, programs and staff. This sense of the importance of education supports the literature and research in the field. Building a sense of community in a school is difficult but crucial to developing successful programs. The role of the school's religious affiliation must be considered here. No documentation of the parents' religious affiliation or parish membership was requested but may have offered additional insight into the role of the Church as an authority figure in the lives of these families. The more obvious trapping of the parochial school of the past--religious faculty attired in the austere habits of the religious community--are not an issue here. Only the principal and librarian are affiliated with a religious order and neither wears traditional "habits" so common prior to Vatican Council II.

In Cell B the questions regarding homework and reading practices could have benefitted from some clarification since responses varied drastically by grade level. School-wide frequencies as well as racial and language percentages were influenced by the poor supportive responses which were given by parents in grades six, seven and eight. Although these give interesting results in a grade level analysis, the analysis by race and language variables may be affected by this factor. This question may have provided more accurate results if it were separated into primary, elementary and middle grade response sections. Patterns of homework assistance and reading practices vary by grade level, and although older students may request parental assistance they may not feel comfortable reading to their parents even if they could benefit from the experience.

The strength of student centered involvement practices was soundly affirmed by the research. All grades, races, and language groups supported these activities by their strong patterns of response. This information should prove beneficial to any school planning and developing parent outreach programs. These should be paired with the more business and administrative oriented activities which are necessary in the day to day operation of any school.

Expansion or clarification of the barriers to participation may be suggested. Although the results are exciting and relevant to program development they encourage the desire for deeper investigation and analysis. What are the specific transportation concerns? How could the school assist with financial concerns? Listing specific safety issues such as lighting around the school, need of security personnel, local gang issues, police support, could provide invaluable data for planning. Consideration of additional safety issues could give the administration deeper insight into parents' needs. The addition of an open-ended question to this particular item may have offered clarification of the specific concerns of the respondents.

Discovering that most parents want evening meetings is a positive result of this study. Scheduling is often a huge problem for schools and often staff members are reluctant to return at night. The inclusion of a clarifying question on specific hours (2 to 4, 4 to 6, 6 to 8) would have provided additional information which could prove useful.

The results of analyzing barriers caused by work schedules could be considered a strength of this project in its implication as an area for future study. Polling parents on work and corresponding child care demands could provide the theme for an interesting questionnaire to support research efforts. Such information could be utilized in building a public campaign to make employers aware of the need for more parental interaction and participation in the school and the barriers which employers may create without their knowledge. If industry is unhappy with the quality of graduating high school seniors when they must realize the role that parents play in support of educational endeavors and allow parents the time to interact with the educational community even if it means creating new rules for work schedules and flexible employee work schedules. Such support of education can only lead to positive change.

The impact of life/work patterns so prevalent in 1990 could have been assessed by the inclusion of a request for additional personal data. The administration′s agreement to participate in this study included the request that no personal data be requested. However, such an inclusion should be considered in future investigations. An analysis of work patterns employment status, work schedules, family structure, religious affiliation, zip codes and such information could have provided the researcher with additional clarifying data which would have enhanced and expanded the depth of the research data. The benefit of this additional information is obvious.

The low percentages of health and medical concerns by the respondents indicated that this was not a great concern to the school community. However, clarification of the medical issues themselves could have strengthened the study′s data. Providing various options such as personal illness, illness of a spouse, child, or grandparent could have clarified the intensity and connection of the issue to actual involvement decisions.

Administration and staff members in both private and public schools voice the opinion that parental involvement is low. To support this research it may have been helpful to take a baseline of parent attendance at the school′s November parent-teacher conferences. This would have provided the researcher with a benchmark of attendance to compare with questionnaire responses regarding this issue.

Although I have highlighted many areas of my research which would have benefited from expansion and clarification, the overall results of this study provide a strong indication of the feelings of this particular school setting and offer the administration and parent council a valuable tool to assist in the development of parent involvement programs which will include offerings which are relevant to the needs of the parents in this community.

The analysis of the strengths and weaknesses has provided the researcher with the framework for future study design. The results obtained from this study have provided information which should be considered basic to the establishment and support of an active parent involvement program. It is hoped that schools will see the need of utilizing a tool such as this is they hope to guide parents to the realization that education is a cooperative effort that parents and educators must work cooperatively, in partnership, not independently to provide quality education for urban students no matter what their school setting.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The print and electronic media are quick to find fault with the educational systems which exist in our country. Urban educational structures are cited for providing substandard education and producing graduates who are on the edge of illiteracy. Business and industry support this belief in the constant criticism of the workers who apply to their personnel departments in search of employment. The call for change is nationwide and it is loud and clear. However, there appears to be no one best answer to the problem.

The urban parochial school system is a model in the urban city. It produces students of strong educational aptitude and ability. High percentages of these students go on to college and other areas of post-secondary school education. How do these schools differ? What magic do they cast?

In the school studied, the researcher found a strong and supportive parent base. Although the parental population was from diverse racial, ethnic and language groups they all soundly affirmed the role of education as a means to future success and achievement. Parents were supportive of the school, staff, and administrative policies. They stated that they felt welcomed and that teachers were available to them. Children were perceived as liking school which indicates that these parents feel that their children are happy in this setting.

The school itself is in an old building, reflecting the age of the local public schools. No particular programs or special equipment are available to them. Supplies are plentiful but dated. Tuitions support the expenses of the day to day operation of the building with some support from the local parish and diocese. There are no bilingual programs, special education classes, or gymnasium facilities. This is a basic classroom oriented school where the homeroom teacher does it all. Yet, the community of this school supports and affirms the belief in its ability to provide a quality educational experience for the children.

The results of this study do not indicate that this is a privileged population. Parents come from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds. The neighborhood is not safe and transportation is not readily accessible. No translators are available for bilingual parents, no translated school notices are provided. Issues of work schedules and daily life prevent increased interaction between most parents and the school.

Interesting insight into the concerns and needs of these parents was gained through the open-ended question at the conclusion of this survey. Although these were not tabulated and analyzed using statistical procedures, the comments offered by the parents in this section provide rich information and perspective to compliment the research data. Comments include constructive criticism, suggestions for change, and supportive praise.

The question, as stated on the survey reads:

> What do you feel could be done to help parents and the school work together to help our children?
>
> Hispanic Mother/Grade 8: Schools should make sure that parents are welcome. To the parent, especially if he/she is new to this country, being welcomed by the teachers, principals makes a great difference.
>
> Hispanic Sibling/Grade 8: I feel we could use our children to work together. Ask them what they worry about, what they think and say.
>
> West Indian Mother/Grade 7: Try to understand the child's point of view and get to know the parents for what they stand for.
>
> Hispanic Mother/Grade 7: Well I think that having activities in which they would have someone who would speak Spanish. That way those Spanish people that do not speak English are able to attend those activities and meetings.
>
> Haitian Father/Grade 4: Motivate the parents to participate and make them feel part of the system . . . Although there is a big problem when parents do not read or write or speak the language.
>
> Hispanic Mother/Grade 6: I think that the schools should have more after school programs for all the kids this way children will keep themselves out of the street when their parents are working and also out of trouble.
>
> Hispanic Mother/Grade 4: As much as I would like to participate in school functions, it is just not possible. Some people don't get involved because the simply just can't.
>
> African American Mother/Grade 5: Much could be done in the area of race relations in regards to the parents and teachers. Race and class still seems to be a dominant factor in the survival of

minority children in urban schools where white parents have tunnel vision in these areas.

Hispanic Mother/Grade 5: I recognize that laziness from the parents is the problem not the school. The school is doing a wonderful job.

African American Mother/Grade 5: . . . Projects as a family.

White Mother/Grade 7: . . . It is very hard to get parents to attend things and work together. Entertainment by the children in the evening seems to be the one exception.

African American Mother/Grade 4: . . . I feel that my son's class is a home away from home.

Portuguese Mother/Grade 4: I feel there should be additional special education programs in parochial schools.

Asian Mother/Grade 3: ______ is a very special school. I think the school and the parents have been working together all along.

Hispanic Mother/Grade 3: Have school functions that include parents and teachers. Also have parent and teacher hot lunches or dinners so that there is always communication between parent and teacher.

White Mother/Grade 3: . . . More of a balanced parent commitment.

White Mother/Grade 3: Plan meetings on Fridays nights or Saturday--anytime. I feel that because I work it is very hard to attend some meetings even though I want to go.

White Mother/Grade 1: I feel there should be more types of functions which involve parents with their children. I think the children need to see their parents are as much a part of the school as they themselves are.

African American Mother & Father/Grade 1: It's our job to instill good values, and to let them have the right to be what they wish--to grow with strong bodies and minds--to inform them of the

> pitfalls of life, and how to avoid them with little or no harm to themselves.
>
> "Human" Mother/Grade 2: Treat everybody "equal"--no difference in race religious sex, etc. . . . There is no difference between people.
>
> Hispanic Father/Grade 2: I think that my first concern is that most of the time school teachers aren't aware of the students' life outside school (family, home parents, culture) no one students' life is similar to the other one but at the same time I understand there are just too many students. But if teachers know a little of it behaviors will be understood, but you know this is a big task.
>
> Hispanic Mother/Grade 4: My opinion is only one in a million as a parent I tried to do my best, spend time after work with my child, with his homework and being a head of household with only one income under $20,000 a year is extremely hard. I would like to be more involved in the school activities because I know how important it is for the kids and they feel so proud knowing that I'm there for them. . . When I go to bed at night after cooking supper, helping with homework or any other work I'm exhausted. . . That's the reason I sacrifice to send them to parochial school . . . because at least they are a little more secure there and the curriculum is excellent compared to the public school education in the Boston area.

These quotes, selected form the questionnaires, give insight into the parent's deeper feeling of involvement and school/parent relations. The ideas presented by these comments support many of the findings of this research. Schools often do not take the time to get to know the families whom they serve. Understanding the unique concerns and demands of these parents would do much to support the goals and aims of the school.

All schools desire stronger and more supportive parental involvement programs but educators must understand that not every parent is capable of active and visible participation in the form of school council membership, volunteering within the school, assisting in field trips. Many of these parents may be considered to be involved just because they are able to rise above the worries and demands of their own lives and provide a stable and supportive home to their children. In this case being able to allocate enough money to pay a private school tuition may be the most positive form of involvement that parents are able to provide. Providing for the basic needs of the child is the first goal of any urban school′s involvement program.

Educators must realize that the families of urban America are not the families of traditional middle and working class neighborhoods of even twenty years ago. Social and economic realities of this time are vastly different from the background of experience of most professional educators. The issues of race and class have had strong implications in inner-city communities where the traditional middle class minority families who helped unite the community have moved on to suburban locations as opportunities have opened up for them. Left behind are many single-parent households, mothers working long hours to support families, dual-income families just able t survive economic realities, children having children, latch-key children, eight, nine, and ten year olds who care for the family while parents work, drugs and the rise of gang populations and relating safety factors in neighborhoods. Add to these concerns the issue of existing language barriers and the issues begin to become overwhelming.

Given these issues, urban school administrators must make additional efforts to assess the needs of their population in order to develop programs, schedules and support systems which will assist these parents in providing appropriate and comfortable participation and involvement practices. Understanding that not all avenues of participation are acceptable or even available to parents is the first step toward the development of cooperative strategies for change.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study provided insight and knowledge regarding the parochial school model as it exists in one urban setting. The research in this area is growing and could do much to provide educators with knowledge which could be applied to both private and public educational institutions.

Expanding this research model to the inclusion of all schools in this diocese would be the primary recommendation for future research in this area. The results of such an extensive research project would provide the larger educational community with a deeper understanding of the urban parochial school model and allow the system to analyze their current practices and to develop more appropriate and up-to-date methods and strategies for cooperative participation and involvement.

The suggestions for change which were highlighted in the analysis of the study's strengths and weaknesses should be implemented and the resulting questionnaire could be distributed in a setting with a similar population make up to determine if the suggested changes offer deeper insight and clarification of results.

Although this research provides knowledge which is intriguing to those who have dedicated their lives to the education profession it is only the seed of future research. The topic is timely as educators seek to redesign traditional educational and administrative structures in the schools. Utilizing a questionnaire such as this as a basis for program development would lead administrators to the development of questionnaires and surveys which would be more appropriate to their particular settings.

Future research of such populations should include the request for personal data which could not be included within this research program's structure. This data would offer invaluable insight and understanding of urban school parents and their unique needs.

The elements of choice in the school which the child attends is an area for consideration and future investigation. Do these parents feel more committed or more satisfied because they exercised freedom of choice in this decision? Investigation of this issue could be quite interesting. In connection with this a study involving the role of financial commitment in terms of tuition payments would give insight into parents' sense of involvement, satisfaction, and commitment to the educational mission of the selected school.

Surveying teacher attitudes regarding parent participation, support and involvement practices in a parochial setting would complement the research in this project. We have gained insight into the parents' practices and needs, however an analysis of the teachers perception of these practices would give much information regarding the staff and administrative perspective on these issues.

Parents in this study seemed to welcome the chance to participate and offer the school their concerns,understandings and desires. They enthusiastically offered responses and took the time from their daily schedules to actually write comments and suggestions which complimented the data gathered from the study. Their responses frequently echoed the current research in the field and the results obtained by the researcher. Such insight by parents underscores the fact that parents want to be part of their child's education, they want the best for their children, and that they would like the schools to help them in these endeavors. Schools are considered a hub of the community and are a community in themselves. The members of this community are diverse and each has much to offer in his own unique manner. When schools learn to appreciate these facts and learn to value and respect the diversity of their school community we will begin to develop the type of school in which all children will learn, develop, and thrive. Parents and teachers must continually strive for this ideal.

> The greater the difference between and family and community culture and school norms, the greater the need for parents and teachers who work hard at knowing one another. Because they come together as strangers who share in the common task of education and socialization, they must engage in a relatively self-conscious and painstaking task of discovering each other. Sara Lawrence Lightfoot

APPENDIX A

PILOT STUDY

Pilot Study Survey

Zip Code ______________

How many children do you currently have in this school?

____

Please circle their grades:

K1 K11 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
13 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 continue on to the next page.

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 disagree no opinion

2. My child likes school.

   strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree no opinion

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

   strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree no opinion

4. It is important to visit the school.

   strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree no opinion

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

   strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree no opinion

6. The school addresses the needs of minority students.

   strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree no opinion

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

   strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree no opinion

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

   strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree no opinion

Please read the following statements and circle the answer which best describes 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 in 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 Parents,

I am a student at the University of Massachusetts currently doing research in the area of parental participation and involvement in the schools. My area of concentration is a study of the strengths of the parochial school model in urban neighborhoods. In relation to this study I would like to request your cooperation by asking you to complete the attached survey and returning it to the school within one week.

No personal information is being requested and no names are required. All surveys will be returned anonymously to homeroom teachers in sealed envelopes and sent to the office where I will collect them. Please feel free to express your feelings and opinions. The information you provide will be most helpful in gaining a clearer picture of the Catholic schools as they exist in our cities and the needs of the parents who support these educational institutions.

The results of this survey will be compiled in terms of schoolwide responses and trends and will be available to the parents through the Parent Council. You are under no obligation to participate in this study. The decision to participate is yours alone and cannot be held against you or your child since no names or identifications have been requested.

Your consent to participate in this study and your understanding of its conditions is assumed by your completing the questionnaire and returning it to the researcher. If you do not understand or agree to these conditions please do not return your survey to the school.

My thanks to ___________, the faculty and staff at _________________, and especially to the parents who take time out from their busy schedules to aid in this research.

Sincerely,

Kathleen Mastaby
Student
School of Education
University of Massachusetts,
Amherst

PLEASE RETURN THE SURVEY IN THE ATTACHED ENVELOPE BY

February 15, 1991.

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 disagree no opinion

2. My child likes school.

   strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree no opinion

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

   strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree no opinion

4. It is important to visit the school.

   strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree no opinion

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

   strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree no opinion

6. The school addresses the needs of minority students.

   strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree no opinion

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

strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree no opinion

Please read the following statements and circle the answer which best describes 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.

never once per week once per month once per term once per year

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 in 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. Refreshment

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 Schedules

great deal   somewhat   little   no effect

6. Childcare

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)

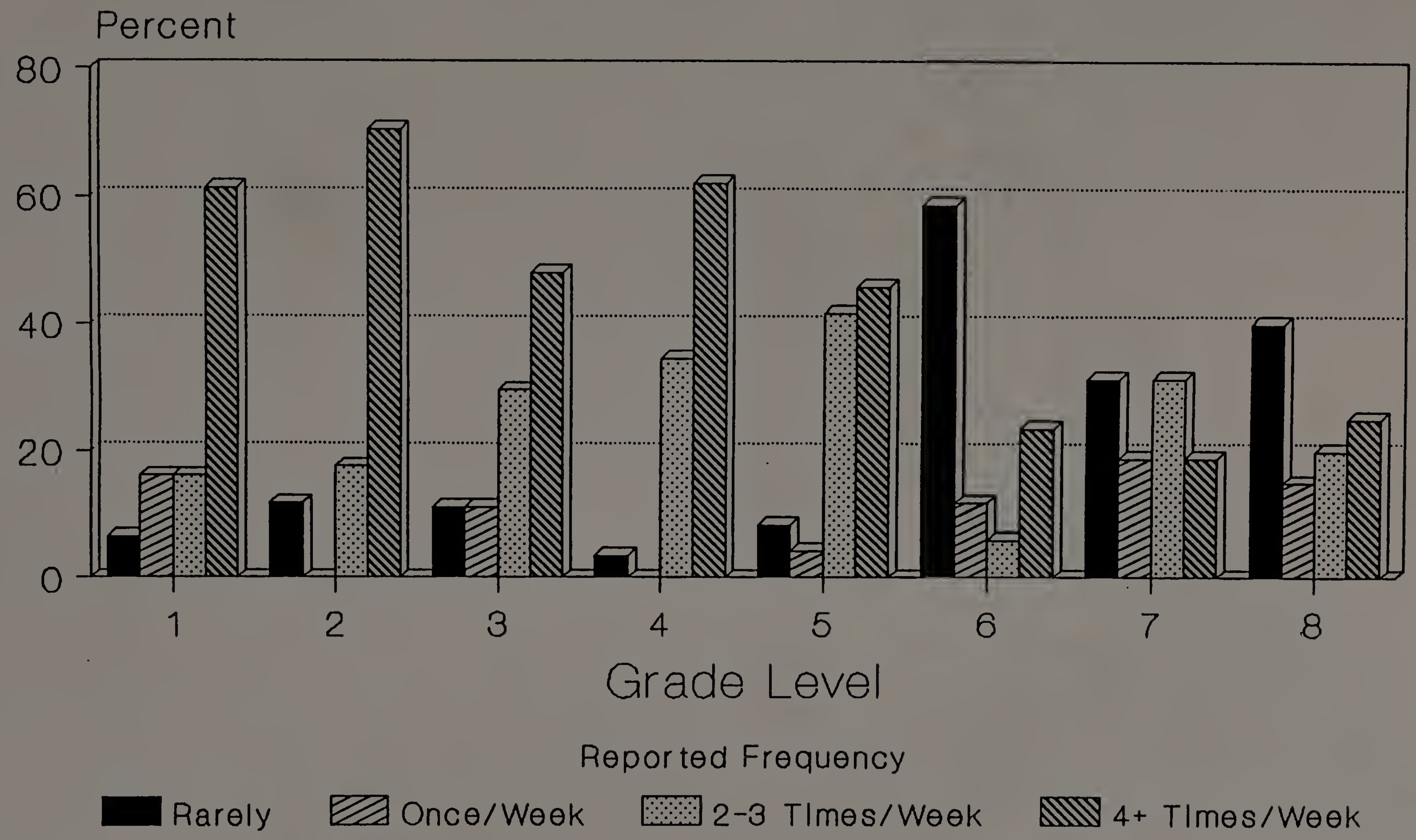
Mother Father Guardian Brother/Sister Other____

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND EFFORT

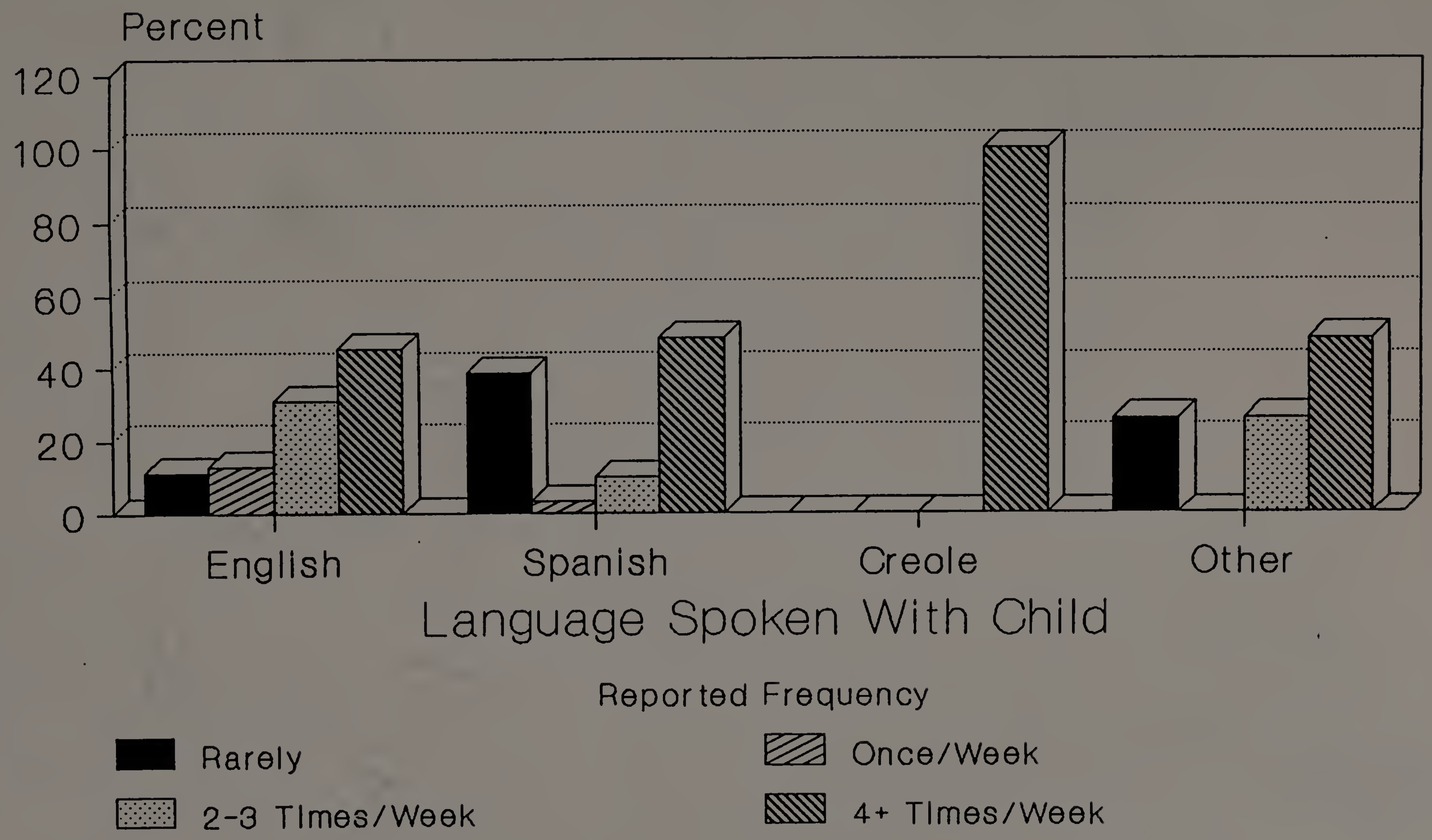
APPENDIX D

DATA TABLES

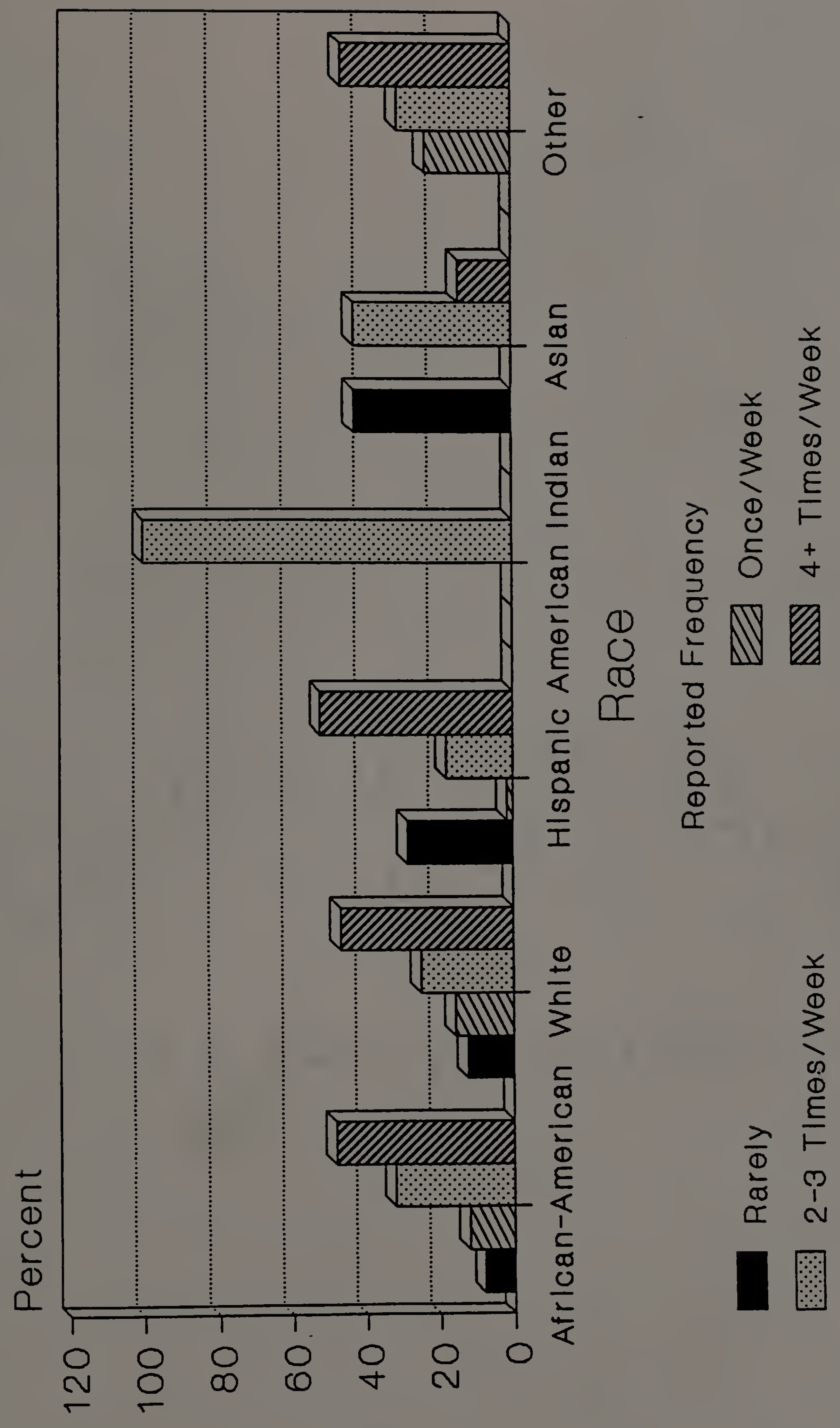
I Help Children With Homework
By Grade Level



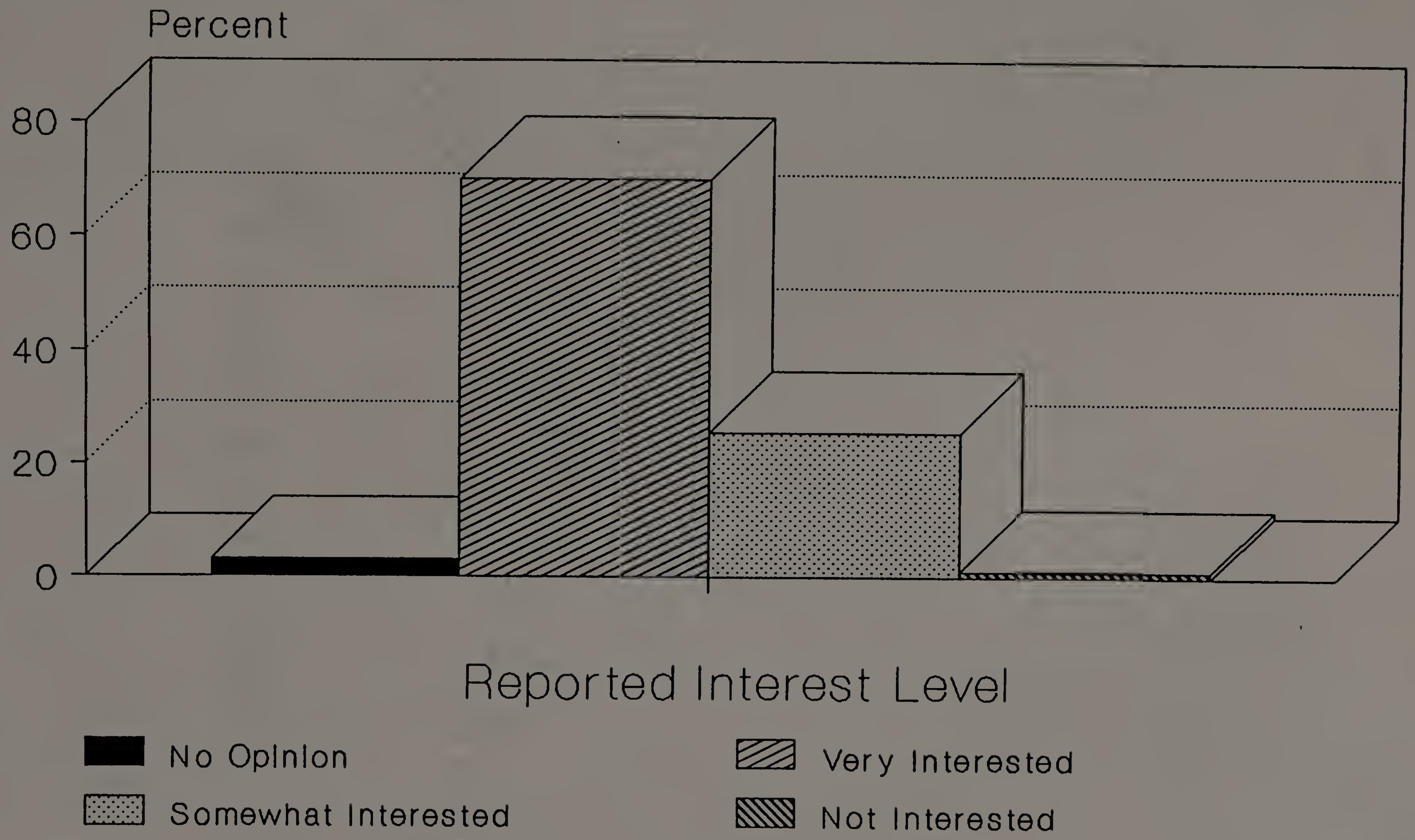
I Help Children With Homework
By Language Spoken With Child



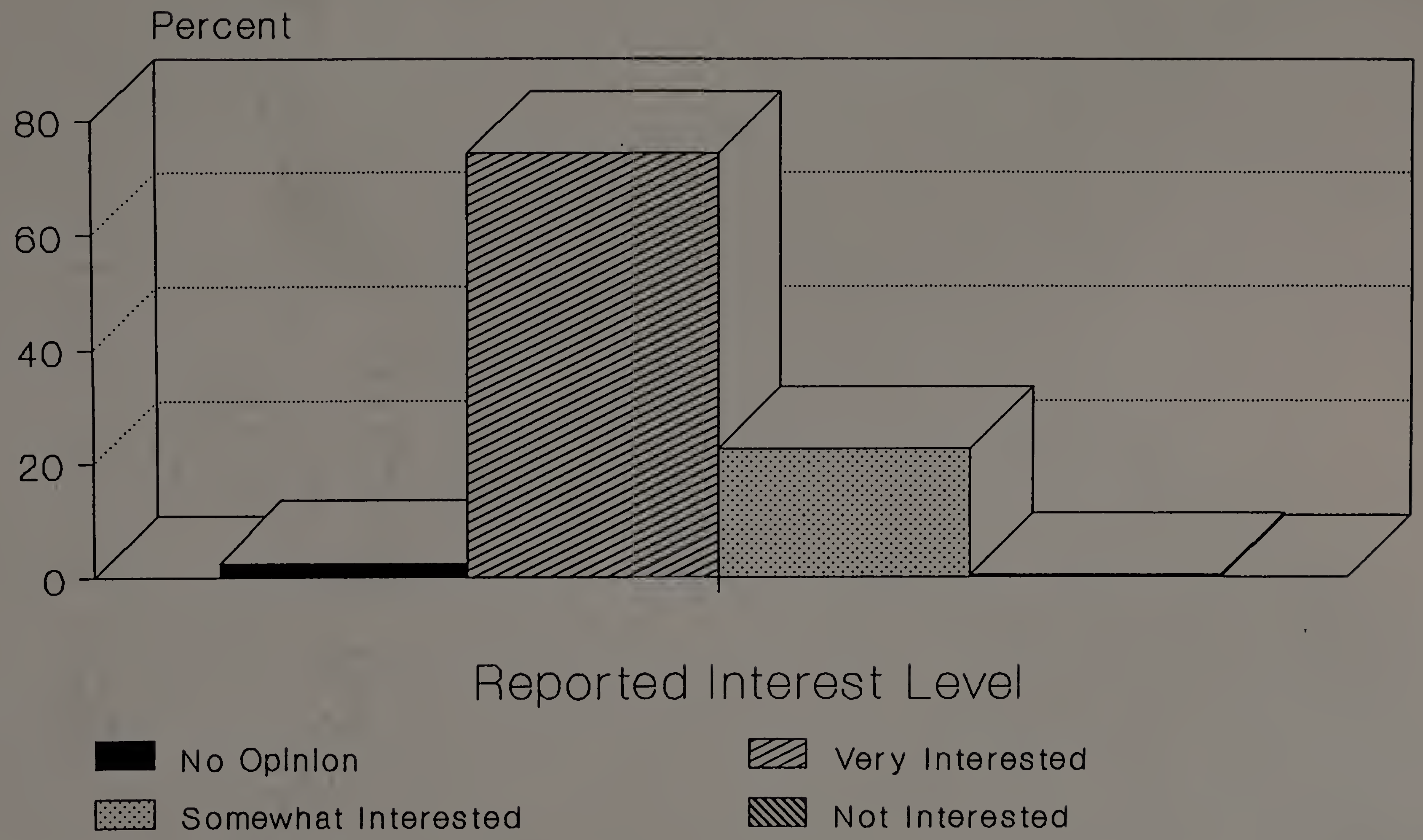
I Help Children With Homework
By Race



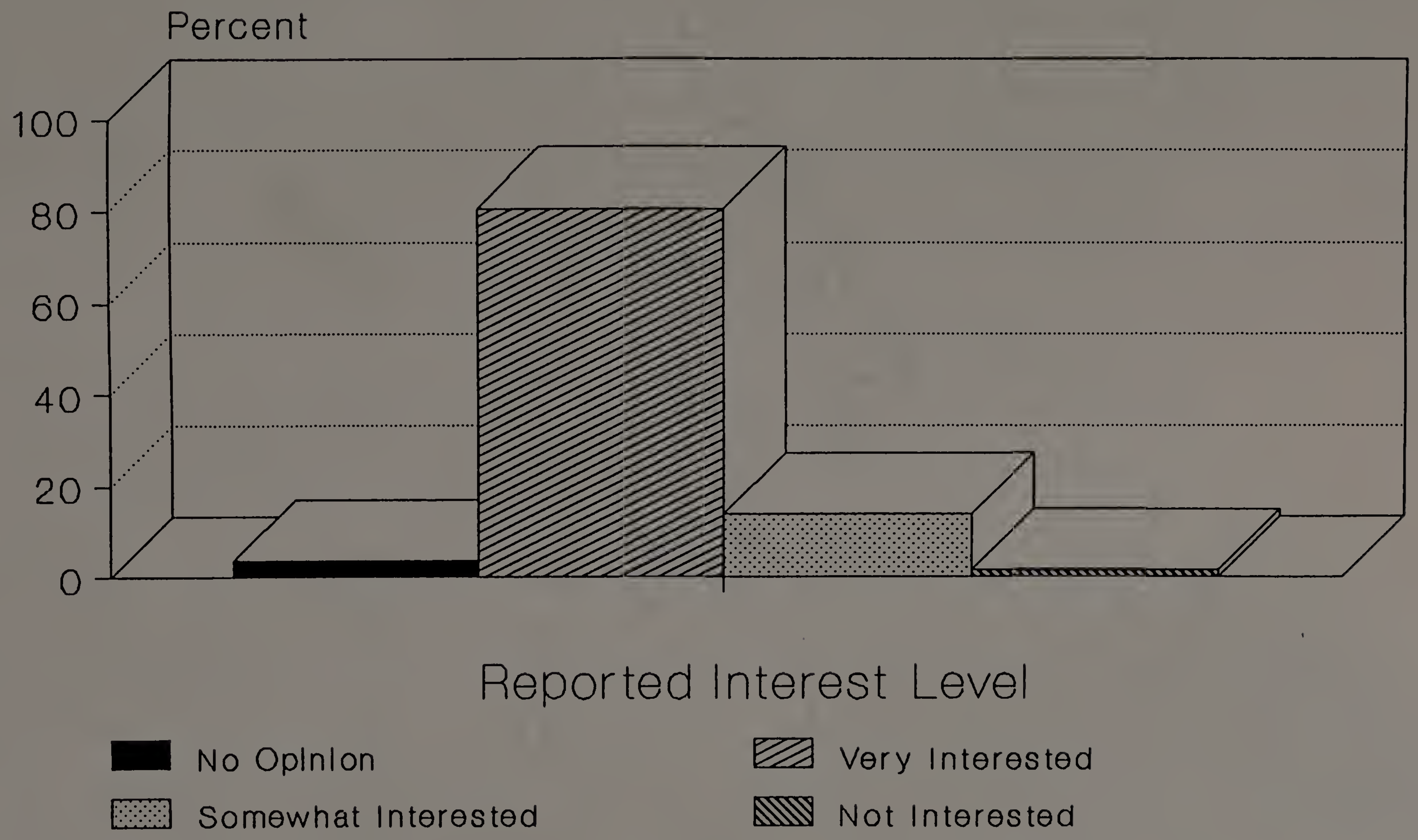
Presentations
Student Awards



Presentations
Child Entertainment



Presentations
Conferences



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