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A Comparative Investigation of the Perceived Influence of Significant Others on the Academic Achievement of Children

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A COMPARATIVE INVESTIGATION OF THE PERCEIVED INFLUENCE OF SIGNIFICANT OTHERS ON THE ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF CHILDREN

by

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

From whom we are to whom we become, our lives, our work, study, business, and pleasure are generally affected and influenced by persons, situations, and resources around us and so it is with primary school children with regard to their academic achievement. For Children, the family represented by parents and the school community represented by teachers, fellow students and the school administration are assumed to be major variables related to the development of academic skills and a rich knowledge base. The overall hypothesis to be tested in the study described here is that in various ways, significant others (namely parents and the school community) do have a significant influence on academic performance.

At the onset, it should be noted that the investigator sharply disagrees with the Platonic assumption that all knowledge is an inherent part of an organism at birth. Plato believed that all learning was an illusion, a simple failure to retrieve what was already in the mind. For him, direct experience with sensory input served to becloud the mind's attempt to recall and regenerate its birthright. In rejecting the Platonic position on this matter, an attempt was made to provide evidence taken from the educational research

literature concerning family living and school practice to provide support for the notion that parents, teachers and communities do have significant influences on the academic achievement of children. The hypothesis stated above, was tested within the context of a real world situation through the use of questionnaire and interview protocols. An attempt was made to measure how fourth, fifth, sixth, and seventh grade children in two parochial schools perceive the influence of their parents, teachers, the school community, and their peers relative to their academic achievement. It is anticipated that findings from the questionnaire and interviews will yield recommendations for improving academic achievement based on the combination of family and school practices that are found to work best.

Such a combination of effective strategies is in part considered to be a major strength of this study that is designed to pull together the attributional perceptions of parents, teachers, other school community members, and the school children themselves regarding the situational constituents of both academic success and academic underachievement. It should be noted that the differential effects of ability on achievement are not the primary focus of this study. It is assumed that every normal child exposed to a meaningful learning environment should do well in school. Whatever a learning community does to push the achievement level of school children forward will contribute to the goal

of maximizing educational achievement.

Underachievement in the schools of today has a significant impact on the global market-place of tomorrow. In sum, most educators, human development and learning theorists disagree with the Platonic position that learning is an illusion and a retrieval failure. Most normal children who come to school can be considered ready to learn, ready to grow from the learning experience, and are determined to apply personal skills developed through the learning experience to life goals, individual differences not withstanding.

Statement of the Problem

In A NATION AT RISK (1983), several indicators of school underachievement were noted:

a. Some institutions struggle to maintain enrollments as a greater day-to-day concern than maintaining rigorous academic standards;

b. Basic literacy becomes the goal rather than the starting point in some metropolitan areas;

c. The ideal of academic excellence as the primary goal of schooling seems to be fading across the board in American Education;

d. The average achievement of high school students on most standardized tests gets lower than when Sputnik was launched;

e. Business and military leaders complain of costly

remedial programs in reading, writing, spelling and computation.

In the document entitled Becoming A Nation Of Readers (1985), officials in the United States Department of Education quoted the National Assessment of Educational Progress report in which it was noted that about 40 percent of 13-year-olds lack the ability to locate information within paragraphs or to make generalizations based on what they have read. Youngsters who lacked such skills had difficulty reading newspapers and understanding their text books.

At the State level here in Illinois, officials in the Governor's Office (1989) caution us with respect to the danger that faces a quarter of all Illinois students who drop out of high school before graduation. The statewide attrition rate among students with disabilities is 40 percent and the attrition rate among students in the Chicago public school system is 44 percent. Such attrition rates tend to translate into high unemployment as high school drop outs have an unemployment rate three times greater than those students who graduate. Young female dropouts are at least three times more likely to become parents than their peers who remain in school, and when the former have children they are likely to depend on welfare, while their children often face high risks of future academic and economic failure.

Commenting on a recent populist crusade to arrest

academic underachievement in American institutions of learning, president Bush (1991) stated that only 9% of the first 18 years of the average American child's life is spent at school. The rest (91%) is spent at home, in front of the television and in playgrounds. For many children, the family is deteriorating or never existed. Some children are unready to start school and/ or arrive hungry and unwashed. The president went on to say that dollar bills alone would not educate students. There must be committed communities, parents excited about school and learning, and teachers free from noneducational burdens. Finally, he called for major changes in the 110,000 public and private schools in the United States (eg., changes in the home, community, and the general attitude to learning). Such emphases by the president tend to strengthen the basic premise upon which this research project was anchored (ie., that significant others do make a difference in the academic performance of children). There is a movement afoot in which emphasis is given to parental choice in selecting schools. Parents would receive their children's tuition straight from the government and would then choose which schools their children would attend. It is argued here that parental choice would perhaps help stimulate a healthy competition for excellence among schools as schools tried to maintain good enrollments by maintaining strong academic programs of study in an attempt to attract more students.

In international competition with Japan and China, Saxe and Gearhart (1988), noted that Japanese and Chinese students outperformed their American counterparts in mathematics. The authors indicate that the highest-scoring American classroom did not perform as well as the lowest-scoring Japanese classroom, and outperformed only one of the twenty classrooms in Taipei. Children in Japan and Taiwan spend significantly more time in school than do American children and this ultimately translates into significantly more time learning mathematics. In both Japan and Taiwan, school is in session 240 days per year compared to only 180 days per year in the United States. Fifth graders in Sendai spent thirty-seven hours, while those in Minneapolis spent thirty hours. Japanese and Chinese students spend the vast majority of their time working, watching, and listening together as a class and are rarely divided into smaller groups. American children by contrast spend the majority of their time working on their own and a smaller amount of time working in activities as members of the whole class. Finally, the authors point out that the value placed on homework in both the Japanese and Chinese cultures means that repetitive practice can be best accomplished at home and class time can be devoted primarily to teaching. At the lower grade levels, Saxe and Gearhart (1988), reported that a great deal of repetitive practice in the American classroom is engaged in during the school day.

Several human development and learning theorists (Dewey,

Vygotsky, and Piaget) believe that persons in the immediate environment of children can and do influence the academic performance of such children. Dewey (1916), a leading figure in American education, believed that children acquire their emotional set and stock of ideas by sharing in what their elders do. Such a sharing function is direct when children take part in the occupations of significant others around them and serve in apprenticeships; or the sharing may be indirect as when children reproduce the actions of others around them and learn to know what they are like through dramatic play. Dewey distinguishes formal from informal education. In formal education, the task of teaching certain things is delegated to a special group of persons. In informal education, no such delegation is necessary. He cites undeveloped social groups where little formal teaching and training take place resulting in savage groups perpetuating savagery while civilized groups perpetuated civilization. To instill needed dispositions into the young, savage groups mainly rely on the same sort of association which keeps adults loyal to their group. Savage groups have no special devices, material, or institutions for teaching except in connection with initiation ceremonies by which the youth are introduced into full social membership. In social and academic situations, the young have to refer their way of acting to what others are doing and try to make it fit. This internal control through identity of interest and understanding is the business of education and consists

primarily in transmission through communication. Such communication Dewey explained, may assume the form of direction, control, or guidance. Guidance best conveys the idea of assisting through the cooperation of the natural capacities of the individuals guided. In contrast, control conveys the notion of an energy brought to bear from without and meeting some resistance from the one controlled. Direction is a more neutral term and suggests the fact that the active tendencies of those directed are led in a certain continuous course instead of aimlessly dispersing.

With respect to the overall importance of contextualism as a basic component of the learning process, Vygotsky (1978), claims that we must examine the external social world in which the individual child develops. The careful examination of the external social world is necessary because there is a social interaction between teaching and learning. The path from object to child and from child to object passes through another person (ie., some significant other). An individual's plane of consciousness or higher cognitive processes is formed in structures that are transmitted to the individual by others in speech, social interaction, and cooperative activity. Vygotsky maintains that individual consciousness arises from the action and speech of others. A child learns to speak by hearing others speak, and learns to think through hearing others speak. Tharp and Gallimore (1991) believe that Vygotsky anticipated the guided intervention perspective which

gives undeniable focus to the importance of social guidance.

Donaldson (1978), credits Piaget with the finding that the speed of movement through the stages of human development (sensorimotor, preoperational, concrete operational and formal operational), is greatly influenced by the social and cultural environment while the order of the stages remains the same across the social and cultural environment. The child's constructive efforts enable children to assimilate what the environment affords. Piaget distinguishes knowledge acquired from some external source from knowledge that results from a child's own activities. If a child became able to conserve through being told the right answer or through some reinforcement activity, there would be learning but no fundamental development could take place in this way. Fundamental development occurs when a child recognizes a contradiction in the process of learning to conserve, an experience that could set in motion processes of equilibration. Piaget believed that the ability to learn is determined by a child's level of development. Piaget also recognizes the importance of the exchange of ideas between the child and significant other persons (eg., parents, peers, and teachers) for the development of thought and strengthening the awareness of the existence of other points of view. Finally it should be noted that Piaget maintained that exposure to significant other persons enables children to grow in awareness. Awareness develops in children when other persons

initiate children into crawling on hands and knees and later ask such children to describe their actions themselves. Such exchange of ideas leads to growth in self-awareness. For example, the Tower of Hanoi puzzle uses three sticks one of which has on it a number of discs varying in sizes with the biggest at the bottom. The problem is to move these discs to one of the other sticks, moving only one at a time and never putting a larger disc on top of a smaller one. For Piaget, awareness typically develops when something gives normal children cause for a pause and consequently instead of just acting, they stop to consider the possibilities of acting which are before them. By considering what is possible, children heighten their awareness of what is actual. Piaget believed that the ability to choose is central to growth in awareness. In sum, the presence of significant others in a child's environment who expose children to situations of choice enable them develop awareness.

In the study described below, the term significant others refers to persons whose conscious impact on the academic stimulation and growth of children is perceived by such children as being greatly influential to their academic performance. Parents, teachers, and school community leaders constituted significant others for the purposes of the study at hand. The overall purpose of this study was to compare the perceived role of parents, teachers, and the school community on the academic performance of grade school children. To

accomplish the goals of this study, a survey of school children in grades four through seven in two parochial schools was conducted. Questionnaire and interview responses were collected from students, and open-ended interview responses were collected from parents, teachers, and school community leaders across the two schools. Of special interests were the student response regarding the amount of perceived parent interest in academic performance, the perceived student-teacher relations, the perceived student-counselor relations, the perceived student-administration relations, and the perceived degree of community involvement in the two schools.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

A systematic review of the literature relevant to the influence of parents, teachers, and school community members on the academic achievement of primary school children reveals a complex interplay of many factors. Some of the factors reported (Tharp & Gallimore, 1991) to be of influence with respect to producing positive effects toward the academic achievement of primary school children include the following:

a). A healthy child-adult interaction.,
b). Parents reading to their children and teaching them to read.,
c). Parents promoting literacy activities in the family,
d). Parents exposing their children to literacy environments (libraries and museums) and the school.,
e). Formal and informal parent-teacher contacts.,
f). A positive school climate,
g). An effective classroom instruction.,
h). Teachers' and students' expectations of personal efficacy.,

i). Teacher feedback activities to motivate student learning.,

j). An effective classroom instruction,

k). A supportive school community.,

l). A daily and weekly review.,

m). Checking homework.,

n). Engaged time and student supervised practice.

As guardians and first teachers of their children (Binkley, 1988), parents prepare their children for school, and as involved school community members, prepare the school for their children. At school, teachers assign homework to children that children complete under parental guidance at home. In such ways, parents and teachers act as mediators of the family-school learning experience for children and the children's good school performance may be significantly influenced by such parental and tutorial roles. Outside the family and the formal classroom environments, children tend to play to an audience of peers with parents and teachers relegated to the balcony (Goldhaber, 1986). Goldhaber believes that membership in peer groups promotes self-worth among children. Coopersmith (1967) supports the view that peer group membership enhances a child's feeling of self-worth and argues that a child's social development during the years of primary school education is influenced by parents and family, the peer group, and the school experience.

In the section appearing below, the following areas of

research related to the problem at hand are selectively reviewed. First of all, a review of research literature related to parent-teacher involvement in education is reviewed. After which, a section dealing with the influence of parents and the family on the academic achievement of children is presented. Then, follows a section on student-teacher relations and how this influences academic achievement. Finally, the impact of school communities and several feedback processes on the academic achievement of school children are respectively reviewed.

Parent-Teacher Involvement in Education

In evaluating Kroth's Parent-Teacher Delivery Service Model, Mahfood (1985) reported that legislation in the 1960s and 1970s had directed professional educators to involve themselves with parents in order to maximize the learning conditions of children. Such parent education programs were designed to inform parents of the minimum essential objectives taught to their children in reading and mathematics and encouraged parents to extend the learning of these objectives into the home. The family would basically be reinforcing the school learning experience of their children, would enable the children to internalize that experience faster through repetitious behavior, and possibly enhance the degree of self-confidence their children develop in the quality and utility of subject matter learned at school. Binkley (1988)

indicates that parents who are concerned with the academic success of their children tend to monitor their children's progress in school, become involved in school programs, support homework, buy books for such children, take them to libraries, encourage reading as a free time activity and place reasonable limits on television viewing. For this author, television viewing should be limited to 10 hours a week for school age children as more than 10 hours a week would have a negative effect on learning. Limiting television viewing frees up time for reading and writing activities. As often as possible, parents should monitor what their children are viewing on television, or watch the programs with them so as to discuss what is viewed with the children later. Parents can provide regular study times for their children and enable children follow a particular routine for homework to make homework and study expected parts of the school day. Binkley (1988) cautions that the regularity, not the specific time for homework and other studies at home is important.

Freiberg (1989) presented a multidimensional view of school effectiveness in which he identified issues of macro (school and community), and micro (classroom level) relating to school achievement. At the macro level, certain factors instill positive effects in aid of student achievement. Such factors include: well-defined school goals and expectations; positive school climate and management; effective principal leadership; district, state, and federal policies on

education; home, peer, and media involvements. At the micro level, the following factors were emphasized: Effective classroom instruction, student and teacher expectations of personal efficacy, positive classroom climate, and a healthy teacher-student interaction. It should be noted that Freiberg's approach seems to be rooted in the ecological theory of Bronfenbrenner (1979), who suggested that a child's perceptions, desires, fears and thought processes might be driven by the child's exposure to and interaction with significant others in his or her environment. A review of the literature on the influence of the family (parents and guardians of children) on the academic achievement of grade school children reveals that the area is divided into the following compartments: the family as a child's nest., literacy events in the family., family life-styles and academic achievement., and family disruptions and academic achievement. Each of these areas of research will be summarized in the sub-sections that follow.

The Family As a Child's Nest

Goldhaber (1986) believed that most school children saw their families as a primary source of support and advice and tended to maintain the assurance that the family would always be there, readily available as an emotional safe haven and a source of physical and monetary support (Elkind, 1978). School children generally hold the same attitudes and values

as their parents on most moral, political and social issues and tend to consider their parents as important sources of vocational guidance. For Slavin (1988), primary school children belong to the "I can do it myself stage" as they spend their lives working through Erikson's (1963) fourth stage of human development: industry versus inferiority. Children tend to develop trust during infancy, autonomy during the early years, and initiative during the preschool years. The experiences children gain during the primary school years can contribute to their sense of industry and accomplishment with the family being there as a safe anchor overseeing the growth pattern. Wilson (1987) suggests that a child's relationship with his or her primary caregiver is crucial as that caregiver determines to a great extent the type of world the child experiences. A primary caregiver who accepts and enjoys his or her role and loves the child sincerely will help the child develop social competence. On the other hand, a caregiver who is rigid, controlling and overly permissive is apt to produce an incompetent child. Wilson (1987) believes that a father figure is important to the sex-role orientation and identification of the male child, and the psychosexual development of the children of both sexes. A father's presence contributes to the strength and cohesiveness of the family and fosters the production of physically and emotionally healthy children, which are characteristics necessary for normal academic pursuits. The absence of a

father figure in a family may lead to children who frequently express hostility, alienation from school and society and engagement in antisocial behavior (Wilson, 1987). Wilson credits Hurley (1969) with the notion of the family as the complete world of a child for a long time; and that the quality of life in that world is crucial for the child's development. The child must be adequately stimulated in all his or her senses right from birth to prevent their intellectual potential from withering. Strom and Torrance (1973) indicate that parents need to provide an atmosphere of psychological safety and support which make it possible for children to live through the pressures and struggles of growth. Amid pressures from school and from peers to conform, parents provide a safe base for children to develop their individuality. The authors believe that a sense of individuality fosters creativity in children. In addition, the family provides children with a sense of predictability and order. A sense of predictability reminds children that if they do something in some manner, something else is going to happen because it has happened that way before and is likely to continue to happen in the future.

Coopersmith (1967) believed that parents who were emotionally stable, without open psychological disturbances, who had few mood changes and high self-esteem, were likely to rear children with high self-esteem and a positive orientation toward school achievement. Parents with high self-esteem

would also tend to have close social relationships with their children, would encourage the children's independence and allow them considerable personal freedom. They are warm and affectionate with their children while providing them with clear-cut guidelines for behavior. Contrarily, parents of low self-esteem children were found not to provide behavioral guidelines for them and generally treated them in a harsh and disrespectful manner. As a consequence, such children tended to low self- esteem characteristics. As students, such children consider themselves to be failures in school achievement tasks; and seem to act in ways that insure that poor self-concepts will be confirmed. They seem to find excuses to avoid studying, doing homework, or participating in class. Teachers, counselors and school psychologists have hard times changing the self-concepts of such students because they have the history of low grades.

School failures prompted the research of Glasser (1969) among school children in a low income area of Los Angeles. Glasser found that children who develop a failure image about the time they begin school, were destined to fail unless their self images were changed in some way. As a way to help out, he developed reality therapy which emphasized carefully planned experiences to ensure that school age children had successful experiences. Having a history of failure would prompt children to continue to fail as they set unrealistic goals for themselves. Glasser discovered that such students would plan

to study for long periods (e.g., 2 hours) instead of studying for shorter periods (e.g., 5-10 minutes) initially until more time could be added as children developed greater self-confidence and viewed themselves as competent and capable.

Rogers (1951) described the effects of different types of parent-child interactions on children's self-concepts. According to his viewpoint, children gradually become aware of being liked or disliked early in infancy. When children hear parents say "I love you" while being cuddled, the words and action communicate liking and loving. If this positive expression happens repeatedly, children come to think of themselves as worthwhile and lovable. Rogers believes that school children develop positive self-concept when parents view and behave toward them in ways that are consistent with their self-evaluation. However, parents generally interact with their children in ways that are consistent with the current standards and expectancies with the larger society or community in which they live. While individual parents and guardians tend to retain their preferences as to how children should be treated, strong social standards tend to modify these. In this way, the general beliefs in society about the nature of children can influence the development of self-concept by influencing parents' treatment of their children. Bruner (1983) regards the socialization of children into their families and communities as natural teaching and

that interactions in this setting assist the growth of higher order mental functions. Donaldson (1978) indicates that parents and other adults provide children with an environment for the development of linguistic skills and also guide them through that development. According to Donaldson, children develop linguistic skills before they become aware of possessing such skills; they are aware of what they talk before developing awareness of sequencing rules. Later, children become able to read to parents words they read to teachers at school. Children play with, and interact with other children in their community from a home base. Freud (In Papalia, 1975) assumed that play was important to the child's emotional and social development and as a means by which children tested reality and learned mastery of their environment. Play was also an outlet for ideas and emotional needs unfettered by social restrictions and punishments from adults.

Literacy Events in the Family

Vygotsky (1962) traces the emergence of literacy in children as part of a continuum that has its roots in the mother-infant conversations and believes that the family provides the setting for the concurrent development of listening, speaking, reading and writing abilities as aspects of oral and written language. Rubin (1973) argued for the inclusion of parents and other concerned community members to help build a

background of influence to support and aid the work of schools. He recommended that principals and teachers must perceive the home and the community as partners in the education of children in subjects such as reading, arithmetic and social studies. Literacy events that take place in domestic chores include the writing and reading of shopping lists, reading television guides, the daily newspaper, the Sunday bulletin, bible reading, doing homework, taking notes, telephone conversations and writing letters (Tharp & Gallimore, 1991).

Binkley (1988) described the act of parents reading to their children as an age-old image that conjures up the spirit of learning as passed from one generation to the next. He argues that children who learn to talk by following parental example, may also learn a great deal about reading at home before attending school. Children make trips to the library or bookstore under parental guidance and supervision, visit museums in cities and have parents explain cultural arts to them. Some parents provide their children with regular study times, set aside some portions of the family home for study and homework and assign their own homework to their children under parental supervision. Binkley declares that as the first and most important teachers of their children, the best way for parents to help their children to become better readers is to read to them. In a study, Singh and Srivastava (1983) found that parental literacy or illiteracy tended to influence

children's academic behavior but not the scores of older subjects. Bennett (1986) believes that the way in which parents talk to their children about experience influences what knowledge the children will gain from the experience and their later ability to draw on the knowledge when reading. For Bennett, parents who read aloud to their children are engaging in the single most important activity for building the knowledge required for eventual success in reading.

Thakur, Singh and Srivastava (1982), found that the impact of parental literacy on the academic achievement of young children was minimal as children reached the fifth grade. In a different study, Albert (1987) found that 74 home-schooled elementary children scored better than the national norms for all students in vocabulary, reading, language skills, work-study skills and mathe-matic when given the IOWA Tests for Basic Skills in a home-school setting. Chmielewski (1987) cautions that the validity of statistical data for the excellence of home schooling should not be accepted at phase value. However, when children attend school while their parents benefit from a systematic training for effective parenting (STEP) there were significant grade point average increases over controls. In a study to examine the effects of a brief parent training for the management of children's homework problems, Anesko and O'Leary (1982), found that children had fewer homework difficulties as measured by their scores on a homework problem checklist (HPC). Control

parents increased the frequency of criticisms to their children during the waiting period.

Family Lifestyles and Academic Achievement:

Sternberg (1989) found that authoritative parenting facilitated the academic success of subjects through a development of a healthy sense of autonomy and a healthy psychological orientation toward work. In his study, subjects who described their parents as treating them warmly, democratically and firmly were more likely to develop positive attitudes towards achievement and to do better in school. In related studies, Piotrkowski and Katz (1982) found that mothers' job autonomy and skill utilization were positively associated with their children's school attendance. While autonomy was negatively associated with the school attendance of children, skill utilization was positively associated with school attendance. Rockwell (1983) found a positive and significant relationship between employment and achievement for those subjects whose mothers worked while they were in school; but negatively significant for subjects whose mothers worked before such subjects started school.

Smith (1981) found a statistically significant relationship between fathers' democratic attitudes and children's academic achievement and a significant relationship between joint parental income and children's academic achievement. The ages of parents at the birth of their first

child had no significant relationship to academic achievement. A significant relationship existed between the number of children in a family and their academic performance; and between the education of parents and the academic achievement of their children. Kinard and Reinherz (1987), found that children of adolescent mothers were generally not different from the children of mothers in their early twenties with respect to academic ability and performance. In Kinard's study, maternal education not maternal age had a greater impact on academic achievement. Parents who allowed their children view more than four hours of television a day, led such children into less achievement scores than subjects who reported less viewing (Fetler 1984). Edward (1987) showed that parent involvement in the education of their children led to gains in student achievement. Such involvement was attained through parent education programs to inform parents of the minimum essential objectives taught to their children in reading and math and how parents could extend the learning of those objectives into the home.

Portes (1987) examined parent-child interactions and academic performance on the basis of the quality and quantity of guidance provided by parents, and found that the ability of parents to deliver verbal directions, cues and problem-solving strategies was a significant characteristic associated with high achievers. The child's propensity to interrupt and behave independently was also related to curiosity,

participation and demands on the resources available in the home. Hansen (1986) identified three types of families and classrooms as being cohesive, coercive and laissezfaire and that the greater the discontinuity in interaction rules between home and school, the more children's academic grades declined. The higher the educational status of the mother the greater the degree of parental involvement in school activities; the younger the age of the child, the greater the degree of parental involvement. On family outing activities, data indicate that participation in family activities differed across racial groups; and academic achievement was greater among participants than among non participants. A good predictor of Hispanic academic achievement was going on a picnic; a good predictor of the academic achievement of White subjects was visiting Disneyland. Blacks had no unique predictor of achievement in this study. Visiting a public library was the best predictor of achievement regardless of race. At three levels of child ability: low, average, and high achievement, maternal verbal guidance (MUG) correlated significantly with academic achievement. Household composition had an important influence on teachers' marks particularly reading and the presence of a second adult in addition to the father figure also had beneficial effects on reading marks.

Family Disruptions and Academic Achievement:

Guttman (1988) describes a research finding in which a child

was rated positively or negatively in accordance with how the child's family condition was perceived. In Guttman's study, teachers and schoolmates watched a film of a 9 year-old child who was engaged in a variety of activities and initially rated him in positive light. Later the same child repeated the same activities after being introduced as living with a divorced mother. Subjects evaluated the child more negatively. In a different study of 234 children of divorce and 223 children from intact families aged 6-12 years at time of divorce, subjects from divorced families were found to attain poorer achievement test scores in the immediate aftermath of divorce. Their grades did not seem to be adversely affected until the fifth year after divorce when the grades of more boys than girls were adversely affected. Donald and Sullivan (1985) found that parental divorce and subsequent parental absence attenuated the academic progress of children. Milling et al (1986) studied three family groups of early disrupted single mother, recently disrupted single mother and never disrupted 2-parent families and found that school children in recently disrupted single-mother families had greater problems in some areas of school achievement and performance than subjects in the two other groups. Shilling (1982) found that single parent children achieve at significantly lower levels than two-parent children in reading, math and composite achievement. Children from father absent homes scored higher on achievement motivation than did subjects from intact homes. Girls from

father absent homes missed more schools and scored lower on tests of masculinity than did girls raised in father present homes. It was also found that a child's grades deteriorated following the death of the family dog and authors conclude that parents' fears tended to be at the bottom of children's anxieties. On test anxiety, Kohlmann et al found that parental rearing inconsistency was the predictor of anxieties associated with test taking. For girls only, parental support was associated with high school performance. Children who transfer into new schools tend to be high risk candidates for school difficulties, face the tasks of gaining teacher and peer acceptance, learning school rules and meeting new academic standards. Jamieson and Stewin (1987), found that the adjustment of immigrant students to learning was dependent on the length of time in the second culture; the proportion of immigrant students within a classroom and the cultural harmony in both home and school.

Bowlby (1973) itemized some of the reasons he believed parents failed to socialize their children. For some children, the natural home-group never existed; for others the natural home group was intact but not functionally effective as economic conditions may lead to the unemployment of the primary breadwinner. In other situations, the natural home-group may be broken up and therefore not functioning. The break up may result from social calamities like war, imprisonment of parent, desertion of one or both parents,

separation or divorce; or the employment of either parent far from home. Bowlby argued that any family suffering from one or more of the above conditions must be regarded as a possible source of deprived children. Whether or not such children actually become deprived will depend on whether both or only one parent is affected; and whether help is given to the unaffected parent through other sources or relatives and neighbors willing to act as substitutes. Parental functionality for children's academic growth is also affected by the geophysical, economic and psychosocial resources of both the family and the community. Bowlby believed that most children tended to be socially dysfunctional when family resources are scarce.

Other aspects of home disruptions manifest themselves in undue pressures for academic performance which parents and other adults bring to bear on school children. Doll (1966) defines academic pressure as a persistent overemphasis on academic achievement (grades) and a lessening of emphasis on the importance and utility of learned material. The author indicates that some significant adults who frequently interact with children hardly differentiate challenge from pressure. He argues that a challenging learning environment stimulates children to test their abilities and resources against some meaningful tasks, their motivation coming from within. Pressure connotes an impelling stress or a constraining influence on one's time or strength by an external agent. In

situations of pressure, students tend to disregard their inner direction and attempt to meet exacting external demands for urgency and achievement. He further argues that students who are challenged with learning tasks tend to identify themselves as worthy, capable and likable individuals. Such children meet new tasks with interest, courage and renewed effort. Contrarily, pressure carries with it feelings of haste, oppression and uncertainty. Instead of being able to concentrate on a present task, the student focuses fearfully on the expectancies of the parent or some other adult figure, thereby dissipating his or her energy in unproductive worry and, efforts to escape the discomfort imposed from outside. Such pressures may come from fears and anxieties which the adult figures could not cope with and are passed on to their children in the form of unrealistic demands that children work harder and play less, be more serious and achieve at very high levels even in unfamiliar and difficult tasks.

Student-Teacher Relations and Academic Achievement

While the academic growth of children in a family setting may be formal or informal depending on the amount of parental involvement and literacy, a review of the literature reveals several strategies by which teachers formally assist the academic performance of primary school children. According to Vygotsky (1978), teacher influence on student learning must focus on the zone of proximal development.

The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) is "The distance between the child's individual capacity and the capacity to perform with assistance" (Vygotsky 1978 p.86). He concludes that a child's actual developmental level is marked by the child's current problem-solving ability when unassisted by more capable others. A child's potential developmental level is determined by the problem-solving activity the child can engage in under adult guidance. The distance between a child's actual and potential developmental levels is the zone of proximal development for that child. For example, a child who understands that 9+3 = 12, but does not understand that 12/3 = 4 has a zone of proximal development lying between the addition that is known (9+3 = 12), and the division (12/3 = 4) that can only be known by assistance. Vygotsky argued that a classroom teacher must endeavor to locate the zone of proximal development of children before engaging them in meaningful instruction. A determination and location of the child's zone of need, helps both teacher and student maximize instructional activities. Tharp and Gallimore (1991), indicate that the zone of proximal development defines those functions that have not yet matured in the child but are in the process of maturation, functions that will mature soon but are currently in an embryonic state.

In his theory of psychosocial development, Vygotsky argued that a child's mental growth occurs in two stages. The first is the interpsychological stage during which knowledge

is passed on from one person (for example an adult, a peer) who possesses knowledge to another (a child, a less advanced peer). Knowledge between people can be communicated from one person to another through instruction. As a psychological process, learning takes place between people: a teacher and a group of students, a teacher and a student, a parent and a child, two students, a student and any more capable peer (Tharp and Gallimore, 1991). During the second stage of mental growth which Vygotsky terms the intrapsychological level (Vygotsky 1956), the student internalizes the item of knowledge. During the internalization process, the significant other person who guided the child's performance gradually withdraws rendering help and the greater the internalization of the problem-solving activity by the child, the less help the more knowledgeable teacher renders. The stages of academic growth in the zone of proximal development is summarized by Tharp and Gallimore (1991) as follows:

a). Assistance is provided by some others: teachers, parents, experts, peers.

b). Assistance is provided by the self but not in a fully developed or automatized way.

c). Internalization, automatization takes place.

d). There is de-automatization, recursiveness through the prior stages. Vygotsky believes that the development of voluntary attention, logical memory, the formation of concepts and the development of volition follow the same

pattern (Vygotsky 1978).

Alfassi (1990) draws a distinction between Piaget who sees cognitive development in terms of universal stages which are identical for all children as a function of age, and Vygotsky who claims that a functional system of one child may not be identical to that of another even though there may be similarities at certain stages of development. The historical conditions, which greatly determine the opportunities for human experience, are constantly in a state of flux and there can be no universal schema that adequately represents the dynamic relation between the internal and external aspects of development. Vygotsky argues that the basic process of academic development is the gradual internalization and personalization of what was originally a social activity. Without the social phase of this process (between child and teacher), nothing may be formally and systematically personalized. Vygotsky believes that children reorganize and reconstruct the experiences they gain as transformations in structure and function occur during the process of internalization. In the beginning of the transformations to the intramental plane, the child need not understand the activity as the adult teacher understands it, and may not be aware of its reasons or of its articulation with other activities. Skills develop into internalized, self-regulated capacity when there is performance through assisting interaction (In Tharp and Gallimore, 1991).

Donaldson (1978) presents a summary of the Piagetian view of knowledge construction. This Piagetian position helps us understand the processes that occur as children reconstruct and personalize knowledge. Donaldson credits Piaget with believing that the order of the stages of cognitive development is held to be the same for all children while the speed of movement from one stage to another varies.

Donaldson (1978) presents a summary of Piagetian teaching on knowledge construction in the following way:

a). Sensorimotor intelligence according to Piaget, considers things one after another without managing an overview. It is like a film run slowly which aims only at practical success and is limited to real actions performed on real objects.

b). Operational intelligence is much better than sensorimotor intelligence in dealing with transformations between states and seeing how they relate to one another. The concrete operational thinker manipulates objects and events even if this manipulation may take place in the mind, they differ from the ability to manipulate propositions and ideas, functions of the formal operational child.

c). The ability to work from hypotheses underlies logical and mathematical thought characteristic of the scientific method. On being asked to combine colorless chemicals to produce a yellow liquid, the child in the

concrete operational level of mental growth tends to stop when one method works, but the formal operational thinker tends to systematically try all possibilities.

d). Piaget does not see any discontinuity between the simplest forms of adaptive behavior and the most highly evolved forms of intelligence. The one develops from the other.

e). Knowledge does not come to us from the outside as if ready made, nor is it a copy of reality or just a matter of receiving impressions as if our minds were photographic plates. Knowledge is not something we are born with. We construct knowledge through a period of many years.

f). Thought that is centered cannot free itself from one point of view, distorts assimilation, prevents a satisfactory equilibrium between assimilation and accommodation leading only to a subjective knowledge of reality.

g). To improve this knowledge, one must develop the ability to move flexibly from one point of view to another and back again.

h). While experience involves the acquiring of new knowledge through acting on objects, physical experience yields knowledge of the properties of objects that are acted upon by the individual learner, logico-mathematical experience yields knowledge of the

actions themselves and the results (Piaget in Donaldson 1978).

Instructional Strategies and Academic Achievement

The literature reveals several approaches to instruction. In "Modeling", behavior is offered for imitation (Tharp and Gallimore, 1990). Such behavior may be offered through words, pictures or live actions. By watching others, a person can form an idea of the components of a complex behavior. In "contingency management", behavior is assisted by arranging rewards and punishments to follow on behavior depending on whether or not the behavior is desired. Although a powerful way of assisting behavior, contingency management cannot be used to originate new behaviors. In the "instructional" method, teachers assume responsibility for assisting performance rather than expecting students to learn on their own. "Questioning" as an instructional activity activates the mental and verbal powers of pupils and thereby provides them with practice and exercise of their thoughts. Through lectures, teachers influentially provide "cognitive structures" of understanding never available to their pupils before. Cognitive structures organize the content of learned materials into like instances (Vygotsky, 1978). Tharp and Gallimore, 1990) use a story concerning a girl's love for her cat to illustrate the differences between instructing, questioning and assisting the formation of cognitive

structures in students. An instructional approach would challenge students to think about the main theme of the story; a questioning approach would ask the children what they thought was the main idea of the story, while a strategy for cognitive structuring would link the story's parts to a main idea: the girl's love for her cat.

Several studies that deal with strategies for assisting academic performance in children, reveal strengths and weaknesses. Kourilsky et al (1983) used 67 teachers of 1853 3rd-6th graders to show that students tend to develop greater perceived personal control of their academic success and failure when subject matter is presented to them as a challenge to their abilities and not a difficulty to frighten them into subjection. Mckinney (1983) found that the level of enthusiasm with which a teacher instructed 160 4th graders had no effect on students' social studies achievement. On comparing the effects of teacher certification on the academic achievement of students, El Tawil and Ezzat (1984) found that pupils taught by certified teachers had higher levels of academic performance than those taught by non-certified teachers. The sex of the teacher had no effects on student achievement but homework that was graded or that contained teacher comments produced stronger effects on learning. A specific school factor such as time spent on instruction had a significant impact on student achievement. Pond and Newman (1988) indicated that extended wait-time (the

pause following a teacher question and pause after student response) increased the chances for more correct responses to textually implicit material on Standard Tests. Wait-Time did not increase the chances for correct responses to textually explicit questions. The authors show that not all learners benefit from wait-time under all conditions but there does appear to be an advantage to increased time to consider the questions. West (1986) studied the effects on classroom disruption of teacher presentation rate, and found that fast presentation rates were associated with significantly less disruptive behavior than a slow presentation rate. However, there are individual differences with regard to the impact of slow presentation rates by teachers as such presentation rates were associated with higher student performance accuracy for some subjects. Overall, the fast presentation rate produced higher rates of correct performance.

Teacher-student interaction attracted the attention of Monash (1987) who found that a student's achievement level was a factor in teacher-student dynamics as teachers tended to interact most frequently with high achieving and high expectancy students. This tendency was most prominent at the grade 6 level. Lyman and Foyle (1988) describe cooperative learning as a teaching strategy that involves students in small group-learning activities that promote positive interaction. The authors indicate that learning together and Group Investigation are examples of cooperative learning. Such

learning strategies promote academic achievement, increase positive attitude toward the class and better student attendance. The literature also reveals that teachers use various cues to make sure of what students are to learn, what they should do and how they should do them to enhance their academic growth. Teachers illustrate, explain and demonstrate what students are to learn. Bloom (In Rubin, 1973) believes that good teachers alter their cues to present those that work best for a particular learner. Some teachers derive cues from written materials, others derive them from combinations of demonstrations. Bloom argues that an explicit curriculum develops competence, encourages interests and attitudes and creates career opportunities to students who learn it well. He believes there is also an implicit curriculum that teaches each student who he is in relation to others. While students learn the implicit curriculum more slowly than they learn the explicit one, they do not forget it as they forget the details of history, rules of grammar or the specifics of study in the explicit curriculum. Thornton (1986) believes that an effective curriculum delivery involves complex relationships between the experience, language and values which students bring into school from their homes, and those which are imported by the teacher. Teachers contribute to the learning taking place in their schools when there is a positive reciprocity of feeling and aspiration between them and their students. If there is no such reciprocity, no mutual emotional

satisfaction, the curriculum remains an idea in the teachers' minds even though teachers teach and students go through the motions of scholastic activity.

School Communities and Academic Performance

For school success, the American educator must look beyond the classrooms to communities and families as schools will never be better than the commitment of their communities. Each community must become a place where learning can happen. Families and school communities are places where learning can both happen and be encouraged. Redding (1990) argues that school administrators, teachers, students and parents can form a community by adopting a core of educational values, transforming such values into goals and acting on the goals. Redding believes that schools and communities must establish associations with one another to enhance the achievement of school goals. Through this approach, the school community can unleash the family's power to boast the academic development of children, provide a safety net of support for children and energize teachers in their classroom duties. Gillspie (1989) identified certain factors related to student achievement following a court-ordered pupil integration in 1970 of two elementary schools in Virginia. The factors include:

a). A strong community involvement and an intensive instructional reprogramming.

b). Mobilizing the entire community around a shared

vision of lifelong educational objectives.

c). Creating a school community pride by developing unity and purpose.

d). Providing outreach services even to parents of newborns.

e). Activating a broadly representative planning council.

f). Enlisting the cooperation of the neighboring college, high school and the business sector.

Finally, Gillspie recommended specific adult parenting and pre-employment opportunities for parents.

Walkins (1990) recommends several strategies to modify a school community's perception of its role in school activities and thereby enhance students' school performance. His approach includes the following components:

a). An improvement in parent attitudes toward their children's school through good time management.,

b). An improvement in parent-child relationship through interpersonal communication.,

c). An improvement in the discipline strategies of parents.,

d). An improvement of parents' abilities to serve as role models and encourage their children to participate in extracurricular activities.,

e). An improvement of parents' abilities to interpret test scores, school reports and homework.,

f). An improvement of parent participation in

Parent-Teacher Association of their schools., and,

g). An improvement of parents' abilities to communicate with school personnel and thereby enhance parent-school relationship by giving parents an opportunity to meet school personnel.

Hatcher (1987) suggested that use of the school, home, and community groups and institutions could be used to reinforce students' basic skills. In addition, he recommended the use of museum programs that offer opportunities to school community patrons to participate in multi-sensory exhibits ; the use of zoological parks to publish books about zoos and zoo animals; the development of cooperative learning opportunities by schools and business; the use of an oral history project to strengthen students' basic skills, and the assistance of families to develop concepts of time.

Feedback Processes and Academic Achievement

Rubin (1973) believes that the good teacher uses positive and negative reinforcement during the learning process and adapts the feedback activities to the individual needs of the students. What is an excellent reward for one student may not operate in the same way for another student. Rubin argues that the effect of evidence of repeated success or failure in a particular set of learning tasks on a student is likely to increase or decrease that student's interest and confidence in further learning tasks of the same type. An evidence of

failure or inadequacy in a learning task is likely to be effective in narrowing the range of alternatives open to a student in school. Repeated evidence of success in a large variety of learning tasks over a number of years is likely to result in a generally favorable attitude toward school and school learning. Such attitudes Rubin believes, tend to generalize from a particular set or range of learning tasks to the entire institution and to most of the school subjects; to the school staff and one's fellow students. Successful experiences in school are however no guarantee of a generally positive self-concept toward school, but they do increase the probability that such will be the case. In contrast, unsuccessful school experiences tend to guarantee that an individual will develop a negative academic self-concept. Rubin finally suggests that students who rarely secure any positive reinforcement in the classroom are likely to be infected with emotional difficulties arising from the rarity with which they can secure any sense of adequacy in the school environment and especially in the classroom. This should characterize a sizeable proportion of students in the bottom third of their classes in grades and other measures of achievement (Rubin 1973).

On the use of praise and reprimands, Acker (1989) found that reprimands alone were associated with high levels of on-task behavior during the initial days of the class. During the same period, the addition of praise produced no change in

the rate of on task behavior or the level of academic performance. The withdrawal of all consequences caused significant decreases in on task behavior and academic productivity. The subsequent use of praise alone led to an initial increase followed by a dramatic decline in on task performance resulting in no change in the average rate of on task behavior relative to the use of no consequences.

In a different study Schunk (1987) showed that teachers who regularly dispensed rewards should link them clearly to the progress of children toward goal attainment. Cannella (1986) cautions that the use of praise and concrete rewards may be seen as controlling interactions that tend to delay or stifle the development of autonomous individuals. Meyer (1984) indicates that teachers' evaluations of students' performance may have paradoxical effects. If for identical performance one student is praised while another is criticized, the praised student may react unfavorably to the teacher's praise perceived as based on a low estimation of the student's capabilities. Kim (1980) found that teacher evaluations for student performance are positively related to student academic achievement and that such evaluations tend to be more powerful indicators of student performance than instructional conditions. Jussim (1989) found that students' performance may confirm teachers' expectations as such expectations create self-fulfilling prophecies, create perceptual biases or accurately predict without influencing

student performance.

Finally, Vygotsky (1987) emphasized that the use of praise as an effective reinforcement strategy should vary according to student age. According to his view, a five year old is capable of attending to teacher instruction and direction only if a rich diet of teacher praise is available. The teacher praise assists the child's attending by both cuing and reinforcing it. With time, the amount of praise required may be expected to decline. Vygotsky believes that most students can easily invoke their attention processes after the third grade when they judge that situations are appropriate. They become self-regulating.

SUMMARY

In a systematic review of the research literature on the influence of parents, teachers, and school community members on the academic achievement of primary school children, a complex interplay of several factors resulted. An interaction between the family and the school was considered necessary in order to maximize literacy events in the two environments for the benefit of school-age children who spent most of their time in those settings. Educators in the 1960s and 1970s considered such practices as important and enacted legislation requiring all professional teachers to interact with the parents and guardians of their children in order to maximize learning conditions for them (Mahfood 1985).

Parents who showed concern for the academic success of

their children tended to place reasonable limits on television viewing, became involved in school programs, took their children to libraries, and encouraged reading as a free time activity. In addition, such parents provided regular study times for their children, and enabled them follow a particular routine for homework. In general, the family was considered to be a primary source of physical, emotional, and monetary support, a safe nest overseeing children's academic growth (Elkind, 1978).

Father figures in families tended to provide sex- role orientation and identification of male children., the psychosexual development of the children of both sexes., and the strength and cohesiveness of the entire family. In the absence of a father figure, children tended to express hostility, alienation from school and society, and engagement in antisocial behavior (Wilson, 1987). The presence of both parents provided children with a sense of individuality, predictability and order. Parents who were emotionally stable and had high self- esteem were likely to rear children with high self- esteem, a positive orientation toward school achievement, developed independence and personal freedom, and had guidelines for behavior. Contrarily, children of low self-esteem parents tended to consider themselves to be failures in school tasks, found excuses to avoid studying, doing homework or participating in class (Coopersmith 1967). The following literacy events were found to take place in domestic chores:

bible reading, reading television guides, the Sunday bulletin, shopping lists, the daily newspaper, doing homework, taking notes, writing letters, and telephone conversations (Tharp and Gallimore, 1991). Sternberg (1989) found that authoritative parenting facilitated the academic success of children by enabling them to develop a healthy sense of autonomy and a positive psychological orientation toward school work.

Families that became disrupted through divorce were found to rear children with poorer achievement test scores during the immediate aftermath of divorce. After the fifth year of divorce, the grades of more boys than girls were adversely affected (Guttman, Geva, and Gefen, 1988). Single parent children achieved at significantly lower levels than two- parent children in reading, mathematics and composite achievement, and a child's grades were found to deteriorate following the death of the family dog (Shilling 1982). The adjustment of immigrant students to learning was found to depend on the length of time in the second culture, the proportion of immigrant students within a classroom, and the cultural harmony in both home and school (Jamieson and Stewin, 1987). Parents who exerted a persistent overemphasis on academic success but lessened emphasis on the utility of learned material were found to rear children who tended to disregard their inner direction for urgency and achievement, focused fearfully on parental expectations and dissipated their energy in unproductive worry (Doll, 1966).

Vygotsky argued that teacher influence on student learning must focus on the zone of proximal development which according to him was the distance between a child's individual capacity and the capacity to perform with assistance. He maintained that learning as a psychological process must take place between people (the interpsychological phase), learned material must be internalized (the intrapsychological phase) and finally deautomatization should take place before the entire process would be repeated. Vygotsky believed that the development of voluntary attention, logical memory, the formation of concepts, and the development of volition followed the same pattern.

Piaget found that sensorimotor intelligence like a film run slowly, considered things one after another. Operational intelligence on the other hand dealt with transformations between states and considered how one state related to another. He argued that the concrete operational child manipulated objects or things while the formal operational child manipulated propositions and ideas. Physical experience yielded knowledge of the properties of objects that are acted upon by children, while logico- mathematical experience yielded knowledge of the actions themselves and the results (Donaldson 1978).

Tharp and Gallimore (1990) found that good instructional strategies included modeling by which behavior was offered for imitation., Contingency Management by which rewards and

punishments were arranged to follow on behavior., and instructions by which teachers provided cognitive structures of understanding never available to students before. Subject matter should be presented to students as a challenge and not as a difficulty to frighten them to subjection (Kourilsky et al 1983). Pond and Newman (1988) found that extended wait-time increased the chances for more correct responses to textually implicit material on Standard Tests. Good teachers tended to alter their cues to present those that worked best for individual learners (Bloom In Rubin, 1973). While an explicit school curriculum developed competence, encouraged interests and created career opportunities for good students, an implicit curriculum more difficult to forget, taught each student who they were in relation to other students.

On the general influence of school communities on children's school success, Redding (1990) believed that school administrators, teachers, students and parents should establish associations with one another to enhance the achievement of school goals, unleash the family's power to boast the academic development of children, and energize teachers in their classroom duties. Gillspie (1989) recommended the mobilization of entire communities around a shared vision of lifelong educational objectives, the creation of school community pride by developing unity and purpose, and enlisting the cooperation of the neighboring college, high school, and the business sector. Walkins (1990) recommended

improvements in parent-child relationships through interpersonal communication, the abilities of parents to serve as role models and encourage their children to participate in extracurricular activities, the abilities of parents to interpret test scores, school reports and homework, the abilities of parents to participate in parent-teacher association functions of their schools, and the abilities of parents to communicate with school personnel and thereby enhance opportunities for parents to meet school personnel.

Rubin argued that feedback processes should be adapted to the individual needs of students. An excellent reward for one student might not operate in the same way for another student. While repeated evidence of success over a number of years might result to a generally favorable attitude toward school and school learning, unsuccessful school experience tended to guarantee that an individual would develop a negative academic self-concept. Acker (1989) found that the use of reprimands alone were associated with high levels of on-task behavior during the initial days of the class., subsequent use of praise alone led to an initial increase followed by a dramatic decline in on task performance resulting in no change in the average rate of on task behavior relative to the use of no consequences. Cannella (1986) cautioned that the use of praise and concrete rewards might stifle the development of autonomous individuals. A praised student might react unfavorably on perceiving the praise as being based on a low

estimation of student's capabilities by the reinforcer. Vygotsky (1987) emphasized that the effective use of praise as a reinforcement strategy in learning tended to vary according to a student's age. After the third grade most students tended to become self-regulating. Finally, Jussim (1989) found that students' performances might confirm teachers' expectations as such expectations created self-fulfilling prophecies or accurately predicted without influencing student performance.

CHAPTER III

METHOD

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested:

1. There will be no significant differences in student opinion scores concerning the amount of parent interest across schools.
2. There will be no significant differences in student-teacher relation scores across schools.
3. There will be no significant differences in student-counselor relation scores across schools.
4. There will be no significant differences in student-administration relation scores across schools.
5. There will be no significant differences in student opinion scores concerning school community pride across schools.
6. There will be no significant differences in student involvement scores across schools.

Sample

The subjects in this study consisted of grade school students selected from two parochial schools in a metropolitan area of the midwest. The two parochial schools were Subjects

were selected from grades four, five, six, and seven in the two schools that enrolled students from kindergarten through the eighth grade. In addition, a sample of the parents and teachers of the students, along with a sample of school community members from the two grade schools was included in the data set. It is important to note that one of the two schools is generally regarded as being among the "First Rate" grade schools in the State of Illinois in terms of school achievement scores and student advancement rates to high school.The average third, fifth, or seventh grader in a "First Rate" school in Illinois achieves at the national average (50%) or better than the national average (55%) in achievement tests designed for all third, fifth, or seventh graders in the United States. The sample of students selected from this school (n=129 students) selected from a total school population of 182 4th-7th graders) served as the High Achievement group (HA). Parents (n=15), teachers (n=6), and community members (n=7) from the high achievement group (HA) were asked to complete open-ended interview protocols developed by the National Study of School Evaluation. Students from both schools completed a questionnaire developed by the National Study of School Evaluation. Students enrolled in a second school (n=71 students selected from a total school population of 131 4th-7th graders) that was considered to be a low achievement school served as the Low Achievement group (LA). Parents (n=12), teachers (n=5), and community members

(n=9) from the Low Achievement Group (LA) were also instructed to complete open-ended interview protocols developed by the National Study of School Evaluation. It should be noted that students in the low achievement school (LA) had lower average achievement scores (47%) and lower rates of student advancement to high school (94%) compared to a 98% advancement rate to high school in the high achievement group. While both schools had a large ethnic mix, the low achievement school group (LA) had a greater ethnic and culturally diverse student body.

Procedure

The study consisted of four phases namely: obtaining the consent of all participants; conducting a pilot study; questionnaire administration; and collection of the interview protocols. Approvals were secured from three principals of three parochial grade schools. Students in the third school served as subjects in the pilot study. During the pilot study phase of the study, a test was made with respect to the item difficulty questionnaire responses among 4th and 5th grade children. Subjects in the lower grade levels of 4 and 5 completed the Likert-Type questionnaire items without appearing to encounter item-difficulty in all 38 items of the Student Opinion Inventory. The item analysis indicated that the student questionnaire items appeared to be acceptable for use in the actual study. After which, letters of consent were

sent to parents, teachers, all students in the 4th-7th grades in the remaining two schools, and to members of the schools' communities. Reminders were sent after six weeks and phone calls were systematically made in an attempt to increase the response rate. As a familiarization strategy, the investigator attended school community functions in both schools, witnessed instructional sessions, and interacted with students.

Two days before the Student Opinion Inventories Parts A and B were administered to students in both schools, the principals reminded the students through their class-room teachers that the inventories would be filled out. The principals also determined appropriate time schedules for administering the items class by class and communicated such time schedules to the researcher. In turn the researcher made available to the principals the names of students who were willing to participate and whose parents had given consent. In both schools, the researcher personally administered the inventories to student participants. In either school, classroom teachers were present when the inventories were administered to their students. Students who completed the first section (Part A) of the inventories continued with the second (Part B) section. Students took an average of 35 minutes to complete the items in both schools. Those who completed their items earlier than others remained in their positions until all students completed theirs.The pool of participants from the High Achievement Group (HA) gradually

increased to 129 students and to 71 students in the Low Achievement Group (LA). Student participants in both schools were made up of about equal numbers of boys and girls. In both schools newly admitted students and recent immigrants who did not have a good command of the English language were excluded from the study. Six teachers in the High Achievement Group (HA) and five of their counterparts in the Low Achievement Group (LA) participated in the study. Fifteen parents and seven community members took part in the High Achievement Group (HA), while twelve parents and nine members of the school community participated in the Low Achievement Group (LA). As indicated above, parents, teachers, and school community members were asked to complete comparative open-ended interview protocols developed by the National Study of School Evaluation Staff based in Virginia. It should be noted that only the student subjects filled out both parts (Part A being the questionnaire and Part B the open-ended interview protocols) of the inventories. While each inventory consisted of two parts (A and B), parents, teachers, and members of the school community completed only the interview protocol section (Part B) of the Inventory.

Instrumentation

The Inventory used for this study was developed by the National Study of School Evaluation in 1988. This inventory consists of the Student Opinion Inventory parts A and B, and the B sections of the Parent Opinion Inventory, the Teacher Opinion Inventory and the Community Opinion Inventory. The first part (part A) of Student Opinion Inventory is made up of 38 Likert-type items aimed at students' opinions toward instructional services, parent interest in school functions and student performance, student-counselor relations, student-administration relations, student involvement in school activities, the school image and facilities. Student Opinion Inventory Part B consists of a set of eight open-ended questions to solicit at greater depths student's opinions regarding the various aspects of their school education. As a valuable addition to Part A, Part B enables students to point out in a less structured manner aspects of their school experiences that would not otherwise be made known. Respondent opinion is solicited with regard to the quality of instruction received; the services provided by counselors in the school; the adequacy of the variety of subjects received at school; and how well they felt with regard to their academic preparation for the next level of their education. It should be noted that a specially constructed item (item 8) was added to each of the B sections of the inventories filled out by parents, teachers, and members of the school community to

enable them to make further personal comments and recommendations regarding the education of their children.

Study Design/ Data Analysis

The data sets collected from 71% of all potential student subjects in the High Achievement Group (129 subjects out of 182 students) and 54% of all potential student subjects in the Low Achievement Group (71 subjects out of 131 students) were analyzed through the use of a multiple analysis of variance (MANOVA) procedure to determine if any differences existed in student questionnaire responses across schools. The analytic paradigm utilized in this study is presented below.

Analytic Paradigm:

X1	X2
High Achievement School (HA)	Low Achievement School (LA)
Y1-Y5	Y1-Y5

Where: Independent Variable = Type of Schools (X1 & X2)

X1 = High Achievement School (HA)

X2 = Low Achievement School (LA)

Dependent Variables = Y1 --Student Questionnaire Scores

Y2 --Student Interview Responses

Y3 --Parent Interview Responses

Y4 --Teacher Interview Responses

Y5 --Community Interview Responses

Of special comparative interests were the student perceptions regarding student-teacher relations (items 7,8,9,10,11,21,30, and 37); student-counselor relations (items 12,13,14, and 15); student-administration relations (items 16,17,18, and 19); the amount of parent interest (item 36); the amount of school community pride (item 26); and student involvement (items 1,2,3,4,5,6, and 25). In addition to the quantitative analysis

of the student responses to the questionnaire items of Part A of the inventory, the interview responses taken from all subjects (students, parents, teachers, and selected members of the school communities) were qualitatively analyzed with special attention being given to documenting differences across the two schools.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) procedure was utilized to determine if statistically significant differences existed between the two schools in terms of students' perceptions of parent interest, student-teacher relations, student-counselor relations, student-administration relations, community involvement, student involvement, the school image and student satisfaction relative to their academic achievement. The mean scores and the standard deviations of students' questionnaire responses are contained in Table 1.

As can be seen from the results contained in Table 1, a total of 191 subjects (121 + 70) filled out the Student Opinion Inventory. 121 subjects from the High Achievement Group (HA) and 70 subjects from the Low Achievement Group (LA). It should be noted that the subjects who filled out the questionnaire in both schools attended parochial schools that consisted of identical programs for all students especially in the areas of student development, general school administration, and parent and community involvement.

TABLE 1

Mean scores and Standard Deviations on the Student Opinion Inventory

	(HA) High Achievement School			(LA) Low Achievement School		
VARIABLE	N	MEAN	SD	N	MEAN	SD
PARENT	121	3.84	1.33	70	3.47	1.42
TEACHER	121	3.38	.64	70	3.67	.62
COUNSELOR	121	3.46	.88	70	3.18	.79
ADMIN	121	3.62	.82	70	3.31	.91
COMMUNITY	121	3.97	1.10	70	3.74	.188
INVOLVE	121	3.79	.73	70	3.55	.022
IMAGE	121	3.70	.67	70	3.65	.69
SATISFY	121	3.88	1.30	70	3.90	1.16

Therefore, it does not come as a great surprise that the subjects exposed to similar school practices in such matters as school policy and student discipline, have similar scores with respect to their perceptions of their teachers, parents, school counselors, and school community members. As can be seen from Table 1, subjects from the High Achievement School, tended to rate their parents, counselors, school administration and communities more highly than did their counterparts from the Low Achievement School. The mean score with respect to rating their perceptions of the degree of parent interest in their school of the 121 students from the High Achievement Group was 3.84 compared to a mean score of 3.47 from their counterparts in the Low Achievement Group. The mean difference between the two scores is .37.

In rating student-teacher relations, subjects from the Low Achievement Group rated their interactions with their teachers in better light than their counterparts from the High Achievement Group. All the mean score differences related to rating student- teacher relations are reported in Table 2.

TABLE 2

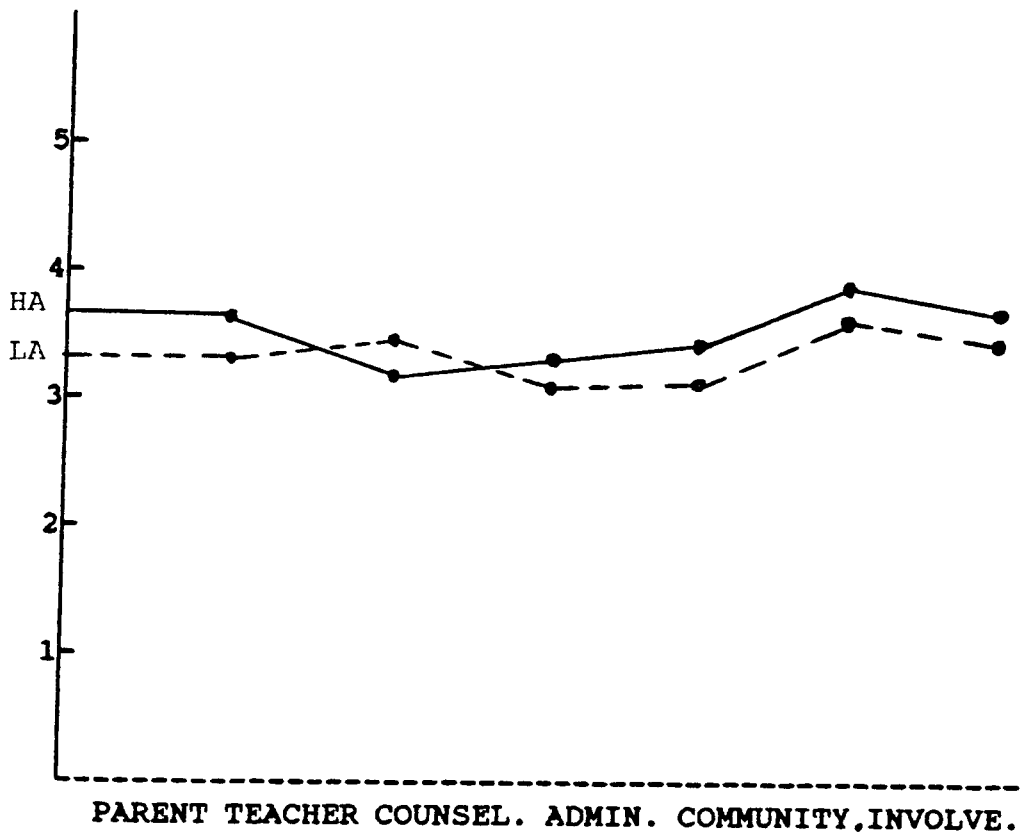
Means, and Mean differences on the 8 scales of the Student Opinion Inventory

	High Achievement School		Low Achievement School		
VARIABLE	N	MEAN	N	MEAN	DIFF.
PARENT	121	3.84	70	3.47	.37
TEACHER	121	3.38	70	3.67	.29
COUNSEL	121	3.46	70	3.18	.28
ADMIN	121	3.62	70	3.31	.31
COMMUNITY	121	3.97	70	3.74	.23
INVOLVE	121	3.79	70	3.55	.24
IMAGE	121	3.70	70	3.65	.05
SATISFY	121	3.88	70	3.90	.02

The differences in mean score ranged from .02 (student perception of the level of satisfaction toward school) to .37 (student perception of parent interest in school functions). It should be noted that in most instances, the High Achievement Group outperformed their Low Achievement counterparts. In student-teacher relations and level of satisfaction, the Low Achievement Group (.29) outperformed their High Achievement (.02) counterparts. Of the two groups, the student-teacher relations variable appears to be the most important discriminanting variable across groups. This finding can be seen in a graph (Figure 1) of the means taken from Table 2.

Figure 1

Graph of the Means



A multivariate analysis of variance was applied to determine if there was an overall significant mean difference in the eight scales across the two schools. This procedure yielded a value of .859 with a corresponding F value of 3.72. This F value is statistically significant at .000 level of significance, indicating that the vector of means corresponding to the eight scales of the coping questionnaire are significantly different across the two schools. Table 3 contains a summary of the multivariate analysis of variance procedure.

Table 3

Multivatiate Analysis of Variance:

Multivariate Tests of Significance

Test Name	Value	Exact F	DF(Hyp)	DF(Error)	Sig of F
Pillars	.141	3.72	8.00	182.00	.000
Hotellings	.164	3.72	8.00	182.00	.000
Wilks	.859	3.72	8.00	182.00	.000
Roys	.141				

Univariate F-Tests were used to determine where the difference for each of the eight scales lies. These univariate findings are reported in Table 4.

Table 4

Multivariate Analysis of Variance: Univariate F-Tests

Variable	SS(Hyp)	SS(Err)	MS(Hyp)	MS(Err)	F.Va	F.Sig
PARENT	6.12	351.46	6.12	1.86	3.3	.071
TEACHER	3.75	75.90	3.75	.40	9.3	.003*
COUNSEL	3.38	114.14	3.38	.60	5.6	.019*
ADMIN	4.22	137.53	4.22	.73	5.8	.017*
COMM	2.23	241.24	2.23	1.28	1.7	.188
INVOLVE	2.59	92.20	2.59	.49	5.3	.022*
IMAGE	.11	86.76	.11	.46	.24	.626
SATISFY	.03	295.44	.03	1.56	.02	.899

Univariate F - tests with (1,189) D.F.

*Denotes F is statistically significant at @ = .05

An F value of 5.6 and an F level of significance of .019 for the student-counselor relations variable indicate that there is a significant difference between the two schools, and that the High Achievement Group had a greater mean score with respect to the student-counselor relations variable (3.45) compared to the Low Achievement Group (3.18). The High Achievement Group is also perceived by students as having better student-counselor relations. In what follows, the remainder of the findings will be presented according to the order of the hypothesis tested.

Results Related to Testing Null Hypothesis One

The first null hypothesis stated that there would be no significant differences in student opinion scores concerning the amount of parent interest across the two schools. This null hypothesis was designed to test the extent students' perceptions of the amount of parent interest in their schools contributed to the level of the students' academic performance. It should be noted that all student subjects from the two schools filled out the same Student Opinion Inventory items. A single item in the Inventory dealt with student satisfaction with regard to the amount of parent interest in school functions (item 36). The scoring manual of the Student Opinion Inventory clearly indicates that the same process of item scoring may be undertaken for interpretation of single items as for interpretation of homogeneous groups of items

(subscales). The results indicated that there was no significant difference in student opinion scores concerning the amount of parent interest across the two schools. These findings are reported in Table 4 (P<.071). Since the F value of P<.071 was found to be greater than P<.05, null hypothesis one was not rejected.

Results Related to Testing Null Hypothesis Two

The second null hypothesis stated that there would be no significant differences in student-teacher relation scores across schools. This null hypothesis was designed to test for student perceptions regarding student-teacher relation differences between the High and Low Achievement Schools. Eight items on the Student Opinion Inventory (7,8,9,10,11,21,30, and 37) dealt with student-teacher relations. The results indicated that there was a significant difference in student-teacher relation scores across schools. These findings are reported in Table 4. Therefore null hypothesis number 2 was rejected.

Results Related to Testing Null Hypothesis Three

The third null hypothesis stated that there would be no significant differences in student-counselor relation scores across schools. This hypothesis was designed to determine if differences in student achievement scores across schools resulted from differences in how students perceived their

relationships with their school counselors. Four items (12, 13, 14, and 15) dealt with student-counselor relations. In the four items, students were asked to rate the extent to which school counselors provided the necessary help needed in program planning; the students' degree of satisfaction with the time given individual students by school counselors; the extent counselors provide help to enable student vocation selection; and the degree school counselors are accessible when students need help to solve personal problems. The results indicated that there was a significant difference in student- counselor relation scores across the two schools. The results are reported in Table 4. Given this finding, null hypothesis number three was rejected.

Results Related to Testing Null Hypothesis Four

The fourth null hypothesis stated that there would be no significant differences in student-administration relation scores across the two schools. The fourth null hypothesis was designed to determine the extent to which student-administration relations across the two schools made a difference in terms of student achievement. Four items on the Student Opinion Inventory (items 16, 17, 18, and 19) dealt with student-administration relations issues. Given an F value of .017, null hypothesis number four was rejected.

Results Related to Testing Null Hypothesis Five

The fifth null hypothesis stated that there would be no significant differences in student opinion scores concerning school community pride across the two schools. The issue to be tested here was to determine the degree of community pride perceived by students in the High Achievement Group and the Low Achievement Group and to assess the extent student perception of community pride influenced their academic achievement. A high level of community pride was assumed to benefit students indirectly by influencing student motivation toward academic achievement. In contrast, a low level of community pride was assumed to depress students and weaken their motivation to learn. Item 26 on the Student Opinion Inventory was used to assess student opinion with respect to this issue. An F value of .188 indicated that there was no significant difference in student opinion scores concerning school community pride across the two schools. These findings are reported in Table 4. Since the F value of .188 is greater than $P < .05$, null hypothesis number five was not rejected.

Results Related to Testing Null Hypothesis Six

The sixth null hypothesis stated that there would be no significant differences in student involvement scores across the two schools. This null hypothesis was designed to test for differences in the students' perceptions of their freedom to interact with other students and participate in school activities across the two schools. A healthy student to

student interaction coupled with student freedom to participate in all school activities were assumed to promote a positive school climate and student achievement. Seven items on the Student Opinion Inventory (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 25) dealt with student involvement in school activities. The results indicated that there was a significant difference in the student involvement scores across the two schools ($P < .022$ as in Table 4). The High Achievement Group attained a significantly higher mean score of 3.79 than their Low Achievement counterparts with a mean score of 3.55. This indicated that students in the High Achievement Group rated their participation in school activities in a more favorable light than their counterparts in the Low Achievement Group did. Given these findings, null hypothesis number six was rejected.

An Overview of the Results related to the Six Hypotheses

In order to determine the relative importance of the variables that differ among the two schools, a discriminant analysis was applied using SPSS-X. A Standard Canonical Discriminant Function using the Wilks' Lambda discriminant procedure indicated that the student- teacher relations variable exhibited the strongest discriminate function. With a P-Value of .0005, the significance of the Wilks' Lambda criterion was very high. This finding means that the two samples discriminate very highly with respect to the student-

relations variable. The teacher variable was found to be the most strongly weighted of the remaining variables and had a value which was nearly twice the value of any other variable used in the study. The results of the Discriminant Analysis are summarized in Table 5.

Table 5

Results of the Discriminant Analysis

Groups	Function Coefficients
Parent	0.36138
Teacher	-0.69572
Counselor	0.32807
Administrator	0.38697
Community	0.19519
Involve	0.41809

Stevens (1986) used a formula (gamma = sum of the vector scores) to determine which group of variables is responsible for the scores on the standardized canonical discriminant function. According to Stevens, if gamma is greater than zero, then the vector of scores are considered to have come from

group 1, and if gamma is less than zero, the vector of scores are considered to have come from group 2. In applying this formula to the scores reported in Table 5, the following sum results: Gamma = .36138 - .69572 + .32697 + .38697 + .19519 + .41809 = 0.99398. The above results indicate that the gamma is greater than zero (.99398 > 0) and that the vector of scores are therefore considered to have come from group 1. If all cases in the data set of students are considered (121 + 70 = 191), the accuracy of predicting the group from which a member came is indicated in Table 6

Table 6

Classification Results

Actual Group	No. of Cases	Predicted Group Membership	
Groups		1	2
		82	39
High Achievement (1)	121	67.8%	32.2%
		26	44
Low Achievement (2)	70	37.1%	62.9%

Percent of Grouped Cases Correctly Classified: 65.97%

Using this procedure, the classification results indicate that the overall correct classification of cases would occur about 66% of the time. It appears that classification of a case into group 1 which consists of a larger sample size, is more accurate than classification into group 2. In group 1, a sample size of 82 yielded a classification accuracy of 67.8%,

and in group 2, a sample size of 44 yielded a classification accuracy of 62.9%. The lesser overall classification accuracy for group 2 may be a reflection of its substantially smaller number of cases compared to group 1 (70 for group 2 as against 121 cases for group 1) (Stevens, 1986). When evaluated with respect to the group means, the canonical discriminant function for group 1 was found to be 0.31 compared to -0.53 for group 2. Finally, it should be noted that the gamma for the vector of scores for group 2 variables was found to be less than zero. This indicates that the scores are to be considered as coming from group 2.

Results Related to the Student Opinion Inventory-Part B

The Student Opinion Inventory Part B was the second instrument used to determine how students in the two schools perceived the influences of their parents, teachers, counselors and the school community regarding their academic performance. Made up of 8 open-ended questions, this set of items provided students with an opportunity to respond in their own words using lined spaces in the inventory. Four items (students' perception of the quality of instruction, counselor services, the school climate, and areas of improvement or change in the school) were considered to be of special importance with respect to addressing the research questions of this study. As a valuable adjunct to Part A of the Student Opinion Inventory, Part B allowed students to

elaborate on their opinions and point out aspects of their school experiences that would otherwise be difficult to ascertain through the use of Part A alone. The limited forced choice response format to Part A (Strongly Agree, Agree, Undecided, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree) did not allow subjects to explain fully their responses to the questions asked. A qualitative analysis of the four inventory items relevant to the purposes of this study is summarized in Tables 7 and 8.

Responses Related to Item 2: What is your opinion about the quality of instruction students receive?

For purposes of clarity, students' responses were grouped into four categories according to how positive or negative or indifferent their responses were. Responses that were grouped as being very good included such answers as great, very easy to understand, of very high quality, and they make learning fun. Similarly, responses that were grouped as being good included the following: good, okay, easy to understand, and of good quality. Responses that were judged to be indifferent included sometimes good and sometimes bad, and don't know responses. Student responses that were considered as being negative included not that good, not good, don't explain questions, bad, sometimes use terms we do not understand, and poor.

A total number of 73 students from the High Achievement Group (HA) answered the question related to the quality of instruction. Twelve students (16% of all respondents) perceived the quality of instruction as being very good. Forty-five students (62% of all respondents) from this group perceived the quality of instruction as being good. Six students (8%) were undecided on the issue while ten students (14%) perceived the quality of instruction negatively. These findings are summarized in Table 7.

Table 7

A Summary of Student Opinion Inventory Part B (HA)

	N	Very Good	Good	Undecided	Poor
Instruction	73	16%	62%	8%	14%
Counsel	44	16%	54.5%	6.8%	22.7%
Climate	44	23%	41%	27%	9%
Change	45	11%	76%	13%	-

Sixty eight students completed the Part B section of

Student Opinion Inventory from the Low Achievement Group (LA). Twenty five of them (37%) perceived the quality of instruction as being very good. Twenty six others (38%) reported that the quality of instruction was good. Eight students (11.8%) were undecided, while nine others (13.2%) perceived the quality of instruction negatively. These findings are summarized in Table 8.

Table 8

A Summary of Student Opinion Inventory Part B (LA)

	N	Very Good	Good	Undecided	Poor
INSTRUCTION	68	37%	38%	11.8%	13.2%
COUNSEL	63	12.7%	44.4%	7.9%	34.9%
CLIMATE	54	48%	37%	9.3%	5.6%
CHANGE	56	17.9	82.1	-	-

Responses Related to Item 3: What is your opinion of the services provided by counselors at your school?

A total number of 44 students from the High Achievement Group (HA) gave their opinions on the services provided by

counselors in their school. Counselor services were described as being great, or "I like it" two descriptions that were interpreted as meaning very good services. Counselor services were also described as being okay, not that bad, and good., and these descriptions were understood to mean that the services were perceived as being good. Other respondents described such services as being boring, not good, not enough, do not explain enough or should try harder. These responses were viewed as negative perceptions. Sixteen percent of the respondents from the High Achievement Group perceived the counselor services as being very good, 54.5% perceived counselor services as being good, 6.8% were indifferent to the quality of counseling services, while 22.7% regarded the services of counselors as poor or boring. Students' responses are summarized in Table 7.

Sixty three students from the Low Achievement Group (LA) reported their perceptions of counselor services. These findings are summarized in Table 8. Eight (12.7%) felt the services were very good, 28 (44.4%) felt the services were good, 5 (7.9%) were indifferent, while 3 (5.6%) perceived them negatively.

Responses Related to Item 7: To what extent do you feel you really "belong" at your school?

This item provided an opportunity for students to report on their school climate. Their responses ranged from answers

that indicated that their school climate was very good to other answers that implied that their perceptions were negative. Some of the open- ended answers were as follows: "I feel proud, I feel comfortable, I really belong, My school is part of my family, this is a smart school, It is very good here, I fit in a lot". Other answers were "People save seats for me when I'm late; I am liked by everyone; the school needs me because I am the future; I learn better here than at other schools". There were a few negative answers noted (eg., "My school is so-so. I feel terrible here"). A total number of 44 students from the High Achievement School (HA) responded to this item. Twenty three percent gave answers that were very positive, 41% gave answers that were positive, 27% were indifferent, while 9% gave answers that indicated that the respondents had negative perceptions of their school climate. Similarly, 54 students answered this question from the Low Achievement Group (LA). Forty eight percent of them rated their perceptions very positively, 38% rated their perceptions positively, 9.3% were indifferent and indicated their indifference by answering "I don't know", and 5.6% reported that they did not belong. A summary of the students' responses is presented in Table 8.

Responses Related to Item 8: Is there something you would like to change about your school? If so, what and how would you like to see it changed?

Students' responses to this item were grouped into no changes desired, moderate levels of change, and high levels of change. Some students answered "No change". Such answers were rated positively. Of 45 students in the High Achievement Group (HA) that answered this item, 13% (6 students) indicated that no changes were desirable. No student in the Low Achievement Group (LA) selected this category. Seventy six percent from the High Achievement Group recommended moderate changes compared to 87.1% in the Low Achievement Group. Responses regarded as recommending moderate school changes included such statements as: "People who say bad words, no more announcements, no class on party days, change some of the subjects, longer recess, provide a candy machine, change school floors, provide more lockers, change time school starts, students to wear gym shoes, people should be nicer, provide basketball courts, tennis courts and start a football program". It is interesting to note that most of these responses were common to both schools. "Major" school changes recommended included the following statements made by the respondents from both schools: "Provide a new principal, new teachers, better classrooms, better food, and better school uniform". Responses were considered to be major by the investigator if such responses could in some great way affect the image of the schools, or lead to changes in school policies, student nutrition, or affect instructional quality. Specific major school changes recommended by the High

Achievement Group (HA) included the provision of male teachers, a new heating system, and changes in the Workshop Way (ie., an intensive learning program that progressively introduces new learning tasks to students). The Low Achievement Group (LA) desired better toilets and sinks, shorter class periods, and more study. Five percent of the students in the High Achievement Group compared to 17.8% in the Low Achievement Group recommended school changes considered to be major. Subjects' responses are summarized in Table 7 for the High Achievement Group and in Table 8 for the Low Achievement Group.

Results Related to the Parent Opinion Inventory-Part B

Responses Related to Item 1: To what extent do you feel our teachers and administrators are interested in parent opinion about our school?

A total of 12 parents answered this question from both the High Achievement Group (HA) and the Low Achievement Group, (LA) (six parents from each group). The following responses came from the parents of the High Achievement Group of students: "Interested, very interested, school sends newsletters for parent input from time to time, I'm often invited as a parent to give input in school-related business, and parents offer opinion when needed". Similarly six responses came from the parents of the Low Achievement Group: "They listen, very much so, okay, very high, very interested,

and minimal. The responses of parents from the Low Achievement Group and the High Achievement Group are contained in Tables 9 (LA) and 10 (HA) respectively.

Responses Related to Item 2: What is your opinion about the quality of instruction students receive?

Responses from parents of the High Achievement group (see Table 10 for details) indicated that teachers are perceived as being qualified, the quality of instruction is considered to be good, and the teachers are perceived as being very good motivators. One parent indicated that instructional quality was fair but could improve. Parents in the Low Achievement Group (see Table 9 for details) indicated that the quality of instruction was: good, better than in the public school system, rated medium-to-high, and very good.

Responses Related to Item 3: How well do you think the curriculum covers the skills students need to acquire?

Parents of the High Achievement Group described curriculum coverage as being extremely adequate, very good, meets my students' needs. However, it was reported that teachers should concentrate on the tutoring/learning program. Their counterparts in the Low Achievement Group reported that curriculum coverage should expose students in grades 7 and 8 to high school environments, that curriculum coverage was well spread out, good but not outstanding, they were not sure

that students were well prepared for high school, or that curriculum coverage met students' skill needs.

Responses Related to Item 4: To what extent do you think our school atmosphere promotes learning?

Basically, there were identical responses from the parents of students in both schools. Responses from parents of the High Achievement Group ranged from "Very much so to strongly agree". Four parents simply responded "Yes". Four parents in the Low Achievement Group responded "Yes". One rated the school atmosphere as being poor-fair; while another recommended old fashioned discipline. These findings are reported in Tables 9 (LA) and 10 (HA).

TABLE 9

Parent Opinion Inventory Part B (LA)

Subjects	Parent Op	Instr Qual	Student Skill	Sch Atmos
1	Listen	Very Good	Well	Yes
2	Very much so	med.-high	expose 7 & 8 graders to high sch. skills	Yes
3	okay	-	well spread out	-
4	Very high	good	well spread out	yes
5	very interested	better than pub school	not sure	need old-fashion discipline
6	minimal	good	not outstanding	poor-fair

TABLE 10

Parent Opinion Inventory Part B (HA)

SS	PARENT OPINION	QUALITY OF INSTR.	STUDENT SKILL	SCHOOL Atmos.
1	interested	teachers are qualified	extremely adequate	very much so
2	very interested	best	very well	yes
3	parents send input as needed	good	teachers to concentrate on tutoring/ learning program	yes. input from students posted throughout the school
4	-	motivating	very good	yes
5	I'm often invited to give input in school related business	good	very good meets their needs	yes, strongly agree
6	parents offer opinion when needed	fair, could improve	very well	yes

Results Related to the Teacher Opinion Inventory Part B

Five teachers in each of the High Achievement and Low Achievement Groups filled out the second part of the Teacher Opinion Inventories. Five items (1, 2, 3, 6, and 7) were

considered relevant to the purposes of this study and were qualitatively analyzed.

Response Related to Item 1. What are the strongest, and weakest aspects of the organization and administration of our school?

Teachers in the High Achievement Group of students indicated that parent groups, the School Board, and curriculum planners constitute the strongest aspects of school administration and organization. They also indicated that more employees be added to administrative personnel and specifically recommend the appointment of a second assistant principal. Similarly, teachers in the Low Achievement Group indicated that the School Board, curriculum planners, the principal and faculty working together, and the Mothers Club were the strongest aspects of school administration and organization. They also indicated areas of improvement to include the need to follow up on discipline and enforce school rules. It should be noted that in either school, only two teachers indicated areas of school administrative weakness.

Responses Related to Item 2: What is your opinion about the quality of instruction students receive?

Teachers of the High Achievement Group of students gave the following responses: very good, excellent, good, in some grades great but in others teachers are not qualified, and

recommend the use of the Workshop Way for every subject. Similarly teachers of the Low Achievement Group of students gave the following responses: instructions are effective, excellent, very good, and good, but not enough to boast the self-esteem of students and instill respect for authority.

Responses Related to Item 3: If you could make one change in the instructional program at this school, what would it be?

Two teachers in the High Achievement Group suggested that the opening time be changed but did not say when the new opening time should be. One teacher was satisfied with the instructional program, others recommended the hiring of teachers working on their master's degree programs and an enrichment of the teaching staff with young and "semi-old" teachers. Their counterparts in the Low Achievement Group recommend that a science curriculum be introduced from kindergarten through the eighth grade., an appeal should be made for volunteers to teach computer education programs for gifted children., and for more instructional approaches based on need not on text books.

Responses Related to Item 6: As seen by students, how effective is our school in promoting their professional, vocational, and personal objectives?

The teachers of the High Achievement Group indicated that Christian values were being promoted, that the students were

learning to care for their neighbors, and that the school was very effective in promoting the professional, vocational, and personal objectives of students. Their counterparts in the Low Achievement Group responded that Christian Life was being promoted., that there were programs to instill self-confidence in students, academic contests were being used to promote school objectives, and that the counseling center was not performing an outstanding job despite efforts to individualize counseling objectives and processes.

Responses Related to Item 7: If you could make one statement to describe our school, what would that statement be?

Teachers in the High Achievement Group reported the following: the Workshop Way was a means students were growing into responsible adults, the school was improving, and there was potential the it could become great, and finally the school was perceived as an organization that delivered quality education. Teachers in the Low Achievement Group indicated that "New teachers were needed, teachers tried to reach all students, the school strives to excel, we have a multi-ethnic school, more discipline needed, and less favoritism should be practiced.

Results Related to the Community Opinion Inventory-Part B

As shown in Appendix G, there are six items in the Community Opinion Inventory Part B. Five community members

from the High Achievement Group filled out the items, while seven community members responded from the Low Achievement Group. Responses to four of the six items are discussed below.

Responses Related to Item 1: To what extent do you feel the local school is doing a good job?

Community members from the High Achievement Group indicated that the local school was "doing a great job, an excellent job, teachers taught very well, parents, teachers and students are cooperating", or that the job being done by the local school was "Not quite good". To this item, community members from the Low Achievement Group indicated that "The job is outstanding, a very good job, a good job". Some rated the job performance level as being between fair-to-good, and as blending well considering the diversity of ethnic and economic backgrounds that made up the student population.

Responses Related to Item 2: How well do you know what the instructional programs are about in our community, and what is your judgment about the quality of the programs that you do know about?

Community members from the High Achievement Group "Are very impressed", regarded the quality of instruction "As great, all right, very good", and indicated that the Workshop

Way was an excellent program for student involvement in school tasks. Their counterparts in the Low Achievement Group responded that the quality of instruction was "Good, very good, not enough", music and art were needed. One community member was not familiar with the instructional program.

Responses Related to Item 4: How wisely have local school officials managed funds and other resources?

Community members in the High Achievement Group indicated that funds were "Very wisely used, very well used, the school works miracles with minimal stipend, more funds are needed, do so much with the little available, students need a lunchroom, teachers need better salaries". Their counterparts in the Low Achievement Group indicated that funds were okay, were well managed, and recommended the use of funds to arrest teacher turnover, and enhance discipline.

Responses Related to Item 5: To what extent are school opportunities available to all students in the community?

While four community members in the High Achievement Group perceived school opportunities as being available to all students in the community, one community member disagreed with this position. Two community members in the Low Achievement Group indicated that school opportunities were available to all students in the community, two others expressed the need to educate the community on what was

available to students, and another community member believed that for the most part school opportunities were being made available to all students within the community.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

In this final chapter, a discussion of the results related to testing each of the six null hypotheses, is presented. In addition, sections are included in which the major findings are summarized and recommendations for further research are explored.

This study was designed in an attempt to examine the perceived influences of parents, teachers, counselors, school administrative personnel, and other school community members on the academic performance of primary school children in two parochial schools located in the city of Chicago. The focus of the study was directed at maximizing literacy training events in the family and the school community for the benefit of primary school children. An attempt is made in this chapter to integrate the findings of this study with those reported by others described in Chapter 11. What are parents, teachers, counselors, school administrative personnel and members of the school community in the High Achievement Group doing differently from their counterparts in the Low Achievement Group? How may the best combination of literacy training events in both schools be used to the benefit of school

children?

Discussion related to Null Hypothesis One

The statistical analyses related to testing this null hypothesis indicated that there was no significant difference in student opinion scores concerning the amount of parent interest across the two schools. Students in the High Achievement Group had a mean score of 3.84 in rating the amount of parent interest in their school, while their counterparts in the Low Achievement Group had a mean score of 3.47. As reported in chapter 11, Anesko and O'Leary (1982) found that children tended to experience fewer homework difficulties following a brief training of their parents in homework problem management. Administrative personnel in the High Achievement Group gave families video-cassettes and books relevant to school work that enabled the school children and their parents to practice and discuss school work at home. It is reasonable to assume that school children who benefitted from such practices would perceive the interest of their parents more positively than their counterparts who did not have the experience of school-directed literacy programs in the home.

While the score variation (.37) across groups on perceived parent interest across the two schools was the highest mean score variation in the entire study as indicated in Table 2 (Teacher .29, Counselor .28, Administration .31,

and Involvement .24), it was not found to be statistically significant ($P < .07$). This mean variation resulted from a single- item scoring approach as indicated in Chapter 1V. One might reasonably speculate that a mean score variation of .37 which resulted from a group of three or more homogenous items weighted together could lead to a statistically significant alpha. Although lower mean score differences computed for teacher, counselor, administration and involvement were found to be statistically significant, parent interest was not found to be significant at the .05 alpha level ($P < .07$).

It should be pointed out that parents of the High Achievement Group tended to be generally more supportive of school programs, teachers, and administrators in responding to the Parent Opinion Inventory Part B than their counterparts in the Low Achievement Group. In reporting how well school curriculum covered the skills students needed to acquire, parents of the High Achievement Group described curriculum adequacy as being: "Extremely adequate, very adequate, very good, or very well". These findings are presented in Table 10. Their counterparts in the Low Achievement Group described curriculum adequacy as being: "Well, well spread out, not sure, or not outstanding". These findings are presented in Table 9. This general pattern across groups tended to be evident in most of the parent responses to the Parent Opinion Inventory-Part B.

Discussion related to Testing Null Hypothesis Two

The statistical analyses related to testing this null hypothesis indicated that there was a significant difference in student- teacher relation scores across schools. As indicated in the mean variation scores listed in Table 2, students from the Low Achievement Group perceived their teachers as being more positive than their counterparts from the High Achievement Group (3.67 for the Low Achievement Group , and 3.38 for the High Achievement Group). Harmin (1990) described the Workshop Way learning approach practiced in the High Achievement Group as being punctuated by high student involvement since it offered an array of clever individual study tasks that enabled students to develop self-responsibility, and freed up time for teachers to help individual students and subgroups in their classes. Such an approach to learning could easily send the wrong signals to students in the High Achievement Group that their teachers were not actively engaging them in instructional activities making it easy for such students to perceive student-teacher relations as being somewhat disengaged. However, It could also be speculated that the higher mean score variation in favor of student involvement in the High Achievement Group as indicated in Table 2, might have resulted from the high student involvement quality of the Workshop Way program. According to Harmin (1990) teachers who use the Workshop Way challenge students to concentrate, share, think, create and judge, and

not merely to read and write. Thus challenged, students might perceive themselves as being active and involved while their teachers might be perceived as being passive and disengaged. It should be noted that the student-teacher relations item was the lone instance in which the Low Achievement Group attained a higher mean score than their High Achievement counterparts.

As previously indicated, Vygotsky (1978) identified the zone of proximal development (ZPD) as the distance between a child's individual capacity and the capacity to perform with assistance. By arranging tasks in an ascending order of difficulty for the High Achievement Group from kindergarten through the eighth grade, school teachers easily identified task difficulties for their students which in Vygotsky' s view corresponded to areas in which such students needed assistance. An identification of task difficulty has enabled teachers to more easily render meaningful assistance to their students. One might be reasonably led to believe that the Workshop Way program gave an academic edge to the High Achievement Group compared to their Low Achievement counterparts.

In addition, the Workshop program Way seemed to be in line with Piaget's notion of knowledge acquisition through knowledge construction. Piaget in Donaldson (1978) claimed that experience involves the acquiring of new knowledge through acting on objects or tasks. While physical experience yields knowledge of the properties of objects that are acted

upon by the individual learner, logico- mathematical experience yields knowledge of the actions themselves. Based on this Piagetian position, one could easily be led to assume that a combination of the Workshop Way and the traditional approaches to instruction contributed greatly to the high level of academic performance in the High Achievement Group.

Discussion related to Testing Null Hypothesis Three

The statistical analyses related to testing this null hypothesis indicated that there was a significant difference in student-counselor relation scores across the schools ($P < .019$). With a mean score of 3.46, students in the High achievement Group perceived student-counselor relations in a more positive way than their counterparts in the Low Achievement Group ($X = 3.18$). However, it should be noted that whereas students in the Low Achievement Group had a counselor who worked full time, their High Achievement counterparts had no staff member so designated. The principal was responsible for attending to the counseling needs of students and when she was absent, the vice principal replaced her. It does not therefore come as a surprise that in both student-administration- relations (null hypothesis 4) and student-counselor relations (null hypothesis 3) there were significant differences across schools in favor of the High Achievement Group since the same administrative personnel also shared responsibility for attending to student counseling needs in

the High Achievement Group.

Discussion related to Testing Null Hypothesis Four

An examination of the results of the statistical analyses related to testing the fourth null hypothesis indicated that there was a significant difference in student- administration relation scores across the schools ($P < .02$). Three (16, 17, and 19) of the four items that were related to testing this hypothesis focused on the possibility of the principal being reached on the same day students had problems or suggestions; the general disposition of the personnel in the principal's office to care about students as individuals; and student satisfaction with the personal encouragement they receive from the principal concerning their school work. The availability of an assistant principal in the High Achievement Group provides a reason to believe that students in this group were more likely to see the principal (or the vice) on the same day they had problems than the students in the Low Achievement Group where the office of a vice principal was non- existent (item 16). The tendency to care about students as individuals was also assumed to be more likely in the situation where there were two principals than in a situation where only one principal was available for consultation (item 17). Although students in both schools were not active participants in the decision- making processes that affected them (item 18), video- cassettes designed to encourage family involvement in

school work activities were made available to the families of the High Achievement Group (item 19). School officials in the Low Achievement Group did not report any such strategy specifically designed to boost school work.

Discussion related to Testing Null Hypothesis Five

Like parent interest (item 36), school community pride was a single item and was scored accordingly. It should be noted that student perception of parent interest was not significantly different across the two schools. Analyses related to testing this null hypothesis indicated that there was no significant difference in school community pride across the schools. This could have resulted from a uniformity of administrative practices in all Catholic Schools in the same diocese in terms of strong community support, involvement in fund- raising activities, and other school programs; or from community pride as a single item. From my personal observation related to attending three or more school/community activities in each of the two schools over a six- month period of the same academic year, it is my belief that school community pride as manifested in community involvement in school functions, seemed to be greater in the High Achievement Group. With a mean score difference of .23, student perception of school community pride was not found to be a statistically significant difference ($P < .19$). Did identical school practices give rise to identical student perceptions of

community pride across the two schools? One could also speculate that a mean score difference of .23 which resulted from a group of seven homogenous items weighted together (as in student involvement with a mean score variation of .24 and an alpha level of $P < .02$), could have resulted in a statistically significant alpha. Once again, it should be noted that in responding to community Opinion Inventory Part B item 1 which dealt with the extent the local school did a good job, school community members from both schools tended to be strongly affirmative. Their responses to this item (1) ranged from such answers as: "Excellent job, great job, teach very well, parents, teachers and students are cooperative", in the High Achievement Group compared to "Outstanding job, very good job, good job, blends well considering the diversity of ethnic backgrounds" in the Low Achievement Group. Although such responses might not have directly influenced student opinion with respect to school community pride, one would not rule out the likelihood of school community members from both schools responding to questionnaire items in a socially desirable manner. Such a bias could increase the chances for school community members from both schools to describe their schools in ways that were socially desirable and further weaken any chances for real differences in their own perceptions of how well the local schools were doing a good job.

Discussion related to Testing Null Hypothesis Six

The statistical analyses related to testing this null hypothesis indicated that there was a significant difference in the student involvement scores across schools ($P < .02$). With a mean score of 3.79, students in the High Achievement Group reported a significantly higher degree of student involvement in school activities than their counterparts in the Low Achievement Group ($X = 3.55$).

The higher student involvement reported in the High Achievement Group could have resulted from the Workshop Way approach to learning practiced from kindergarten through the eighth grade. Brandt (1990) summarized the Workshop Way as a strategy for teachers to make lectures highly involving of student attention and/ or participation, getting students actually doing their homework, arranging students in subgroups to enable them to learn styles that are appropriate for them, and enabling students to develop self-confidence in asking for help by reminding them that "No one knows everything". In describing "The Heart of the Workshop Way" program, Harmin (1990) also noted the high quality of student involvement as students were challenged to concentrate on their respective tasks, to think about them, and to share their knowledge with fellow students. Students were instructed to avoid the danger of merely learning "To read and recite". They were offered an array of clever individual study tasks designed to enable them to develop self- responsibility. It should be noted that only

the High Achievement Group utilized the Workshop Way approach to learning and one might reasonably speculate that student participation in learning tasks might have adequately strengthened student overall involvement in school activities.

Brandt (1990) reported that a typical Workshop Way classroom had one wall covered with task signs and students knew they had to work their way through those tasks each day, doing the tasks in order one at a time, working alone or with a self- selected partner. Students began their tasks when they first entered the classroom and tended to continue until the teacher hit the bell twice as a signal for all students in the class to clear their desks and get ready for a whole class lesson, or until the teacher called individuals together for a small group discussion. In sum, the students in the Low Achievement Group had a significantly lower mean score in student involvement in school activities (3.55 when compared to 3.79 for the High Achievement Group) than their High Achievement counterparts.

Summary and Suggestions for Further Research

The results of this study strongly indicate that the children in the two schools perceived that their parents, teachers, counselors, school administrators, and school community personnel (significant others) were related to their academic performance. Across the two schools, student opinion scores concerning the amount of parent interest in school

functions were not found to be significantly different. Similarly, there were no significant differences found in student opinion scores concerning school community pride across the two schools. However, there were significant differences found in student-teacher relation scores, student-counselor relation scores, and student-administration relation scores across the two schools. Finally, it should be noted that the student-teacher relations variable was found to be nearly twice as important as any other variable used in the study with respect to its ability to discriminate across the schools.

The High Achievement Group students had higher mean scores in student perception of parent interest in school functions, student-counselor relations, student-administration relations, student perception of school community pride, and student involvement in school activities than their Low Achievement counterparts. However, students from the Low Achievement Group perceived their teachers more positively than their counterparts from the High Achievement Group. Individual study tasks offered to students of the High Achievement Group by their teachers through the Workshop Way approach to learning, while increasing student involvement in learning tasks could easily have sent a mistaken message to students that their teachers were not actively engaging them in instructional activities. As the teachers challenged students to concentrate, share, think, create and judge

literacy issues, students might have perceived themselves as being active and involved while perceiving their teachers as being passive and disengaged. This perception could have produced a lower mean score in student-teacher relations among the High Achievement Group than among their Low Achievement counterparts.

Given the results reported above, the Workshop Way program seems to be a useful strategy to enhance the active involvement of children in learning tasks. By systematically arranging learning tasks in an ascending order of task difficulty from kindergarten through the eighth grade, teachers in the High Achievement Group were better able to match their instruction to a child's zone of proximal development (ZPD). Furthermore, such an approach for influencing the academic performance of children (through the Workshop Way program) seems to be congruent with Piaget's notion of knowledge acquisition through knowledge construction.

Given the vast literature on the influences of family and school variables on the academic achievement of grade school children, it is recommended that future investigators develop their own questionnaire. Use of a specially constructed instrument would unveil more current literacy events and practices in both the family and school settings. It would also permit the detection of possible interactions among teachers and counselors, teachers and administrative

personnel, the school community and school administrators, and parents and teachers. By factor analyzing family and school variables found to be significantly influential to the academic achievement of children, a model program could then be constructed and utilized as part of an ongoing research program. Such a research program could also include survey instruments from Parts A and B of Student Opinion Inventory (those parts used in this study),the Parent Opinion Inventory, the Teacher Opinion Inventory, and the Community Opinion Inventory. The inclusion of these additional instruments would allow for a more fine grained analyses (qualitative and quantitative) of the perceptions of both the school children and their significant others with respect to academic performance. Since ability has consistently been shown to account for over half of the variance in performance (Parkerson, et al., 1984), an effort should be made to control for student ability in determining High versus Low Achievement Groups.

The National Center for Education Statistics Report (1991) indicated that the average academic proficiency of 9 - 13 year-old children declined during the 1970s, then increased significantly between 1982 and 1990 to reach a level equal to that of the first assessment two decades earlier. In light of this report, a clearer understanding of the influences of family and school variables on the academic performance of children appears imperative to the development of effective

intervention strategies and meaningful programs designed to enhance the academic performance of grade school children.

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VITA

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His elementary and secondary school education were obtained at Saint Charles Central School Avuvu, and Saint Columba's Secondary School Amaimo respectively. He later obtained a two-year post secondary education in Holy Ghost College Owerri where he majored in Chemistry, Botany and Zoology. In October 1970, he was admitted to Bigard Memorial Seminary in Enugu Nigeria where he studied Philosophy (1970-1973), and Theology (1973-1977). Ordained a Catholic priest on April 16, 1977, he received the Bachelor of Divinity Degree in June 1977.

He served as high school seminary teacher at Saint Peter Claver Seminary Okpala; and director of Saint Mary's Seminary Umuowa in Orlu. He was appointed associate pastor of Saint Michael's parish Urualla in Orlu, pastor of Saint Peter Claver Seminary parish Okpala., pastor of Saint James' parish Arondizuogu, and Saint Mary's Seminary parish Umuowa both in Orlu; and later, pastor of saint Joseph's parish for Uzoagba,

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In the summer of 1985 his bishop, the Most Reverend Mark Unegbu, recommended him for further studies in the United States of America. In January 1987, he received the Bachelor of Science Degree in Psychology from Loyola University of Chicago. In February 1989, he received a Master of Arts Degree (with distinction) in Human Services and Counseling (Agency Management) from DePaul University, in Chicago Illinois. The title of his Master's thesis is "A model program for the recruitment and retention of registered hospital nurses".

While doing his undergraduate studies in Nigeria, he was a member of the first football (soccer) team of Holy Ghost College Owerri (1966-1967), and Bigard Memorial Seminary, Enugu (1970-1977). He also played table tennis (singles) and was champion for Bigard Seminary Enugu (1973), and Loyola University of Chicago (Spring 1986). In addition to full-time academic works, he served as a minister of religion at Saint Felicitas Church Chicago (August 1985-December 1985), and Saint Ita Church (1986 till the present). He is the spiritual director of Saint Ita Legion of Mary, and an assistant chaplain at Saint Columbus-Cabrini Medical Center.

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The final copies have been examined by the director of the dissertation and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated and that the dissertation is now given final approval by the Committee with reference to content and form.

The dissertation is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

8/20/92
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