

**A STUDY TO DETERMINE WHY PARENTS
DO OR DO NOT PARTICIPATE
IN THE EDUCATION OF THEIR MIDDLE SCHOOL CHILDREN**

by

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(ABSTRACT)

This study was conducted to obtain information from parents regarding why they do or do not participate in the education of their middle school children. The results of the study should serve as a resource to teachers and administrators who wish to increase parental participation.

A total of 209 parents returned a completed questionnaire. The survey requested information regarding how many times they attended functions/activities during the first semester of the 1990-91 school year, and what their reasons were for attending; what functions/activities they did not attend and their reasons for not attending. Parents also were asked what kind of resources/activities they provided for their children at home and elsewhere. In addition, the instrument requested information that would be helpful in determining if there were observable differences when selected demographic variables (race, education and occupation) were considered; and, using a Likert scale, this instrument gathered information regarding parental expectations.

The data collected from the Parental Participation questionnaire were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSSX). Inferential and Descriptive research methodologies were used to describe the variables. Frequencies, means, percentages and cross tabulations were computed and tables were generated for each research question.

The results indicated that parents attended Back-to-School Night and parent/teacher conferences at a significantly higher percentage rate than any other function during the first semester. The reasons parents gave for attending these activities/functions most frequently were: "Because we believe our attendance will help teachers and principals do a better job toward educating our children," and "Because we believe parent participation is important." The reasons parents selected most often for not attending functions/activities were: "No one asked me," and "I could not take time off from work." Demographics, education and occupation, played a significant role in how often parents participated and in the manner in which parents participated. Race did not appear to play a significant role in this population's participation.

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DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to the memory of my grandmother whose love, support, involvement and encouragement helped to shape my past, my present and my future.

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Several studies, (Comer, 1980, 1987, 1988; Epstein, 1987, 1988, 1989; and Henderson, 1987, 1988, 1989), which focused on middle school age children indicated that the adolescent years are a critical time for a child to learn to like school. These school years are especially important because a student who falls behind his peers or who becomes bored with school at this age may never regain an interest in continuing his/her education.

Further, making a good middle school adjustment is particularly critical for some minority students (Comer, 1988). By age 11, 44 percent of Black boys and 26 percent of Black girls have repeated at least one grade. The percentage of Hispanics retained is 38 for boys and 32 for girls. The 1988 United States Department of Commerce Current Population Report showed that 35 percent of Black students and 45 percent of Hispanic students fail to complete high school by age 19. In several of our cities, as many as half of the minority students drop out between entry into middle school and age 18 (Berla, Henderson and Kerewsky, 1989). These figures are disturbing, but increasingly, educators are coming to understand that successful dropout prevention must start by the time youngsters reach middle school, or earlier (Albert,

1985).

Many middle class adolescents currently face problems that used to be familiar only to the lower socioeconomic groups, such as both parents working, single parents, taking on many grown-up household chores, working to earn money, and less structure in the home (Elkind, 1981). "The stress these children face has cause them to revolt in any number of different ways, including running away, getting into drugs, dropping out of school, becoming delinquents and committing suicide" (Elkind, 1981, p. 114).

In spite of the prevalence of these negative influences, school administrators and teachers recognize that some students continually avoid the drug scenes and other disparaging conditions, while achieving at optimum levels and maintaining high self-esteem (Fehrmann, 1987). When educators began to look for reasons for the positive interplay, they found there were fewer negative incidents when parents participated in the education of their children (Henderson, 1988).

Epstein and Becker (1985) experienced positive achievement results from parent participation in Baltimore middle schools. Comer (1980) in *School Power: A Model for Improving Black Student Achievement*, discussed the increased achievement of Black students when a parent participation component is used. Not only do individual students and their

families function more effectively, but there is also an aggregate effect on the performance of students and teachers when schools collaborate with parents (Comer, 1988). The findings of the research are uniformly positive, although what was found varied substantially in approach, methodology and subject matter, writes Anne Henderson (1988).

Despite the clearly documented benefits of parental participation for students' achievement and positive attitudes toward school (Burns, 1982; Epstein, 1987; Gary, 1986; Mattox, Rich and Van Dien, 1979), parental participation of all types decline progressively during the elementary school years. By middle school, the home/school connection has been significantly reduced (Hornbeck et al. 1989). The reasons for this decline in participation are inconclusive.

Statement of the Problem

Researchers and educators have been searching for ways to guarantee student success since the release of A Nation At Risk in 1983 (Harspring, 1988). Ann Henderson (1987) contends that studies have documented measurable benefits of parent participation. Although there is now an abundance of literature that supports the positive contributions that parents make toward the success of their children, it is not unusual to hear educators say that they have difficulty

getting some of the parents to work with the schools. Thus, it was the problem of this study to identify those factors that relate to why parents participate and why parents do not participate in the education of their children who attend middle school in a large suburban Maryland public school system.

Purpose of the Study

Although recent studies indicate the merits of parent participation, the literature suggested very little effort had been made to solicit parent opinions concerning the reasons for their participation, or lack of participation, in their child's educational process. It was the purpose of this study to gather empirical data from a group of 209 parents who had children attending middle schools in a large suburban Maryland public school system. These parents provided reports regarding why parents participated and why they did not participate in the education of their middle school children.

This study also documented the reported patterns of parental participation, examined the relationship between parental participation and parental expectations, and determined if there are observable differences in suburban Maryland middle school parental participation when selected demographic variables (race, education and occupation) are

considered.

Research Questions

The research questions which guided this investigation are:

1. What reasons do suburban Maryland middle school parents give for participating in the education of their middle school children?
2. What reasons do suburban Maryland middle school parents give for not participating in the education of their middle school children?
3. What are the reported patterns of suburban Maryland middle school parents' participation?
4. What is the relationship between parental participation and parental expectations?
5. Are there observable differences in suburban Maryland middle school parental participation when selected demographic variables (race, education and occupation) are considered?

Delimitations of the Study

To make this study manageable, it was delimited as follows:

1. This study was delimited to a group of parents whose children attended middle schools in a large suburban Maryland public school system.
2. Reasons why parents do or do not participate in the education of their middle school children were delimited to those reasons given by parents who participated in the survey.
3. Parent expectations were delimited to those items listed on the questionnaire which contained "should" in relationship to what the parent felt the school or the parent was expected to do.
4. Patterns of participation were delimited to those items listed on the questionnaire which parents selected most often as the ones in which they participated.

Limitations of the Study

This study was limited by the fact that the data are self-reported by parents who responded to items listed on the parental participation questionnaire. Those parents have

children who attended middle schools during the 1990-91 school year, in a large suburban Maryland public school system. Therefore, caution should be used in making generalizations beyond a similar population.

Definition of Terms

Several terms germane to this study are identified to assist the reader:

Parental participation --- in this study includes the following activities in which parents might have been involved or could have attended: school programs, parent conferences, parent meetings, booster club activities, opportunities to serve as a volunteer in the classroom or in other school related activities, attendance at or assistance with extracurricular activities, and all the supports that parents provide at home and elsewhere to socialize their children for school (Ascher, 1988).

Parent expectations --- for the purpose of this study, those events which parents looked for confidently; those things they presumed would occur or exist; what parents anticipated.

Patterns --- in this study are the most frequent forms or types of middle school parental participation.

Middle school --- represents Grades 6, 7 and 8 for the purpose of this study.

Minority --- persons who are Asian, Black or Hispanic.

Barriers --- those behaviors or circumstances that hinder parental participation.

Limited English Proficient (LEP) parents --- parents, who because they were born in countries other than those where English is spoken and have never acquired an English proficiency, are classified as Limited English Proficient parents.

Significance of the Study

Major studies over the last 20 years have indicated that parents are significant educators of their children and that not even the best schools can do the job alone (Allen and Koehler, 1988). However, until recently, parent participation has been the forgotten factor in the discussion of students' lack of success (Demos, 1987). Evelyn M. Van Devender (1988) writes: "How successful a child is in school depends to a large degree on the child's parents" (p. 524). Although many parents have been involved in the schools their children attend, there are parents who feel alienated and lack the motivation to help schools improve because they no longer feel confident that what they say or do will make a difference

(Epstein, 1987).

This study was conducted to contribute to the research on parent participation. Some parents have revealed to educators that they do not participate in the education of their middle school child because there are still barriers to their participation despite the efforts schools have made to include them (Moles, 1982). Parents often harbor attitudes about schools and school staffs that preclude an amiable working relationship between the two groups (Kwata, 1988). So that schools and parents can establish maximum working relationships, those factors promoting and preventing harmony must be mutually addressed in order to effect productive outcomes.

Organization of the Study

This study is divided into five chapters. Chapter I includes the introduction, problem statement, purpose, research questions, delimitations, limitations, definition of terms, and the significance of the study. Chapter II includes a review of the related research and literature. Chapter III contains a description of the subjects, the instrumentation, procedures, and analyses used for the investigation. Chapter IV contains the results of the data analyses. The fifth and final chapter presents the summation, conclusions, and

implications for further study and recommendations.

CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Overview

There is new interest in parent participation in the education of their children, and it has come at a time when schools are under serious criticism, particularly for failing to educate children from low-income and minority families (Allen and Freitag, 1988). As outlined by Kagan (1984), research has begun to demonstrate the many positive effects of parental participation such as: 1) improved cognitive performance, 2) improved student behavior and attitudes toward school, 3) improved school climate, and 4) improved school/community relations. Henderson (1987) documents several major studies or programs that support the belief that there is direct and positive correlation between a parent's participation and the educational success of his or her students.

Epstein (1986) believes that a coordinated effort between home and school can produce a continuity of educational support. In order for full coordination to take place, she feels that both schools and parents need to know what each is doing. The school and home, through their interdependent

relationships, have the opportunity to work together as a natural team. The results of this teamwork will contribute to the child being better educated and better adjusted according to Epstein.

Dr. Comer (1988), professor of Child Psychiatry at Yale, writes:

Because children's interpersonal and psychosocial experiences have great impact on their ability to succeed in school and adult life, parent-teacher cooperation is crucial if children are to develop academically, socially, and emotionally. Teachers who are sensitive to both the developmental needs of the students and to the goals and aspirations of their students' parents can facilitate positive learning by designing their curriculum and classroom interactional environment to address those needs and goals (p. 39).

This chapter presents a review of selected studies and literature related to parent participation which provides the conceptual framework for this study. The review of the literature is divided into five areas. The first section gives a brief historical overview of home-school relations in the United States. The second section examines the effective schools' research, and its relationship to home and school.

The third section is focused on the research which relates to barriers to parent participation. The fourth section discusses the research related to parent participation and parent expectations. The fifth and final section reviews the literature related to selected demographic variables: race, education and occupation.

History of Parent Participation

In primitive societies, the tribe was the basic economic and political unit. Surviving was their number one problem since man had a constant struggle with animals, the elements of the weather and other tribes. The role of the family was determined by the tribal governance, which also dictated what the child should learn and what his/her future role would be. Parents could no more determine what was in the best interest of their own children than they could for the children of others (Kaestle, 1983).

Several centuries later (into the feudalism period) the tribal governance was replaced by the feudal lord who controlled a much larger population. What the child's training and education was to be, how it should be carried out, and by whom, were decisions made by the feudal lord; the parents' responsibility was to perform the child-rearing duties assigned (Tyack, 1984).

During the Colonial period in America, as well as at the same time in Europe, the family was held responsible for educating and training their children. Parents were expected to teach them their religious duties; to see that they were vocationally trained, usually through apprenticeships, indentured service, or training in the home; and to see that they were disciplined in proper respect for authority and the law (Zeigler, Tucker, and Wilson, 1977).

Thomas Jefferson played a leading role in increasing the prominent social position of schools after the American Revolution. He was one of the first to view the schools as a vehicle for serving national interests and bringing about socio-political change. He was convinced that an informed citizenry was essential to strengthening democracy and safeguarding liberty in the new republic. Jefferson believed education to be the means to accomplishing these ends (Ikenberry, 1974).

During the first period of "maximum feasible participation" (1835-1900), the control of the educational system rested with local boards of education. There was substantial opportunity for community members to interact with and influence the members of their boards. As late as 1930, there were 130,000 independent school districts; now there are approximately 16,000. In 1835, there were 28 cities with populations of 100,000 or more. In these cities there were

603 central board members, an average of 21.5 per city. In addition, there were hundreds of neighborhood boards of education. Most school boards believed that their responsibility was the administration of the schools. They managed specialized tasks, such as curriculum and finance (Greer, 1972).

As school systems increased in size, lay boards which were highly political and corrupt because they rewarded voters with jobs, alienated ethnic groups and siphoned off funds from building contracts. The lay boards felt capable of handling such duties as checking attendance and recording examinations. They later discovered they could not effectively keep up with the day-to-day operation of the schools. Consequently, they began hiring superintendents whose early responsibilities were largely clerical (Zeigler et al., 1977).

By 1912, all states had some form of free public education, and although the ties of home and school were strong, schools played the dominant role in home-school relations. As indicated earlier, by 1930, the close ties between the home and school began to weaken. Advances in science and technology and changes that occurred politically, psychologically and physically caused the home and the school to grow further apart.

Transportation made it possible for teachers and students to work at and attend schools in communities other than those

in which they lived. Television also contributed to the difference in home-school relations. Consequently, the level of interaction that existed between teachers, students and parents decreased.

The role of the parent fluctuated through the years. States intervened with child labor laws to protect the child even when the parents wanted him/her to assist with the family income. Desegregation, Sputnik, the Civil Rights Movement, the War on Poverty, and the Women's Movement all created social issues which brought about changes in the role of the school. Disagreement still exists between the home and the school over authority and responsibility for these issues which began during that era (Church, 1976).

While the role of the home and the school is still being debated, parents and schools must realize that the functions of each continue to be important to children. They need to work in tandem if students are going to achieve at maximum level and if schools are going to be effective (Davies, 1987).

The 1970's saw the cry for a return of the schools to the people. The national government intervened to increase the educational and economic opportunities of deprived populations (Tyler, 1978).

The Parent Teachers Association was founded about the turn of the century, and in 1972, the organization issued a set of bylaws that increased the scope of parental

participation.

One of the most popular ideas about school reform to emerge as a result of A Nation At Risk (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983) is that parents should participate much more actively in making decisions about what happens to children at the school level (Goodlad, 1984).

Effective Schools Research

Parent participation programs have positively influenced the development of effective middle schools. Factors which include improved student attendance, increased motivation, higher self-image and a decrease in discipline problems enhance a school's effectiveness (Fehrmann, Keith, and Reimers, 1987).

When the late Ronald Edmonds of Harvard University initiated what has come to be known as the "Effective Schools Movement," the parent participation component was missing (Fairman and Clark, 1985). Edmonds identified many schools in the United States where students were achieving far beyond expectations and went further to examine the successful schools to determine the factors they had in common. Those factors which Edmonds identified, according to the authors, were:

1. Strong instructional leadership
2. Emphasis on academics, including the basic skills
3. High expectations for student achievement
4. Positive school climate
5. Frequent monitoring of student progress and its utilization in curriculum planning (p. 7).

Edmonds insisted that all children are educable and claimed that the fact that many poor and minority children fail to master the school curriculum does not reflect deficiencies in the children but rather inadequacies in the schools themselves (Neisser, 1986). Since Edmonds' initial work, many other researchers have developed lists of factors which are associated with effective schools. The majority of the recent school effectiveness researchers have tended to focus on the importance of parent and community participation in the schools.

Solomon (1991) is one of the policy writers who claimed that a critical and often overlooked dimension of effective schooling is parent participation. She believes that the research has made a strong case which clearly supports the fact that successful students receive long-term support from parents and/or other adults at home as well as strong support from teachers and others at school. She also feels that effective family/school partnerships will be essential for helping more students reach the ambitious education goals

which the nation has set for the year 2000.

Hilliard (1983) discusses two ways to attain superior academic performance. First, he says, it is possible for schools alone to organize and offer effective instruction that can overcome many negative factors in a child's environment. Such things as low family income, divorced parents, or poor nutrition are important factors in the learning environment for children; but they are not the determining factors. Secondly, he says that there are in existence examples of communities, operating independently of schools, which have taken the necessary steps to overcome the schools' failure to educate children.

Epstein (1987) disagrees with Hilliard and writes that parents are children's first and most important teachers and continues with the premise that the effects of parent and home environment variables are indisputably tied to children's performance throughout their entire school careers. She feels so strongly about the research that she lists parent and home environment variables as the most important factors in achieving effective programs.

Oliver Moles (1982) calls our attention to an effective school in Chicago where a program called "Parents Plus" is in place. The program brings parents into the school one day per week to learn how to help at home with the current school work and to expand homemaking and community-related skills.

Chicago also was one of the first major cities where the school system restructured schools through parent participation in Local School Councils. This was a very long and painful process for some school staffs initially, since this gave parents the authority to make important policy decisions about budget, curriculum and administration (Hall and Henderson, 1990). However, teachers and administrators who were very uncomfortable with the new approach in the beginning are no longer complaining about parent participation because they have seen that enacting with the middle school students' parents makes their job a great deal easier, according to the authors.

Ohio's effective schools program incorporates the effective schools research conducted by Edmonds (1982), Lezotte (1987), Good and Brophy (1986) and Brookover (1985). Evans and Jilek (1986) describe the correlates as the following seven factors:

1. A Sense of Mission
2. Strong Building Leadership
3. High Expectations for All Students and Staff
4. Frequent Monitoring of Student Programs
5. A Positive Learning Climate
6. Sufficient Opportunity for Learning
7. Parent/Community Participation (p. 23).

An effective schools program located in Wheeling, West Virginia, was observed by Marockie and Jones (1987). The instructors and administrators experienced many of the same problems that other similar school districts faced, such as high unemployment, an increase in the school dropout rate, a scarcity of resources, loss in population, families in distress, and stiff competition for existing resources. However, when the community worked together with the schools, one of the accomplishments was a reduction in the school dropout rate.

Project B, a middle level suburban school project in Illinois with a racially diverse student body, where the test scores had been declining for years and only 40 percent of the Partnership Grant in assignments was funded by the school's Urban School Fund, focused on improving student's test scores and increasing report card grades. The three main components of the project were: 1) a homework lab which was available to students two days per week, 2) student contracts for improvement in school performance, and 3) instructional videotapes produced by the school in conjunction with the local cable company. Ninety percent of the student body had VCRs (Chapman, 1991). The parent education tapes showed effective ways to motivate children to improve their study habits and organizational skills without yelling, threats or bribery. The program and the school were highly effective.

When research was done on 8,000 students in Palo Alto, California, it was discovered that influence on grades was determined by family behavior patterns and parent attendance at school events, despite the income of parents or education level. Parent reaction to good and poor grades was an important factor. The thing that seemed to help most was encouragement. Students who get better grades tend to have parents who praise, encourage and offer to help them (Dornbusch, 1987).

The schools where parents have had the greatest success are in areas where parents play a variety of roles, including decision-making, and where there is a structured program of training for both parents and school personnel (Revicki, 1981).

An analysis of the School Preferred Reading Program in selected Los Angeles schools revealed that in middle schools with low-income minority students, large consistent gains were found when there were tremendous efforts to involve black and Hispanic parents and other community members in the decision-making process (Armor, 1976).

One of the most successful programs was started by Dr. Comer (1987). His project, "Excel," which included a parent participation component, began in 1969. The two original project schools in New Haven, Connecticut, were ranked 32nd and 33rd in the city. Their students were about 18 months

behind national achievement levels on standardized tests. In 1986, these schools, with no change in socioeconomic makeup, tied for third place in achievement out of 26 schools. Project "Excel" has now been expanded to all New Haven middle schools.

Just as Dr. Comer discovered, other studies also have determined that high teacher expectation, regardless of the students' background, is one of the most distinguishing features of an effective school. The tone of that high expectation must start with the principal (Fairman and Clark, 1985).

A strong parent participation program needs to exist in a middle school if the school is to be effective (Rich et al., 1980). The more comprehensive and long lasting the parent participation program, the more effective the school is likely to be (Olson, 1989).

Barriers To Parental Participation

For schools to better serve the interest of their communities, administrators should broaden their thinking about the concept of parent participation. Neilsen (1982) states that administrators must encourage parents and community representatives to become partners in education. Parents are particularly knowledgeable about learning when it

comes to their own children. Schools sometimes use a one-way practice of enlisting parents to support existing school activities. However, what is needed is a family, school and community enterprise (Chavkin and Williams, 1985).

Student teachers at Brooklyn College concluded that one of the central difficulties faced by schools is parent/teacher relations (Shadick, 1970). They felt there was very little that anybody could do to solve the problem because the parents were apathetic and had little concern for education.

Parents are often asked to get involved in meaningful ways with schools only when their children are in trouble (Crispeels, 1991). They do not have natural interactions with school staffs, and are often suspicious and distrustful before there are problems and are convinced their feelings were justified after problems arise. Some parents have difficult memories and ambivalent feelings about school themselves. They are often under great stress with their own personal problems or failures and view school problems of their children as only another failure. Thus, many parents stay away from schools or interact with school personnel in angry, defensive and confrontational ways (Moles, 1987).

One of the barriers that continues to surface is the disagreement about whether parents have enough training to make school decisions. In a recent study completed by Chavkin and Williams (1985), only 34 percent of the parents thought

they did not have enough training to help make school decisions while more than 81 percent of the superintendents and 72 percent of the school board presidents thought parents did not have enough training.

Chavkin and Williams (1989) continued their focus on parent participation and wrote the six essential elements of successful participation. Without these components, they say, the barriers will remain. They are:

1. Written policies to legitimize the importance of parental participation and to help frame the context for program activities.
2. Administrative support. First, funds need to be designated for implementing the program. Secondly, material resources, meeting space and equipment are needed. Third, people need to be designated to carry out program efforts or events.
3. Training is needed for both parents and staff.
4. A partnership approach is needed for planning, goal setting and role definition.
5. Two-way communication. Communication between home and school needs to occur frequently.
6. Evaluation. This activity will give school staffs and parents an opportunity to make program revisions as necessary (p. 238).

Because children's interpersonal and psychosocial experiences have great impact on their ability to succeed in school and adult life, parent-teachers cooperation is crucial if children are to develop academically, socially, and emotionally (Comer, 1987). Teachers who are sensitive to both the developmental needs of their students and to the goals and aspirations of their students' parents can facilitate positive learning by designing their curriculum and classroom interactional environment to address those needs.

Asher (1988) agrees that school staffs sometimes say and feel that parents don't care. They offer in evidence that parents frequently avoid keeping appointments and do not attend school functions but blame the school for most of their children's problems. Virtually all parents would like to help their children, Asher thinks, but many feel helpless to do so.

Often departmentalization in middle schools will not allow staffs to work together on a problem, because of the manner in which they are organized. Thus, middle schools need to be restructured into interdisciplinary teams which would allow teachers to plan together and to get to know their students, the parents of the students and the needs of both. When this occurs, teachers can do a much better job of stimulating the social and emotional growth - and in turn, academic learning (MacIver, 1990).

Teachers worry about the interference from parents, and

parents inherently feel anxious about surrendering their children to strangers. Principals are eager to establish a distinction between parents and teachers, so that the confusion will be diminished. Thus, the turf battles are often present and enhanced by negative and often inaccurate stereotypes (Henderson et al., 1989).

Parents can be easily intimidated by the expertise and "educationese" of teachers and administrators. Before parents enter a school, they have already made a host of assumptions about teachers and administrators, as well as their role as supporters of the school and of their child. If their own school experiences were unpleasant, schools are a formidable place, both in complexity and in size. If parents are asked to come to school only when the school wants something or their children have had a negative experience, it stands to reason they may be easily intimidated by articulate and knowledgeable professionals. This may be especially characteristic of the parent who is non-English speaking or who feels inarticulate around teachers (Henderson and Marburger, 1990).

If parent power and energy are to be used to further the education of a city's poorest and neediest students, new models of parent participation and involvement are essential. Models that stress greater collective community values and the empowerment of families as key decision makers are needed.

The second wave of school reform (1984-1988) moved in that direction, insisting that school improvement was better driven by client demands, market forces, autonomy and decentralized demands, minimum standards, and greater state involvement (Jackson and Cooper, 1989).

In spite of the mounting evidence that parental participation is not just a way of placating parents and taxpayers, many teachers and administrators continue to work with parents reluctantly, even grudgingly (MacIver, 1990). Perhaps they resent the time and effort that working with parents requires; maybe they have become discouraged with the lack of parental response; maybe they are convinced that all those single parents and working mothers are not really interested in their children's school life; perhaps the teachers or administrators are new at their jobs and not yet secure enough to reach out to the community or simply think that the parents' place is in the home, not in the school. McAfee (1987) says that neither teachers nor administrators have been trained in how to work effectively with parents since most certification requirements do not include the ability to work with parents.

McPherson (1982) is another researcher who found that teachers sometimes discourage parent participation because

they:

- Are uncertain about how to involve parents and still maintain their role as specialized "experts."
- Are uncertain about how to balance their concern for the group of children against a more personalized concern for each individual child, which they believe would be expected if parents were more involved (p. 36).

Warnat (1987) admits that it is difficult to achieve a successful parent participation program when teachers harbor an "anti-parent sentiment" and view parents as "unwelcome invaders" of their turf. He also saw the bureaucracy which includes local, state and federal legislative levels as an interference, and saw "parent power" as another handicap to parental participation.

Lickona (1988) writes that parents are often unsure about what rules are appropriate for participating with their children. Many are willing to join forces to help their children grow into good and decent people, but are confused about how much to do or when to limit or discontinue participation. This is particularly true of the middle school parent, according to the author. On the other hand, according to Lickona, parents complain that the bureaucracy of the schools discourages their participation and their expression of concerns, complaints and demands.

Becher (1986) discovered that teachers:

- Believe parent participation activities take too much planning time, turn responsibility for teaching over to parents, and are disruptive because parents do not know how to work with children.
- Are concerned that parents may use nonstandard English or demonstrate other undesirable characteristics.
- Question whether parents will keep commitments, refrain from sharing confidential information, and avoid being overly critical (p. 1).

In the study done by Tangri and Leitch (1982), which involved inner-city middle level schools, parents reported as barriers to collaboration the health of family members, having small children at home, their jobs and work hours, and late notice of meetings.

Sometimes what constitutes a barrier to parental participation is the feeling among some parents and educators that once kids get to be preteens, parents should let them be independent (Berla et al., 1989). Although young adolescents need to take on more responsibility for managing their own lives as they get older, they are not ready to be on their own. The message that is often sent to parents by the school is that parents who come to the school, or ask frequently to

see teachers, or spend a great deal of time with their kids, are meddlesome and overbearing, or can't let go. However, "Kids at this stage need their parents more than ever. They need close, caring adults with whom to share increasingly complex and grown-up thoughts. Schools that understand young adolescents must work actively to keep their parents informed and involved" (Berla et al., 1989, p. 55).

Parent Expectations As A Key Factor In Parent Participation

Often there is concern about who is expected to do what. What exactly is the parent expected to do? What is expected of the teacher and other school staff members? Epstein (1987) asserts that parents are expected to provide food, clothing, and shelter for their children. They are also expected to assure that their children are healthy and to provide a safe environment. In addition, Epstein says parents are expected to provide school supplies and a place to do homework, and to build positive home conditions for learning.

Epstein continues with the fact that parents also are expected to assist teachers and students with lessons, on class trips, at class parties or other classroom activities. They should assist teachers, administrators, and staff in the school cafeteria, library, computer labs and other school activities.

McConkey (1985) in his discussion of parental expectations cites such things as parents helping with the organization of parent groups for fund-raising, community relations, political awareness and program development. They may also be able to assist schools by attending students' assemblies, sports events, and special presentations. Further, parents may help to organize workshops, discussion groups, and training sessions for other parents.

Administrators must be educated about the importance of enabling teachers and counselors to take initiative, about the effects of their own expectations regarding parent participation in the school or in the school district, about the bureaucratic and political value of parent advisory councils, and about the importance of sending a signal that parent participation is valued (Slaughter, 1987).

Schools are expected to communicate with the home. It is the school staff members' responsibility to inform parents about the school calendar, schedules, special events, channels of communication, school goals, programs, services, school rules, codes, grades and procedures for grading, report card dates, test dates, informal evaluations, open house and parent-teacher conferences.

Parents want to know when their children come home from school that they have had enough good experiences to want to return the next day. Parents also want to know that the

middle school is teaching students what they will need to be prepared for high school, and they want teachers to keep them informed about their children's progress (Berla et al., 1989).

Parents believe that early adolescence is a difficult time, and although it is a time for children to take on more responsibility than they had previously assumed, it is still a time when parents can be involved. They do not buy totally into statements saying that their children become clumsy and less interested in school at the middle school level (Miller et al., 1987).

Several parents who were interviewed in one study describe middle school counselors as "not willing to work with them and not dedicated." These parents also said that counselors are teachers who found a way to get out of the classroom. However, others who were interviewed discussed the importance of good middle school counselors and the need to have them work with the parents and teachers as much as with the children (Remley and Albright, 1988).

Parents expect the school to articulate its philosophy in understandable terms. They also believe that eighth graders will teach their younger children about sex, drugs and rudeness, and they expect school staffs to be aware of their concerns and to help them solve the problem (Finks, 1990).

Parents expect schools to communicate a desire to have them participate in the education of their middle school

children. Often several methods of communication are needed, and it is expected to be often. If parents' work schedules interfere with the customary methods of participation, parents expect schools to adjust their schedules to accommodate them (Michael, 1979).

Jackson and Cooper (1989) reported that if schools are serious about developing programs for parental participation, they should assume that all parents have strengths and interests in education. They must also:

- Assume that parents themselves need schooling
- Assume that parent communities and networks are high on "social capital, "support for school
- Build on cultural traditions of community and parents
- Develop schools as a place for parents to congregate and solve problems, using a "Parents' Room" in the school
- Organize parent groups in schools and district-wide
- Work through existing relationships, as between district offices and school leadership, to help parents
- Increase communications through parent organizations and individuals (p. 270).

Many parents believe teacher expectations are lower for some students, especially those who are from a lower

socioeconomic area, or whose parents are Black or Hispanic. Parents also indicated that the cumulative folder information influences the teacher (Rolison and Medway, 1985).

Parents do not believe they can change anything, according to It Starts in the Classroom (1987). There is the feeling that when parents are up against the system, the system always wins. They also believe the professionals will use their language, whether the parents understand it or not. Further, one of the most difficult things for schools to come to grips with is the fact that parents sincerely believe that if they make waves, it will be taken out on their kids.

Race, Education and Occupation

Parents who cannot speak English or who have trouble speaking English correctly, those who are illegal aliens, or those who are not well educated may find it difficult to join an organization that is dominated by middle class norms (Jackson and Cooper, 1989).

The assumption by many, when Black and Hispanic students are placed in classes for low achievers and their parents don't complain, is that this is acceptable. However, the fact may be that the parents are very dissatisfied, are unaware, or are not knowledgeable about what the change means. Minority parents seldom confront the school organization because they

feel powerless to effect change. Parents believe schools legitimize the background of middle-class students, but the minority student must accept the hurt, humiliation and embarrassment (Calabrese, 1988).

Despite the feelings that many minority middle school parents have, they must participate in the education of their children, says Olion and Gillis-Olion (1983) who write "If students are to reach their potential, parents must become advocates for their children at all levels of the educational hierarchy" (p. 54).

Among the characteristics that create most of the negative expectations, race and social class are at the top of the list. Both cause differential treatment. Teachers tend to have higher expectations for students who speak better English, whose parents have better jobs and whose parents are better educated (Cecil, 1988).

Of utmost importance in all work with parents of any race, education or occupational level is the warmth, acceptance and knowledge of the cultural customs. These add to the establishment of positive relationships (Berger, 1981). A common complaint by principals and teachers is that they expect parents to respond to the school's communications much better than they do (Herrera and Wooden, 1988). School staffs continue with, "One of the reasons for the parents' lack of communication may be that certain kinds of oral and written

communications from schools alienate parents" (p. 78). The fact is the problem is compounded when the school and parents speak different languages.

There is inconsistency in the research findings on parental participation when occupation and education are considered. Although the level of expectations for the child's achievements is related to the differential in access to power and resources, the gender of the child plays a significant role when the child is Hispanic (Hamner and Turner, 1981).

In the study accomplished by Solorzano (1986), the discovery was made that Hispanic middle school parents have a higher expectation for their children than white parents. However, those high aspirations of Hispanics often do not translate into higher achievements. Both Hispanic males and females are disproportionately found in the lower level classes when compared with whites.

Hispanic and Asian parents, even though they care deeply about their children's education, are often not as involved in their children's school as they should be. Neither was ever asked to participate before; consequently, this is a break in tradition, beliefs and customs, as the education of the child was strictly left to the professionals in their countries (Lewis, 1990). For limited English proficiency (LEP) parents, directions, important messages, and every communication

possible, including major publications, materials and notices from the school should be developed in the language of the parent (Henderson, 1987). Thus, the school must be aware of the cultural needs of the parent. Secondly, the school must be committed to solving the language problem, and thirdly, action must be taken to extend opportunities for all parents, and particularly middle school parents, because their participation is so crucial (Henderson et al., 1987).

Also, when parents have limited English capabilities, directions are needed in the parents' own language to describe how they can help students excel in reading, math, science or obtain other skills by monitoring, talking with the child, asking questions, giving encouragement, listening to the child's answers, and signing homework (Maynard, 1986).

Programs which include the above suggestions and the ones below encourage the participation of low-income and working parents:

1. Evening parent conferences. This could be negotiated with teachers so that they have a shortened school day in return for evening hours.
2. Family nights. Cafeteria or potluck dinners for families, baby-sitting for young children, and activities or quiet study in the library for middle school students on an evening when parents meet at school. The increased turnout is well worth the

extra effort.

Bilingual volunteers, other parents, or paid aides or staff can form an important communication network to translate information for parents. The limited English proficient (LEP) parents may become part of the group of translators as they improve their own English skills. These networks and services require strong staff support.

Although many parents cannot come to the school, many others do not come because they do not feel welcome or are not invited. In order for parents to feel invited, schools must write, telephone and personally invite parents, particularly those who are Black, Hispanic, and Asian (Epstein and Becker, 1987). Epstein agrees that once the parent comes to school, there must be a bilingual parent or staff member who can welcome, direct and instruct the parent about the activities without creating feelings of discomfort or inadequacy.

Just as parenting practices are different when there are socioeconomic differences, participation practices are different (Hamner and Turner, 1983). Parents with a college education and better paying jobs have demonstrated higher expectations concerning achievement for their children; they talk to their children more and tend to stress goals more.

The educational level of the mother tends to play a greater role in the achievements of middle school children than any other characteristic (Baker and Stevenson, 1986).

The researchers found the more educated mothers were, the greater their participation in their children's education. They knew more about their child's program and had more contact with teachers. They were also more prone to take action when the need arose. The educated mothers tended to choose college preparatory subjects for their children in spite of their children's academic performance.

In some middle-class families, particularly in suburban communities, many mothers do not work. This means that more women are available to assist at school, and to attend daytime PTA meetings and parent conferences (LeCompte, 1987). However, LeCompte points out that 70 percent of the other mothers are working, leaving behind latchkey kids and a complicated situation where parent participation is concerned. The demographic shifts, LeCompte says, will mean that by the year 2000, one of every three children enrolled in school will belong to a nonwhite minority group, and schools must be prepared to accommodate this reality.

The overwhelming majority of parents, despite their occupation and educational backgrounds, possess the basic strengths and abilities to help their children achieve (Rich, Mattox and Van Diem, 1979). Parents everywhere, in suburbs, inner-city and in rural areas, have remained constant in caring about their children and want very much to help them achieve (Rich, 1988).

Summary

The benefits of parental involvement are enormous (Henderson, 1988). However, what seems to be clear is that teachers, administrators and parents will need to have many barriers removed in order to maximize parental participation (Epstein, 1987). Additionally, parent participation training is warranted for both parents and school staffs.

Many researchers ignored the middle school level until recently, feeling that this was the time for parents to "relax," but Comer, Epstein and others believe that this time period is the one in which parent participation is critical because students who experience failure at this level often become "dropouts" prior to reaching high school.

CHAPTER III
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the research methodology used in this study, to give a description of the population selection procedures, to explain the development of the questionnaire (the survey instrument) and its administrative procedures, and to provide an explanation of the statistical procedures used in analyzing the data.

The research questions guiding this investigation were:

1. What reasons do suburban Maryland middle school parents give for participating in the education of their middle school children?
2. What reasons do suburban Maryland middle school parents give for not participating in the education of their middle school children?
3. What are the reported patterns of suburban Maryland middle school parents' participation?
4. What is the relationship between parental participation and parental expectations?
5. Are there observable differences in suburban Maryland middle school parental participation when selected demographic variables (race, education and occupation) are considered?

The Setting

The Montgomery County Public School system located in the state of Maryland was selected as the site for this study. The student population in this county school system was 103,773 for the 1990-91 school year. The median household income was \$54,100. The school system was 38.2 percent minority, with 17.1 percent Black, 11.9 percent Asian and 8.9 percent Hispanic. There were 172 schools: 14 middle schools (grades 6, 7, 8) 10 intermediate schools (grades 7 and 8), 21 high schools and 122 elementary schools. The remaining five were alternative schools.

Population

Parents of 500 students who attended six of the middle schools (two each from three of the four administrative areas; one area had only intermediate schools) were randomly selected from a computerized database which contained 4500 middle school students' names, numbers, addresses and telephone information. Weisberg and Bowen (1977) call this method the systematic selection procedure: a variant of the simple random sampling process. Using this method, a researcher makes a random start to choose the first person, then skips over so many names to get to the next person and so on. In this

particular study, the researcher chose every ninth student after a random start, until approximately 85 students from each school was selected (29 from each of the three middle school grades).

Instrumentation

The survey research method was chosen as the means of collecting the data for the study. Since no suitable instrument was available to collect the kind of data sought in this study, it was necessary to develop an instrument. The initial steps in formulating the questionnaire, once the research questions for the study were established, were to review the related literature in order to identify the various activities associated with parental participation, interview parents to identify topics, and collect information and recommendations regarding reasons for their participation and nonparticipation.

In order to obtain information regarding the ability of the respondents to understand and complete the instrument correctly, a field test was undertaken. A draft of the questionnaire was sent to 10 middle school parents. These parents were asked to:

1. Indicate the length of time it took for them to complete the questionnaire.

2. Circle the questions that were confusing or ambiguous and tell why.
3. List the questions they felt should be deleted and give an explanation.
4. List the questions that should be modified and explain how.
5. List items that should be added.

This group of parents was also given an opportunity to offer format suggestions, discuss concerns they had about the questionnaire, and discuss both negative and positive factors that inhibited or promoted their participation. The length of time parents took to complete the survey varied. However, the average time was approximately 25 minutes.

After reviewing data from the field test, consulting with members of the researcher's committee and meeting with staff members of the school system's Department of Educational Accountability, it was determined that some changes in wording and design of the instrument should occur.

The same group of parents who participated in the field study participated in the pilot. Again, they were asked to indicate the length of time it took to complete the study and if they felt threatened or intimidated by the questions asked in the survey instrument. The response rate was 80 percent and no one admitted being threatened or intimidated by the questionnaire.

The final version of the questionnaire was divided into three sections. The first section requested parents to select from lists those activities/functions in which they participated or did not participate. Afterwards, respondents were to indicate the reason(s) why they participated or did not participate in an activity during the first semester of the 1990-91 school year. They were also to indicate how many times they participated in an activity. If they participated in an activity that was not listed, an "other" space was provided for parents to add such an activity/ function. If a reason why a parent did not participate was not listed, space was provided for the parent to include his or her own reason(s) for not participating. Parents were also asked to point out how they participated with their children at home and elsewhere by choosing from a list of resources and types of assistance which may have been provided for their child.

Section II collected demographic data about the middle school student's parent(s), while the third and last section which contained a Likert Scale gave parents an opportunity to indicate their choice on a scale between "strongly agree" and "strongly disagree" on 23 items related to parental expectations.

Procedure

The researcher presented a proposal of the study to the Department of Educational Accountability of the Montgomery County Public School system where the study was to take place, along with a request to conduct the research among parents of middle school students (Appendix A). The proposal was reviewed and recommended for approval and distribution by the Department of Educational Accountability.

A cover letter, stating the school system's approval to administer the questionnaire and asking for the parents' cooperation, accompanied the survey instrument (appendix B). The letter told recipients that a Spanish version of the instrument was available upon request and that a translator would be provided for any parent who wished, at no cost to the parent. The researcher included her telephone number so that parents who desired assistance or who had questions about the instrument could contact her directly.

Additionally, the letter accompanying the questionnaire explained to the respondents that although they would remain anonymous, the questionnaires had been coded in order to provide a follow-up procedure.

Data Collection

The printed survey instrument that had been number coded, accompanied by the letter described in the preceding section, was mailed to 500 parents of middle school children on March, 16, 1991. They were asked to complete the questionnaire and return it in the enclosed postage prepaid envelope by March 30, 1991.

By April 2, 1991, 150 questionnaires had been returned. This represented an initial 30 percent return rate. A follow-up letter was sent on April 3, 1991, to 100 of those parents whose response had not been received. The researcher made an effort to keep the numbers from each school equal, as she selected the names of parents who would receive follow-up letters. By April 20, 1991, a total of 209 questionnaires had been returned. The response rate to the survey was 41.8 percent. The percentage rate of nonresponse was 51.2 percent.

Data Analysis

The raw data obtained from the parent participation questionnaire were entered into a microcomputer and analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences, (SPSSX). The five research questions were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Frequencies, means, percentages and cross tabulations were computed and are

reported in table form in Chapter IV.

Weinberg and Schumaker (1969) in their deliberation on descriptive research pointed out that:

The methods of descriptive statistics entail specifying a population of interest and then collecting the measurements of all members of that population. These original measurements or scores are called raw data. The raw data themselves are descriptive, but the science of descriptive statistics deals with methods of deriving from raw data measurements that are more tersely descriptive of the original population. In fact, it is the type of measure once removed from the raw data that is of prime importance to the statistician and research worker. For instance, the average IQ of members of an army battalion is obviously much more comprehensible and meaningful than the list of thousands of IQ scores as they were originally obtained. But it almost goes without saying that an understanding of the exact meaning of an average is necessary to interpret an average in any particular case. The descriptive statistical approach makes use of all data concerning population, and it entails deriving descriptive statistical measurements from data (pp. 4-5).

Inferential statistics, according to Hayslett, Jr.

(1968), has been described as the science of making decisions in the face of uncertainty, that is, making the best decision on the basis of incomplete information. In order to make a decision about a population, a sample (usually just a few members) of that population is selected from it. The selection is usually by a random process, where each has an equal chance of being selected, and for which the selection of any one member does not affect the selection of any other member. On the basis of the random sample, we infer things about the population. This inference is used to reach conclusions about the population from which those samples have been drawn (p. 7).

The first research question, "What reasons do suburban Maryland middle school parents give for participating in the education of their middle school children?" was analyzed using a 3x4 design. Types of participation were divided into four categories: activities/functions 1) where parents were involved in small group conferences, 2) where parents were involved in large group meetings, 3) where students were performing or participating, and 4) an "other" category. Frequencies, percentages and mean score statistics were used. Reasons why parents participated were divided into school, child, neighbor and "other" categories. Again, frequencies

and percentage were given for each. Afterwards, reasons "why" were rank ordered. The second research question which dealt with the reasons parents gave for not participating in the education of their middle school children was treated in the same manner. Participation at home and elsewhere was illustrated using frequencies and percentages.

The third research question, "What are the reported patterns of suburban Maryland middle school parents' participation?" was determined by using the most frequent forms or types of participation selected by parents. Again, the statistics used were frequencies and percentages.

Parents used a Likert scale to answer the fourth research question, "What is the relationship between parental participation and parental expectation?" The respondents chose from "Strongly agree" to "Strongly disagree," using a list containing 23 items related to expectations parents have of the school and expectations parents feel the school should have of them as parents of a middle school child.

The fifth and final research question, "Are there observable differences in suburban Maryland middle school parental participation when selected demographic variables (race, education and occupation) are considered," was analyzed using ten Education categories and 12 Occupation categories chosen from the 1990 Occupational Outlook Handbook. A "Student" category was added to the Occupation list, and an

unemployed category was added when the analyses were done. There are two levels of participation, High and Low, which were determined by the number of times respondents indicated they participated in activities. The top 50 percent was considered "High Participation," the bottom 50 percent was considered "Low Participation." Cross tabulations and Chi Square were used to provide the answers for this question.

Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to describe the research methodology used in developing the survey, data collection procedures, and the statistical procedures used in analyzing the collected data.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The purpose of this chapter was to report the analysis, and interpretations of the data. This study examined the reasons why parents participate and the reasons why parents do not participate in the education of their middle school children. The data collected for this study are analyzed through the use of appropriate statistical procedures. The findings are reported by organizing the chapter into the following parts: The first part includes a profile of the survey participants as it relates to their specific personal and professional characteristics. The second part provides answers to the first three research questions through the use of descriptive analysis of the data. The third part of the chapter deals with the inferential analysis of the data by testing the null hypotheses derived from the remaining two research questions. In addition, a summary of the findings is presented at the end of the chapter.

Personal and Professional Profile of the Survey Participants

A frequency distribution of the responses to the questionnaire items related to personal and professional characteristics of the survey participants was initiated to provide a profile of the subjects with regard to their education, occupation, and race/ethnic background.

Race/Ethnic Background: Of the 209 parents who participated in this study, 127 were White, 27 were Black, 26 were Hispanic, 22 were Asian, and the remaining 7 were from other ethnic groups. Table 1 presents the distribution of the participating parents according to their race/ethnic backgrounds.

Education: Distribution of the survey participants according to their highest level of education was as follows: parents holding a master's degree had the largest number of questionnaires returned, followed by parents who hold bachelor degrees. Those parents having some college and those holding a doctoral degree ranked third and fourth respectively. Parents who had a high school diploma, some high school, an associate degree, vocational training certificate, a GED and only an elementary school education participated in the study in relatively small numbers compared to the top four

TABLE 1
SURVEYED PARENTS BY RACE/ETHNIC GROUP

Racial/Ethnic Background	Frequency	Percent
White	127	60.8
Black	27	12.9
Hispanic	26	12.4
Asian	22	10.5
Other Ethnic Groups	7	3.4
Total Participants	209	100.0

categories. The largest number of respondents were married to spouses who hold doctoral degrees. The next highest number indicated their spouses hold a bachelor's degree. Only a very small number of respondents was married to spouses who hold a training certificate or a GED. These findings are presented in Table 2.

Occupation: Distribution of the survey participants according to their occupational categories was as follows: executive, administrative, managerial and professional specialty occupations; technicians and related support occupations, marketing and sales, administrative support and service occupations; agriculture, forestry, fishing, and related occupations; mechanics, installers, repairers, construction, trades and extractive occupations; production, transportation and material moving occupations; student, and unemployed. The highest number of participants were in the professional specialty occupations. The same categories were used for the spouses of participants. Accordingly, those who worked in professional specialty occupations were represented most often, with those who work as mechanics and in the fishing, forestry and related occupations being represented by only a very small number. These findings are presented in Table 3.

TABLE 2
SURVEYED PARENTS' EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

Highest Level of Education	Respondents		Spouses	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Elementary school	3	1.4	26	12.4
Some high school	13	6.2	8	3.8
High school diploma	16	7.7	15	7.2
GED or equivalent	4	1.9	4	1.9
Vocational certificate	8	3.8	6	2.9
Some college	29	13.9	23	11.0
Associate degree	9	4.3	5	2.4
Bachelor's degree	46	22.0	35	16.8
Master's degree	53	25.4	42	20.1
Doctoral degree	28	13.4	45	21.5
Total Participants	209	100.0	209	100.0

TABLE 3
SURVEYED PARENTS' OCCUPATIONAL BACKGROUND

Occupational Category	Respondents		Spouses	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Executive and managerial	34	16.3	40	19.1
Professional specialty	84	40.1	83	39.7
Technician/related support	7	3.3	5	2.4
Marketing and sales	8	3.8	9	4.3
Administrative support	30	14.4	10	4.8
Service occupations	20	9.6	16	7.7
Agriculture and fishing	1	0.5	4	1.9
Mechanics and installers	1	0.5	1	0.5
Construction and extractive	7	3.3	3	1.4
Production occupations	2	1.0	2	1.0
Transportation and moving	1	0.5	3	1.4
Presently unemployed	10	4.8	31	14.8
Student	4	1.9	2	1.0
Total Participants	209	100.0	209	100.0

Further, additional analysis of the data in this table indicates that, overall, the majority of the parents involved in this study held either a high level or a middle level occupation. The figures indicate that 118 (56.4 percent) respondents and 123 (58.8 percent) spouses held occupations which would fall in the executive, administrative, managerial, or professional categories. The data show that only 32 (15.4 percent) of the respondents and 29 (13.9 percent) of their spouses held occupations which would fall in the lower-income categories.

Descriptive Analysis of the Data

Descriptive analysis of the data in this study was based on both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The quantitative approach included analysis of the findings based on the frequency, percentage and rank order of parents' participation in each of the specified school activities. The qualitative approach included assessment of the reasons why parents participated in some activities and why they did not participate in other activities. A combined quantitative and qualitative approach was also followed to determine the reported patterns of parents' participation. In this portion of the chapter, the first three research questions were examined and presented as follows:

Research Question 1

What reasons do suburban Maryland middle school parents give for participation in the education of their middle school children?

Findings:

This research question was examined by analyzing the number of times parents participated in various school activities and the reasons given by parents for participating in each activity.

- (a) Parent/Teacher Conferences: Of the 209 parents involved in this study, 134 (64.1 percent) attended parent/teacher conferences. Eighty-six (41.1 percent) parents reported participating only one time, and the remaining 48 (23.0 percent) participated more than one time.
- (b) Back-to-School Night: Participation in Back-to-School Night was reported by 156 (74.6 percent) of the total 209 parents involved in the study. This indicates a relatively high rate of participation, since only 53 (25.4 percent) did not or could not participate in the Back-to-School Night event.

- (c) PTA Meetings: Sixty-nine (33.0 percent) parents reported that they participated in PTA meetings. Forty (19.1 percent) of these parents attended only one time and the remaining 29 (13.9 percent) attended more than once. This represents approximately one-third of the parents.
- (d) Chaperoned School Activity: Of the total 209 parents involved in this study, only 23 (11.0 percent) reported participating by chaperoning school activities. Sixteen (7.7 percent) parents participated only one time in this activity and the remaining seven (3.3 percent) participated more than once. This is a relatively low rate of participation.
- (e) Tutoring in Classroom: Only four out of the 209 parents were involved in classroom tutoring. Two of them participated three times and the remaining two participated more than three times. This represents 1.9 percent of the total 209 parents involved in this study.

- (f) Informal School Discussions: Twenty-eight (13.4 percent) parents reported that they participated in informal school discussions with teachers and school administrators. Twenty (9.6 percent) of them had attended only one informal discussion with the school principal/teachers, and the remaining eight (3.8 percent) attended more than once. This represents a relatively low rate of participation.
- (g) Athletic Activities/Functions: Participation in athletic activities/functions was reported by 32 (15.3 percent) parents involved in this study. Eight (3.8 percent) of them reported attending only one time, and the remaining 24 (11.5 percent) attended more than once. This also represents a moderately low rate of participation.
- (h) Student Awards Night: Of the 209 parents involved, 17 (8.1 percent) reported attending Student Awards Night. This also indicates a low rate of participation.

- (i) Choir/Band Concerts: Forty-three (20.6 percent) parents attended choir/band concerts. Thirty-five (16.7 percent) attended only one time, and the remaining eight (3.8 percent) attended more than once. This is also a moderately low rate of participation.
- (j) Drama/Play/Theatrical Functions: Attendance at such functions was reported by 15 (7.2 percent) parents involved in this study. Eleven (5.3 percent) participated only once, and the remaining four (1.9 percent) participated more than once. The rate of participation in this category is very low.
- (k) School Committee Meeting: Eighteen (8.6 percent) of the parents involved in this study reported they participated in School Committee Meetings. Nine (4.3 percent) parents reported attending one time, and the remaining nine (4.3 percent) attended more than once. The participation rate in this category is also very low.
- (l) Volunteered to assist school: Thirty-six (17.2 percent) parents reported volunteering to assist the school. Sixteen (7.7 percent) of

them reported having participated one time, and the remaining 20 (9.5 percent) reported having participated more than one time. This also indicates that the participation rate is relatively low.

- (m) Other Activities/Functions: Twenty (9.6 percent) parents reported other types of school participation including open school day, parent orientation, fall visitation, Teen Club meeting, science fair, spelling contest, and meetings with school counselor. Table 4 presents the rank, the frequency and the percentage of parents who participated in each of the specified school functions/activities.

In summary, high rates of parent participation were observed in three categories. Those categories were Back-to-School Night (74.6 percent), Parent/Teacher Conferences (65.1 percent) and PTA Meetings (33 percent). Low rates of participation were observed in four categories. Those categories were Tutoring in class (1.9 percent), Student Awards Night (8.1 percent), Drama/Play/Theatrical function (7.2 percent) and School Committee Meetings (8.6 percent).

TABLE 4
NUMBER, PERCENTAGE AND RANK OF PARTICIPATION IN
EACH ACTIVITY/FUNCTION

Activity/Function	Number	Percent	Rank
Parent/Teacher conference	134	65.1	2
Back to School Night	156	74.6	1
PTA Meeting	69	33.0	3
Chaperoned school activity	23	11.0	8
Tutoring in classroom	4	1.9	13
Informal school discussions	28	13.4	7
Athletic activities/functions	32	15.3	6
Student Awards Night	17	8.1	11
Choir/Band Concert	43	20.6	4
Drama/Play/Theatrical function	15	7.2	12
School Committee Meeting	18	8.6	10
Volunteered to assist school	36	17.2	5
Other types of activities	20	9.6	9

In Table 4 percents are shown for all categories to permit comparisons.

Reasons given by parents for participation in school activities are rank ordered by percentage of responses as follows:

- (1) Because I believe parent participation is important (26.9 percent)
- (2) Because I believe my attendance will help teachers and principals do a better job toward educating children (11.4 percent)
- (3) Because I felt I needed to support my child (10.0 percent)
- (4) Because I believe my attendance will help my child succeed and stay in school (8.9 percent)
- (5) Because teachers respond better to my child when they know I am interested (8.2 percent)
- (6) Because it makes my child happy when I attend (7.6 percent)
- (7) Because my child was a participant in those activities (5.7 percent)
- (8) Because it helps my child's self-esteem (4.9 percent)
- (9) Because it adds to what my child learns in school (3.5 percent)

- (10) Because administrators and teachers are willing to hear my concerns about my child (3.4 percent)
- (11) Because it was an opportunity to meet new neighbors (1.0 percent)
- (12) Because many parents I know were going to be there (0.9 percent)
- (13) Because neighborhood children I know were participants (0.9 percent)
- (14) Because it assures that my child is not discriminated against (0.8 percent)
- (15) Because my school provides a newsletter (0.5 percent)
- (16) Because I do not want my child to embarrass me (0.1 percent).

The remaining 5.3 percent indicated the following specific and personal reasons for participating in school activities:

- (a) I was interested in knowing about my child's school, classes and teachers.
- (b) I wanted to encourage teachers' support of my child's schooling.
- (c) I wanted to be aware of my child's performance in school.
- (d) I wanted to discuss my child's behavior problem at home and in school.

- (e) I was interested in knowing my child's teachers and the educational plans for the entire year.
- (f) I wanted to discuss my child's difficulties as they affected his school work.
- (g) I was interested in the current changes in the school curriculum.
- (h) My child was having difficulty in coping with his classmates.
- (i) I wanted to help strengthen the overall program at school.
- (j) I wanted to meet and make my assessment of my child's teachers.
- (k) I felt my child was not being stimulated.
- (l) I was interested in identifying the room for my child's academic achievements.
- (m) I went to participate in fund-raising activities.
- (n) I was interested in the teachers' view of the course materials.
- (o) I am more than willing to do anything to contribute to the success of my children's education.
- (p) I am interested in my children's learning and I always help them locate sources.

(q) Once in a while I am interested in participating because teachers and administrators call me when there is a problem caused by my child.

Table 5 presents resources and activities which parents have provided for their children at home. Based on the findings in this table, a majority of the participating parents reported providing most of the resources and facilities for their children at home.

A list of extracurricular and out-of-school activities as well as other opportunities provided by parents is presented in Table 6. According to the data in this table, a relatively large number of parents reported providing opportunities for their children to participate in a variety of extracurricular and out-of-school activities. In fact, 190 respondents said they usually take their children on family vacations, 187 reported encouraging their children to read for pleasure, and 189 reported helping their children with homework assignments.

TABLE 5
RESOURCES AND ACTIVITIES PROVIDED BY PARENTS
TO CHILDREN AT HOME

Resources and Activities	Frequency	Percent
Separate place for child to study at home	182	87.1
Quiet place for child to study at home	187	89.5
Specific time(s) for child to study at home	127	60.8
Set of encyclopedia available at home	130	62.2
Dictionary available at home	199	95.2
Calculator available at home	195	93.3
Typewriter available at home	139	66.5
Computer available at home	124	59.3
Maps or world globe available at home	178	85.2
Daily newspaper(s)/magazines/books at home	185	88.5

TABLE 6

**FAMILY, COMMUNITY, AND OUT-OF-SCHOOL ACTIVITIES
PROVIDED FOR CHILDREN**

Opportunities Provided to Child	Frequency	Percent
Participation in extracurricular activities	143	68.4
Membership in community recreation groups	108	51.7
Take child on family vacations	190	90.9
Take child to concerts and the theater	134	64.1
Encourage child to use public library	181	86.6
Encourage child to read for pleasure	187	89.5
Help child with homework assignments	189	90.4

The following comments and recommendations were made by those parents who were highly involved in school activities:

- (a) In middle school, teachers do not spend as much time with each student as in elementary school; therefore, they do not know the children as well as in elementary school.
- (b) Those parents who are indifferent, illiterate, or perhaps culturally disadvantaged are less likely to get involved in school activities.
- (c) School administrators should encourage parental participation by making parents feel that they are needed and they are appreciated.
- (d) The conflict of grouping students heterogeneously and homogeneously is a problem and teaching to the middle of the range is very unrewarding and unencouraging to the bright children.
- (e) There is a lack of enthusiasm on the part of parents toward their children's education.
- (f) Children with disciplinary problems are a distraction to the teachers and other students.
- (g) At the middle school level, it is difficult for parents to get to know so many teachers, and it is also difficult for teachers to be involved with so many students and their parents.

- (h) From the parental point of view, it is difficult to make the adjustment from elementary to middle school.
- (i) Each school should have an advisory committee soliciting input from parents on the school administrators as well.
- (j) Seeking feedback from parents would increase the collaboration between school and parents.
- (k) School administrators should help teachers make curriculum more relevant, pertinent, and appropriate to fulfill the children's needs.
- (l) When a considerable number of parents are voicing a concern over a single issue, the school staff should listen to them and make appropriate decisions regarding that particular issue.
- (m) School principals should consult with parents regarding individual needs of students, because most often parents are more aware of their own children's needs than principals.
- (n) School principals should provide an opportunity for Hispanic, Black and other minority parents to express their concerns about their children's schooling.
- (o) Schools should provide more support to the special needs students and the special education programs.

- (p) Hidden talents of individual students should be discovered and encouraged by the teachers.
- (q) Parents should talk to their children about their schools and social lives more often; and
- (r) Disciplinary actions should begin at home; many parents expect schools to do the job for them.

Some of the parents who had been more involved in school activities expressed their personal concerns about their children's education through the following remarks:

"Our child lacks much interest in academics for the first time since she has left elementary school. Her self-esteem is low. We feel extremely disappointed in the lack of administrators' and teachers' abilities so much that our family is in a dilemma as to whether we should move or request a transfer. Racial concerns within the administration are extremely unethical."

"After elementary school, parents need to be in tune with the maturity level of their children. Some need careful watching-over, and others need space to expand abilities and responsibilities. Parents need to find acceptable ways to stay involved without limiting the child's right to move onward. This sensitivity shapes our current level of involvement with the school teachers and administrators."

"We feel that parent support is very important to our

children's education throughout high school. However, the primary responsibility for success in school belongs to the child. Our children have done well in school and are very responsible with their school assignments. In their early years, we helped them quite a bit with homework and set standards for how to complete the work. However, after they learned the importance of school work, and listening and participating, we only help them when they ask us for assistance. Now, we do attend Back-to-School Nights, but we attend conferences only once a year (in the Spring). This policy would change, of course, if there were problems. If report cards are good and if we get no teacher's notes to the contrary, we assume things are going well."

"It appears to me that our public schools are somewhat neglected. Even in our county, which is supposed to be one of the best school systems in the country, some teachers seem to be inadequately prepared for their job. My impression is that they feel insecure as teachers and that, as a result, they tend to avoid a close contact with the parents -- perhaps fearing that some of the parents would challenge their approach and/or teaching methods at school meetings. One of the ways to avoid parent participation is to publicize meetings as little as possible or not to encourage parent participation to the extent required. As a result of this state of affairs, it also appears to me that the busier

parents end up participating very little if at all, particularly in those homes where both work full-time outside of the home. What is left is a small group of parents who seem to participate assiduously but who may not be representative of the views of the large numbers who fail to participate. This small group tends to be very uncritical of the schools and, therefore, reinforces the maintenance of the status-quo. Therefore, many teachers who would benefit greatly from negative feedback or criticism or suggestions, continue in their comfortable and unchallenged position, doing things in the same old ways."

Research Question 2

What reasons do suburban Maryland middle school parents give for not participating in the education of their middle school children?

Findings:

This research question was examined by analyzing the frequency of parents who did not participate in each of the specified school activities and the reasons given for their lack of participation:

- (a) Parent/Teacher Conferences: Of the total 209 parents involved in this study, 75 (34.9 percent) did not participate by attending parent/teacher conferences.
- (b) Back-to-School Night: Nonparticipation in Back-to-School Night was reported by 53 (25.4 percent) of the 209 parents involved in the study.
- (c) PTA Meeting: Of the total 209 parents involved, 140 (67.0 percent) did not participate in PTA meetings.
- (d) Chaperoned School Activity: Of the total 209 parents involved in this study, 186 (89.0 percent) did not participate by chaperoning school activities.
- (e) Tutoring in Classroom: A majority of the 209 parents (205 or 98.1 percent) were not involved in classroom tutoring.
- (f) Informal School Discussions: Of the total respondents, 181 (86.6 percent) were not involved in any informal school discussions with teachers or school administrators.
- (g) Athletic Activities/Functions: Nonparticipation in athletic activities/functions was reported by 177 (84.7 percent) parents involved in this study.

- (h) Student Awards Night: Of the 209 parents involved, 192 (91.1 percent) did not participate in the Student Awards Night.
- (i) Choir/Band Concerts: Nonparticipation in choir/band concerts included 166 (79.4 percent) parents.
- (j) Drama/Play/Theatrical Functions: A majority (194 or 92.8 percent) of the parents did not participate in drama/play/theatrical functions of the school.
- (k) School Committee Meetings: A majority (191 or 91.4 percent) of the parents involved in this study did not participate in the school committee meetings.
- (l) Volunteered to assist schools: Of the parents involved, 173 (82.8 percent) did not volunteer to assist the school.

Table 7 presents the number and the percentage of parents who did not participate in each of the specified school functions/activities. The data in this table indicate that tutoring was the lowest type of participation provided by parents. Other activities which engendered very low levels of parental participation were drama/play/theatrical functions, student awards programs, school committee meetings, and chaperoned school activities.

TABLE 7
NUMBER, PERCENT AND RANK OF NONPARTICIPATION IN
EACH ACTIVITY/FUNCTION

Activity/Function	Number	Percent	Rank
Parent/Teacher conference	75	34.9	11
Back-to-School Night	53	25.4	12
PTA Meeting	140	67.0	10
Chaperoned school activity	186	89.0	5
Tutoring in classroom	205	98.1	1
Informal school discussions	181	86.6	6
Athletic activities/functions	177	84.7	7
Student Awards Meeting	192	91.9	3
Choir/Band Concert	166	79.4	9
Drama/Play/Theatrical function	194	92.8	2
School Committee Meeting	191	91.4	4
Volunteered to assist school	173	82.8	8

Reasons given by parents regarding why they did not participate in some of the school activities are listed as follows by rank order and percentage:

- (1) Because no one asked me to participate (25.2 percent)
- (2) Because I could not take time off from work (15.4 percent)
- (3) Because I was not interested in that particular activity (13.4 percent)
- (4) Because I did not feel it was important to attend (9.5 percent)
- (5) Because notice was not received in time (3.4 percent)
- (6) Because I had a previous engagement (2.5 percent)
- (7) Because I could not leave other children at home alone (2.2 percent)
- (8) Because I did not have transportation (1.1 percent)
- (9) Because I felt intimidated by teachers (1.0 percent)
- (10) Because I felt intimidated by principal or another school administrator (0.3 percent); and
- (11) Because I was out of town/the country (0.2 percent).

The remaining 25.8 percent indicated the following specific reasons for nonparticipation:

- (a) I missed the meeting because I forgot all about it.
- (b) My child was not involved in these activities.
- (c) My stressful job did not allow me to participate in my child's school activities.
- (d) My child was not interested in having a parent present.
- (e) My child said parents are not invited.
- (f) I am also a college student taking my courses in the evenings, and, therefore, I could not participate in evening activities provided by my child's school.
- (g) I did not feel the need or desire to attend.
- (h) My child is a very good student, if a problem arises I contact the school immediately.
- (i) Most of my extra time is allocated to my daughter who is in another school.
- (j) I felt that school administrators do not respond to parental inquiries and concerns about the child.
- (k) PTA is too dominated by one particular group and would not allow other's input.
- (l) Exhausted after working a full day myself.
- (m) I was ill on the day of the activity.

- (n) School administrators are not interested in parental input.
- (o) My child did not want me to be there.
- (p) I knew that my child would be transferred to another school soon.
- (q) I am not interested in such activities unless they are directly related to my child's academic work.
- (r) My three other children also need my help with their homework assignments.
- (s) I am very active in the school where my other children go and can not do both at this time.
- (t) I am physically handicapped.
- (u) My child does not want me to be highly visible in his school; and
- (v) I felt that school administrators and teachers do not usually get involved in important issues related to the general concerns of students and their parents.

The following specific remarks were also made by those parents who did not or could not participate in all or some of the school activities:

- (a) Participation for single parents, especially those who have to work and do not have a baby-sitter, is almost impossible.

- (b) We as parents feel that school teachers and administrators do not want parental participation.
- (c) We as parents think that superior attitudes on the part of educators discourage us from participation in school activities.
- (d) We do not feel comfortable and do not want school to interfere with our home-life.
- (e) Sometimes involvement in work and/or short notice on the part of school prevents us from participation.
- (f) Our children are not interested in some of the school activities and, therefore, our participation in such activities does not seem to be necessary.
- (g) Very often middle school children feel embarrassed when their parents are highly visible; therefore, we do not participate in most of the school activities.
- (h) PTA participation is too time consuming for our schedule.
- (i) We are only able to participate in some activities such as helping the school library or attending PTA meetings.

- (j) We volunteer as much time as we can, but we know those parents who do not work give a lot more time than we do.
- (k) Working full time during the day and taking care of children in the evening do not allow additional time to participate in school activities.
- (l) Our children would like to be more independent from the parents and that is the reason why they do not want us to attend their school activities.
- (m) The problem of a language barrier will prevent us from participating in most of the school activities which require some communication skills.
- (n) We are quite involved in our children's education through our support of their school learning at home.
- (o) Although due to the work demands our participation in school activities is less than what it should be, we often get ourselves involved in the children's education through telephone conversations with teachers and school personnel.

- (p) We believe parents can be very involved in the child's life without spending time within the wall of his/her school.
- (q) Many parents are not interested in school meetings because the meetings are often long and boring.
- (r) We as parents do not feel that we can have as much support or input into the middle school as we did in elementary school.
- (s) We feel our children do not have any significant problems because we provide them with sufficient assistance in their homework and other school assignments.
- (t) Most of the parents do not participate in school activities because their priorities begin to focus more on their own careers and less on their children's education.
- (u) Parents should learn how to let children grow into their own responsibilities.
- (v) We are interested in and happy to support our children's school activities, but the time we give is limited due to our work schedules during the day.

- (w) Since our children are doing well in their schooling, we only participate in those school affairs which involve music, play, sports and other recreation activities.
- (x) Some teachers are biased towards certain students, and they treat them as trouble makers.
- (y) Teachers should treat all students equally, regardless of their racial and family background. and
- (z) Teachers should be trained to be more professional in their attitudes and behavior toward students and their parents.

Comments and recommendations of the parents who have been less involved in the school activities are presented as follows:

- (a) Conduct PTA meetings during the normal work hours to allow more time for discussion.
- (b) The PTA can only do so much, there must be a commitment and leadership from the school administrators as well.
- (c) Parents could make more of a contribution to the educational programs for their children if they see more ongoing communication from teachers on what is going on in the classroom.

- (d) Parents would like teachers to contact them more often.
- (e) We think school staff's availability for parents after the school hours will allow more parental participation in their children's education.
- (f) We recommend a consistent annual calendar which includes all school activities be mailed to all parents sometime during the summer.
- (g) We recommend that the school establishes a better working relationship with parents.
- (h) We recommend scheduling the parent conferences for all grade levels in one day, instead of separate days for each grade.
- (i) We believe that teachers have a great responsibility getting to know and care for all their students; therefore, school counselors and social workers should be assigned to follow up on students' home problems.
- (j) Many children could benefit from a mentor/tutor other than their own parents.

- (k) We do not feel that there is as great a need to bring in outside volunteers at the middle school level, because by this time many of the children are able to help out the school with volunteer work.
- (l) We would like to see frequent written progress reports and narratives on our children's grade report cards; and
- (m) We would like to receive telephone calls from our children's teachers regarding how much or how little our children are functioning in the classroom.

Some of the parents who had been less involved in the school activities expressed their personal concerns about their children's education through the following remarks:

"PTA meetings are of no interest to us, although we do volunteer in the school. We are glad that there are parents who enjoy PTA activities, but we are not one of them. If there is a particular task to do and we are asked to help, we usually do."

"My child has learning disabilities and I have found, through experience in dealing with school teachers and administrators, that the best way to establish a working relationship with school and his team of teachers is through

parent/teacher conferences. Back-to-School Night, PTA meetings (and the like) do not help in establishing a relationship with my child's teachers. Unfortunately, when one has a child who is not on the "Honor Roll," many teachers and administrators develop negative attitudes towards both the child and his or her parents, and this, in turn, causes parents to be less willing to participate. At least, this is what has happened in my case. I was much more active in the school with my two older children who had no learning problems. The problem seems to be that many teachers do not believe in 'learning disabilities. They are convinced that these children simply come from homes in which there are low academic standards. I have spent my son's academic career trying to correct this misconception, and as a result of coming up against negative attitudes on the part of many (but not all) teachers, I no longer feel motivated to participate in anything that is not absolutely necessary." "As a former school teacher myself with 14 years experience and currently a consultant to schools around the nation, I am very concerned with the parent involvement question. I have always considered the triangle of great importance (Student/Teacher/Parent). Yet PTA, Chaperoning dances, etc. are mere tokenism -- they are not involvement. Parents should have a say about cross-age groupings, interdisciplinary study units, block scheduling, etc. -- significant educational

issues (as they do in some other sites I work with). But until site-based management and shared decision making (including parents, teachers, students, community and business representatives) are implemented in this county, I doubt that many parents will go out of their way to get very involved what difference does it make? A cookie here, a ball game there School reform/restructuring/transformation/renewal (pick your favorite word) is not happening in our county -- and no systemic, organic, enduring changes will occur until you bring aboard all the stake holders into a collaborative."

Research Question 3

What are the reported patterns of suburban Maryland middle school parents' participation?

Findings:

This research question was examined by analyzing parents' participation according to racial/ethnic background, level of education, and occupational categories. For each analysis, the relative percentages of parents' participation were compared to determine the patterns of participation in each activity.

A pattern of parental participation in school activities with regard to racial/ethnic background is presented in Table

8. Based on the data in this table, and in comparison with the relative percentages in each category, the following patterns of participation were observed: (a) Asian parents had their highest participation at Back-to-School Night, followed in order by parent/teacher conferences, and PTA meetings; (b) Black parents showed their highest participation in parent/teacher conferences, followed by Back-to-School Night, and PTA meetings; (c) Hispanic parents had their highest participation in parent/teacher conferences, followed by Back-to-School Night and PTA meetings; and (d) White parents had their highest participation at Back-to-School Night, followed by parent/teacher conferences, and PTA meetings. Together, all four ethnic groups reported that the highest participation was in Back-to-School Night, parent/teacher conferences and PTA meetings.

Table 9 shows a pattern of parental participation in school activities with regard to the parents' educational background. According to the data in this table, and in comparison with the relative percentages in each category, the following patterns of participation were observed:

- (a) Parents with a high school diploma or less, tended to participate in chaperoned school activities as much as other parents;

TABLE 8
PARENTAL PARTICIPATION BY RACIAL/ETHNIC GROUP

Resources and Activities	Asian		Black		Hispanic		White	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Parent/Teacher conference	14	63.6	19	70.4	19	73.1	79	62.2
Back-to-School Night	16	72.2	18	66.7	14	53.8	106	83.5
PTA Meeting	13	59.1	10	37.0	6	23.1	39	30.7
Chaperoned school activity	0	0.0	4	14.8	4	15.4	15	11.8
Tutoring in classroom	0	0.0	2	7.4	1	3.8	1	0.8
Informal school discussion	2	9.1	4	14.8	2	7.7	20	15.7
Athletic activities	2	9.1	8	29.6	4	15.4	17	13.4
Student Awards Night	4	18.2	3	11.1	1	3.8	4	7.1
Choir/Band concert	6	27.3	7	25.9	3	11.5	26	20.5
Drama/Theatrical function	2	9.1	4	14.8	2	7.7	7	5.5
School Committee Meeting	1	4.5	3	11.1	1	3.8	13	10.2
Volunteered to help school	2	9.1	6	22.2	3	11.5	25	19.7

TABLE 9

PARENTAL PARTICIPATION BY EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

Activity/Function	≤High School		Undergrad.		Graduate	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Parent/Teacher conference	19	52.8	56	60.9	59	72.8
Back-to-School Night	15	41.7	71	77.2	70	86.4
PTA Meeting	4	11.1	31	33.7	34	42.0
Chaperoned school activity	4	11.1	10	10.9	9	11.1
Tutoring in classroom	0	0.0	0	0.0	4	4.9
Informal school discussions	1	2.8	12	13.0	15	18.5
Athletic activities	3	8.3	15	16.3	14	17.3
Student Awards Night	0	0.0	8	8.7	9	11.1
Choir/Band Concert	3	8.3	20	21.7	20	24.7
Drama & Theatrical function	0	0.0	6	6.5	9	11.1
School Committee Meeting	1	2.8	6	6.5	11	13.6
Volunteered to help school	2	5.6	16	17.4	18	22.2

parent/teacher conferences showed a greater parental participation while Back-to-School Night was next;

- (b) Parents who hold a graduate degree showed more participation at Back-to-School-Night, parent/teacher conferences, and PTA meetings; and
- (c) Parents with a bachelor's degree were next to the parents with a graduate degree in each of the aforementioned activities.

A pattern of parental participation in school activities with regard to the occupational level is shown in Table 10. Based on the data in this table, and in comparison with the relative percentages in each category, the following patterns of participation were observed:

- (a) Parents with high-level occupational positions tended to participate more than other groups in choir/band concerts, and tutoring in class.
- (b) Parents who hold middle level occupational positions showed more participation in volunteering to assist school, Back-to-School Night, and parent/teacher conferences; and

TABLE 10
PARENTAL PARTICIPATION BY OCCUPATIONAL LEVEL

Activity/Function	Low Level		Middle Level		High Level	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Parent/Teacher conference	55	60.4	60	71.4	19	55.9
Back-to-School Night	58	63.7	72	85.7	26	76.5
PTA Meeting	28	30.8	32	38.1	9	26.5
Chaperoned school activity	10	11.0	9	10.7	4	11.8
Tutoring in classroom	0	0.0	1	1.2	3	8.8
Informal school discussions	11	12.1	13	15.5	4	11.8
Athletic activities	12	13.2	16	19.0	4	11.8
Student Awards Night	6	6.6	10	11.9	1	2.9
Choir/Band Concert	15	16.5	17	20.2	11	32.4
Drama & Theatrical function	6	6.6	6	7.1	3	8.8
School Committee Meeting	4	4.4	11	13.1	3	8.8
Volunteered to help school	10	11.0	21	25.0	5	14.7

- (c) Parents who had lower-level occupational positions indicated their highest participation was in parent/teacher conferences, Back-to-School Nights and PTA meetings, where their percentage of participation in two of the categories was greater than that of parents in high-level occupations.

Table 11 shows the reported patterns of resources and activities which were provided at home by the parents according to their racial/ethnic background. Based on the findings in this table, White parents reported providing the largest number of educational resources for their children at home, followed in order by Asians, Blacks, and Hispanics. In another comparison of the findings, it appears that regardless of the racial/ethnic background, a majority of the parents reported that they provided a separate place for their children to study, arranged a quiet place for their children to study, allocated specific time(s) for their children to study, and made available to their children such materials as a calculator, a typewriter and a dictionary.

TABLE 11
LEARNING RESOURCES PROVIDED AT HOME BY RACIAL/ETHNIC GROUP

Resources and Activities	Asian		Black		Hispanic		White	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Separate place for study	18	81.8	21	77.8	19	73.1	119	93.7
Quiet place for study	21	95.5	22	81.5	21	80.8	117	92.1
Specific time(s) to study	15	68.2	17	63.0	14	53.8	75	59.1
Set of encyclopedia	10	45.5	17	63.0	10	38.5	87	68.5
Dictionary at home	21	95.5	26	96.3	22	84.6	123	96.9
Calculator available	21	95.5	22	81.5	21	80.8	124	97.6
Typewriter at home	17	77.3	17	63.0	16	61.5	84	66.1
Computer available	15	68.2	12	44.4	9	34.6	86	67.7
Maps or world globe	20	90.0	21	77.8	13	50.0	118	92.9
Newspapers/magazines/books	19	86.4	24	88.9	16	61.5	119	93.7

A reported pattern of resources and activities which has been provided at home by parents of different educational backgrounds is presented in Table 12. According to the data in this table, parents who hold a graduate degree reported providing the largest number of resources for their children at home, followed in order by parents with an undergraduate degree. Parents with a high school diploma or less provided less resources than any other group. Another comparison of the findings indicates that regardless of the level of education, a majority of the parents claimed they provided a separate place for their children to study, arranged a quiet place for their children to study, allocated specific time(s) for their children to study, and made available to their children such materials as a calculator, a dictionary and/or a set of encyclopedia.

Table 13 presents a pattern of resources and activities which have been provided for children at home by the parents of different occupational levels. Based on these findings, parents who hold a higher occupational level reported providing the largest number of resources for their children, followed in order by parents with middle and lower occupational levels. Another comparison of the findings indicates that regardless of the occupational level, a majority of the parents claimed they provided a separate place for their children to study, arranged a quiet place for their

TABLE 12

LEARNING RESOURCES PROVIDED AT HOME BY PARENTS' EDUCATION

Activity/Function	≤High School		Undergrad.		Graduate	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Separate place for study	28	77.8	83	90.2	71	87.7
Quiet place for study	28	77.8	83	90.2	76	93.8
Specific time(s) to study	22	61.1	56	60.9	49	60.5
Set of encyclopedia	19	52.8	59	64.1	52	64.2
Dictionary at home	31	86.1	88	95.7	80	98.8
Calculator available	28	77.8	87	94.6	80	98.8
Typewriter at home	17	47.2	64	69.6	58	71.6
Computer available	6	16.7	53	57.6	65	80.2
Maps or world globe	24	66.7	76	82.6	78	96.3
Newspapers/magazines/ books	24	66.7	83	90.2	78	96.3

TABLE 13

LEARNING RESOURCES PROVIDED AT HOME BY PARENTS' OCCUPATION

Resources and Activities	Low Level		Middle Level		High Level	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Separate place for study	77	84.6	74	88.1	31	91.2
Quiet place for study	81	89.0	75	89.3	31	91.2
Specific time(s) to study	53	58.2	51	60.7	23	67.6
Set of encyclopedia	53	58.2	53	63.1	24	70.6
Dictionary at home	85	93.4	81	96.4	33	97.0
Calculator available	80	87.9	81	96.4	33	97.0
Typewriter at home	59	64.8	53	63.1	27	79.4
Computer available	43	47.3	57	67.9	24	70.6
Maps or world globe	73	80.2	75	89.3	30	88.2
Newspapers/magazines/ books	76	83.5	80	95.2	29	85.3

children to study, allocated specific time(s) for their children to study, and made learning materials available such as a calculator, a dictionary and/or a set of encyclopedia.

An analysis of the extracurricular and out-of-school activities and other opportunities provided to children by participating parents with reference to their racial/ethnic group is presented in Table 14. According to the data in this table, Whites reported providing better opportunities for their children, especially in areas of community membership and use of the public library. Blacks reported providing better opportunities for their children by (a) helping them with their homework assignments. Asians reported providing greater opportunities for their children by (a) encouraging them to read for pleasure, (b) taking them on family vacations, and (c) helping them with homework assignments. However, only encouraging them to read for pleasure was higher than the other groups. Hispanics reported helping their children with their homework assignments as their number one priority, followed by encouraging their children to use the public library. However, none of the Hispanic scores was higher than the other racial/ethnic groups.

Table 15 displays a pattern of the extracurricular and out-of-school activities provided to children by participating parents with regard to their level of education. The data in this table indicate that, in all areas listed, parents who

TABLE 14
ACTIVITIES PROVIDED TO CHILDREN BY RACIAL/ETHNIC GROUP

Resources and Activities	Asian		Black		Hispanic		White	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Extracurricular activities	15	68.2	17	63.0	14	53.8	90	70.9
Community membership	5	22.7	13	48.1	10	38.5	76	59.8
Family vacations	20	90.9	25	92.6	17	65.4	121	95.3
Concerts and the theater	12	54.5	19	70.4	11	42.3	88	69.3
Use of the public library	19	86.4	21	77.8	20	76.9	115	90.6
Reading for pleasure	21	95.5	25	92.6	17	65.4	118	92.9
Homework assignments	20	90.9	26	96.3	21	80.8	117	92.1

TABLE 15
ACTIVITIES PROVIDED TO CHILDREN BY
PARENTS' EDUCATIONAL LEVELS

Activity/Function	≤High School		Undergrad.		Graduate	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Extracurricular activities	16	44.4	60	65.2	67	82.7
Community membership	12	33.3	45	48.9	51	63.0
Family vacations	29	80.6	82	89.1	79	97.5
Concerts and the theater	16	44.4	60	65.2	58	71.6
Use of the public library	23	63.9	80	87.0	78	96.3
Reading for pleasure	24	66.7	84	91.3	79	97.5
Homework assignments	30	83.3	81	88.0	78	96.3

hold a graduate degree provided better opportunities for their children, followed by parents with an undergraduate degree. More specifically, parents with a higher educational background reported they provided better opportunities for their children by taking them on family vacations, by encouraging them to read for pleasure, by helping them with their homework assignments, and by encouraging them to use the public library for reference materials and other educational resources. Parents with an undergraduate degree also reported encouraging their children to read for pleasure and taking them on family vacations as the most important activities. Parents with a high school diploma or less reported helping their children with their homework assignments and taking their children on family vacations as most important.

Extracurricular and out-of-school activities provided to children by parents with different occupational levels is presented in Table 16. According to the data in this table, parents who hold high-level occupations reported providing better opportunities for their children by taking them on family vacations, by encouraging them to use the public library for reference materials and other resources, and by having them read for pleasure. Parents who hold middle level occupations reported providing better opportunities for their children by taking them on family vacations, and encouraging them to read for pleasure. Parents with lower-level

TABLE 16
ACTIVITIES PROVIDED TO CHILDREN BY
PARENTS' OCCUPATIONAL LEVELS

Opportunities Provided	Low Level		Middle Level		High Level	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Extracurricular activities	56	61.5	61	72.6	26	76.5
Community membership	36	39.6	53	63.1	19	55.9
Family vacations	80	87.9	78	92.9	32	94.1
Concerts and the theater	50	54.9	63	75.0	21	61.8
Use of the public library	75	82.4	75	89.3	31	91.2
Reading for pleasure	79	86.8	77	91.7	31	91.2
Homework assignments	84	92.3	75	89.3	30	88.2

occupations reported providing better opportunities for their children by helping them with their homework assignments and taking them on family vacations.

Inferential Analysis of the Data

In this portion of the chapter, the remaining two research questions are examined by testing the null hypotheses derived from each research question. The following format was adopted to provide answers to each research question:

- (a) statement of the research question;
- (b) statement of the null hypothesis derived from the research question;
- (c) test of the null hypothesis at the selected .05 level of significance;
- (d) tabulation and presentation of the test results; and
- (e) interpretation of the findings.

The first null hypothesis is tested through the use of the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation technique along with its test of significance. This test is commonly used to determine the extent of relationship between two dependent variables (or pairs of variables). The remaining three null hypotheses are analyzed using Chi-square for frequency

comparison. This test is generally used to determine whether or not a frequency obtained is significantly different from that expected.

Research Question 4

What is the relationship between parental participation and parental expectations?

This research question was examined by testing the following null hypothesis and by using the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient technique along with its test of significance at the .05 level.

Null Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between parental participation and parental expectations.

Findings:

Table 17 presents a summary of the resulting statistical test to determine the significance of the relationship between parental participation and parental expectations. The test results revealed a significant and positive relationship between parental participation and each area of expectation as follows: school staffs should welcome less educated parents

($r = +0.12$ and $p = 0.037 < 0.05$); parents and teachers should work together ($r = +0.13$ and $p = 0.034 < 0.05$); schools should have a Handbook for Parents ($r = +0.13$ and $p = 0.035 < 0.05$); parents should help schools obtain additional resources ($r = +0.17$ and $p = 0.006 < 0.05$); parents should attend PTA meetings ($r = +0.24$ and $p = 0.000 < 0.05$); parents should go with their children to performances and other extracurricular activities ($r = +0.17$ and $p = 0.006 < 0.05$); parents should serve as volunteers at their child's school ($r = +0.28$ and $p = 0.000 < 0.05$); and teachers and principals should get to know parents ($r = +0.24$ and $p = 0.000 < 0.05$). Positive relationships were also found between parental participation and the following areas of expectation, but the relationships were not large enough to be statistically significant: parents should help children with homework ($r = +0.01$ and $p = 0.461 > 0.05$); schools should provide workshops that train parents to help their children ($r = +0.07$ and $p = 0.166 > 0.05$); teachers should try to make parents feel comfortable at conferences ($r = +0.06$ and $p = 0.189 > 0.05$); teachers should take more time to involve parents ($r = +0.02$ and $p = 0.404 > 0.05$); school staffs should welcome parents with limited English capability ($r = +0.04$ and $p = 0.278 > 0.05$); schools should have more luncheon/dinner meetings ($r = +0.06$ and $p = 0.193 > 0.05$); and teachers should show concern for all children ($r = +0.02$ and $p = 0.402 > 0.05$).

TABLE 17

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PARENTAL PARTICIPATION AND PARENTAL EXPECTATION
(N=209)

Specific Areas of Expectation	r value	p value
1. School staffs should welcome less educated parents	+0.12	0.037*
2. Parents and teachers should work together	+0.13	0.034*
3. Schools should have a handbook for parents	+0.13	0.035*
4. Parents should help schools obtain additional resources	+0.17	0.006*
5. Parents should help children with homework	+0.01	0.461
6. Schools should provide workshops that train parents to help children	+0.07	0.166
7. Teachers should try to make parents feel comfortable at conferences	+0.06	0.189
8. Parents should be blamed for their child's discipline problems	-0.01	0.477
9. Parents should attend PTA meetings	+0.24	0.000*
10. Parents should go with children to performances/ other extracurricular activities	+0.17	0.006*
11. Parents should serve as volunteers at their child's school	+0.28	0.000*

* Denotes significant relationships at the 0.05 level.

TABLE 17 (Continued)

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PARENTAL PARTICIPATION AND PARENTAL EXPECTATION (N=209)

Specific Areas of Expectation	r value	p value
12. Schools should provide transportation to meetings	-0.10	0.075
13. Teachers should take more time to get parents involved	+0.02	0.404
14. Schools should provide refreshments when parents attend meetings	-0.03	0.357
15. School staffs should welcome parents with limited English capability	+0.04	0.278
16. School meetings should be held on Saturdays	-0.06	0.201
17. Schools should have more luncheon/dinner meetings	+0.06	0.193
18. Schools should have a special room for parents	-0.01	0.459
19. Teachers and principals should get to know parents	+0.24	0.000*
20. Parent participation should end when their child leaves elementary school	-0.05	0.242
21. Parents should trust teachers	-0.01	0.476
22. Teachers should respect parents	-0.05	0.219
23. Teachers should show concern for all children	+0.02	0.402

* Denotes significant relationships at the 0.05 level.

Overall, the statistical test resulted in the rejection of the null hypothesis for eight of the 23 areas of expectations. In all eight significant correlations, the more the parents participated in school activities, the more they expected of school personnel and of themselves.

Research Question 5

Do selected demographic variables (race, education, and occupation) make a difference in Maryland middle school parental participation? This research question was examined by testing the following three null hypotheses and by using the Chi-square technique for frequency comparison at the selected .05 level of significance.

Null Hypothesis 2: Racial/ethnic background will not significantly influence parental participation.

Findings:

Table 18 presents a comparison of the participation of different racial/ethnic groups in school activities. According to the data in this table, except for the Hispanic group, all other racial/ethnic groups are almost equally distributed in high participation and low participation

TABLE 18

PARTICIPATION OF PARENTS BASED ON RACIAL/ETHNIC BACKGROUND

Racial/Ethnic Background	High Participation		Low Participation	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
White	63	49.6	64	50.4
Black	14	51.9	13	48.1
Hispanic	10	38.5	16	61.5
Asian	11	50.0	11	50.0

Chi-square = 1.25
Degrees of Freedom = 3
p = 0.740 > 0.05

categories. In fact, 61.5 percent of the Hispanic parents fell in the low participation category. However, the test results revealed no significant racial/ethnic influence in participation of other groups of parents (Chi-square = 1.25, $df = 3$, and $p = 0.740 > 0.05$).

Overall, the statistical test resulted in the acceptance of the null hypothesis at the .05 level of significance. Therefore, it was found that racial/ethnic background will not significantly influence parental participation in various school activities.

Null Hypothesis 3: Educational background will not significantly influence parental participation.

Findings:

Table 19 presents a comparison of parental participation in various school activities using the educational background of the parents. Based on the test results, educational background appeared to be a significant factor in parental participation, since only a small percentage of parents with a high school diploma or less showed a high degree of participation while a relatively large percentage of parents with master's and doctoral degrees showed a high degree of participation. Therefore, the test results revealed a

TABLE 19

PARTICIPATION OF PARENTS BASED ON EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

Educational Background	High Participation		Low Participation	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
High school or less	6	16.7	30	83.3
Undergraduate degree	43	46.7	49	53.3
Graduate degree	50	61.7	31	38.3

Chi-square = 20.33
Degrees of Freedom = 2
p = 0.000 < 0.05

significant association between education and parental participation in various school activities (Chi-square = 20.33, $df = 2$, and $p = 0.000 < 0.05$).

Overall, the statistical test resulted in the rejection of the null hypothesis at the .05 level of significance. Therefore, it was found that educational background will significantly influence parental participation.

Null Hypothesis 4: Occupation will not significantly influence parental participation.

Findings:

Table 20 presents a comparison of parental participation in various school activities with regard to the parents' occupational group. According to the statistical test, occupation was found to be a significant factor in parental participation, since a smaller percentage of parents who hold low-level occupations showed a high degree of participation while a relatively larger percentage of parents who hold high-level occupations showed a high degree of participation. Therefore, the test results revealed a significant association between parental participation in various school activities and parents' occupational levels (Chi-square = 8.04, $df = 2$, and $p = 0.018 < 0.05$).

TABLE 20
PARTICIPATION OF PARENTS BASED ON OCCUPATIONAL LEVEL

Occupational Level	High Participation		Low Participation	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
High level positions	24	60.0	16	40.0
Middle level positions	44	53.0	39	47.0
Low level positions	31	36.0	55	64.0

Chi-square = 8.04
Degrees of Freedom = 2
p = 0.018 < 0.05

Overall, the statistical test resulted in the rejection of the null hypothesis at the .05 level of significance. Therefore, it was found that occupation will significantly influence parental participation in various school activities.

Summary

The data collected for the study were analyzed through the use of appropriate descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive analysis of the data was performed using frequency distribution of the responses provided for those items on the questionnaire that were related to the first three research questions. Inferential analysis of the data was achieved by testing the first null hypothesis through the use of the Pearson Correlation technique and the remaining three null hypotheses using Chi-square. The .05 level of significance was selected as a criterion for rejection or acceptance of the null hypotheses tested in the study. The significant findings derived from an analysis of the data are summarized in Chapter V.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The current interest in parent participation across this nation is a result of the new climate of school reform which was brought about by the publication of A Nation At Risk in 1983, issued by the National Commission on Excellence in Education (Goodlad, 1984). Because of this new focus, there is an opportunity for parents, administrators, teachers and policy makers to establish plans for parent participation that will enhance the quality of education for all American children, including those whose parents lack social status, those from diverse backgrounds, those whose parents lack political influence, and those who are most at risk in our society. Many of the national leaders, including former Secretary of Education Bennett, have said that parent participation is the only prospect for real improvement in the schools. Former Education Secretaries Bell and Hofstedler both remarked that the "key to excellence" in Education is getting parents involved. With this new emphasis, parents are no longer being seen as just having the conventional role of dropping the children off at school and picking them up when the school day is over.

Schools staffs know that schools that are effective tend

to have parent participation as a large component of their success. However, for a school to have an effective parent participation program, administrators, teachers and parents must believe that parent participation is important and be willing to work together (Sattes, 1985).

The possibilities seem endless when parents and schools join together to plan for the success of a school. What many are beginning to recognize is that joining forces to achieve excellence is not easy for either group. Teachers have been seen as the experts in the classroom, and some have been extremely territorial in that respect by conveying the feeling that parent participation beyond the sale of cookies and an occasional attendance at a PTA meeting was intrusive. Parents have vacillated with various types of involvements through the years, then finally have become very comfortable with their role as classroom mother at the elementary level, but what and how much to do beyond the elementary years has been a dilemma for some parents. Now, with the new upsurge of parent participation information and all the benefits derived from it (Henderson, 1987, Comer, 1988, and Epstein, 1989), educators and parents are organizing and developing plans which will enhance the role that parents have traditionally held.

This exploratory study focused on an important question faced by educators and other important community players today who are attempting to improve participation in their

communities and want to know the reasons why some parents participate and others do not.

In order to collect the required data, an appropriate instrument was designed and mailed. Of the 500 randomly selected parents to whom the questionnaires were mailed, and 100 letters mailed as a follow up, 209 parents completed and returned the questionnaire. The largest number of questionnaires was returned by White parents (60.8 percent). The other responses received by race/ethnic group were Blacks (12.9 percent), Hispanics (12.4 percent) and Asians (10.5 percent). Another 3.5 percent of the respondents were either American Indian or chose not to identify their race or ethnicity.

Educationally, parents who hold a Master's degree (25.4 percent) were the largest responding group. Bachelor degree holders (22.6 percent) were the second largest group. By contrast, parents holding a GED (1.9 percent) and those who had only an elementary school education (1.4 percent) had the lowest response rates.

The method of analysis and statistical treatment applied to the data are reflected in the descriptions and tables which appear in Chapter IV.

Findings

The findings indicate that among all groups there were some programs and events where participation was particularly noteworthy. Back-to-School Night accounted for more people being in attendance regardless of race, occupation or education (74.6 percent). The program that ran second was Parent/Teacher Conferences (64.1 percent). Student Awards Nights and Drama/Play/Theatrical Activities (6.1 percent) accounted for events which had the lowest rate of response. These activities are traditionally held during the second semester, and for the purpose of this study, parents were asked to refer to their attendance at functions they attended during the first semester of 1990-91, only. Parents were not nearly as interested in tutoring in the classroom. In fact, only 1.9 percent participated in that manner.

Reasons Why Parents Do or Do Not Participate

Nearly twenty-seven percent of the parents reported they participated in the education of their children because they believed their participation was important. Secondly, parents reported they participated because they believed their attendance at various functions/activities would help teachers and principals do a better job toward educating their children

(11.4 percent). There was general agreement among approximately the same number regarding participating because they felt they needed to support their children (10.0 percent). Other reasons of the greatest importance to parents were the beliefs that their attendance would help their child succeed and stay in school (8.9 percent), the notion that teachers respond better when they know parents are interested (8.2 percent), and the fact that it made their child happy when they attended (7.6 percent). On the other hand, there was almost no agreement on these reasons for attending: because it assured parents that their child would not be discriminated against (0.8 percent), because the school provided a newsletter (0.5 percent), and because the parents did not want their child to embarrass them (0.1 percent). A few parents (5.3 percent) chose "other" as their category for reasons why they attended and wrote in their own reasons which are listed in Chapter IV.

The reason given by the largest number of parents (25.2 percent) for not attending was that no one asked them. The next largest percentage of parents stated they could not take time off from work (15.4 percent). Several indicated they did not feel it important to attend (9.5 percent). There was clear consensus that parents' lack of participation did not stem from the fact that they were out of town or out of the country, nor did they avoid attending a function/activity

because they were intimidated by a teacher or an administrator. Twenty-five percent wrote in additional reasons for not attending which ranged from "I forgot the meeting" to "My child does not want me to be visible."

Parents saw attending functions and activities as simply one way of participating in their child's educational process. According to the results of the data, a majority agreed that providing appropriate resources was immensely important. There were 182 parents (87.1 percent) who reported that they provided a separate place for their child to study at home, and 187 (89.5 percent) arranged a quiet place for their child to study at home. More than 90 percent had a dictionary and a calculator available. On a whole, all parent participation in this manner was exemplary.

According to this study, a majority of the parents again participated in their children's education by providing opportunities for their children in or with the family or in the community. Few differences were noted among the percentages of parents who provided help with homework assignments (90.4 percent), those who took children on family vacations (90.9 percent), those who encouraged their children to read for pleasure (89.5 percent) and those who encouraged their children to use the public library (86.6 percent). The results indicated that parents did not have a similar attitude regarding the importance of three of the items, although a

majority of the parents agreed that they were important. Those items were: providing opportunities for extracurricular activities (68.4 percent), taking the children to concerts and the theater (64.1 percent), and encouraging membership in community recreational activities (51.7 percent).

Patterns of Parent Participation

An observation of the data collected to determine the patterns of participation focused attention on participation by racial/ethnic background, occupation and education. Asian parents' participation in the Back-to-School Night program was higher than any other activity for that particular population. Parent conferences and PTA meetings rank second and third, respectively. Black parents' participation at parent/teacher conferences was followed by Back-To-School Night while PTA meetings again ranked third. Hispanic parents' participation was like that of Black parents with parent/teacher conferences leading their type of participation, followed by Back-to-School Night and PTA meetings. White parents' participation, like that of the Asian parents, showed the highest percentage going to Back-to-School Night, and parent/teacher conferences came in second, and PTA attendance was third. Thus, all four groups indicated they put their highest priority on those three programs.

When patterns of parental participation was observed with regard to educational background, the data showed that more parents who had a graduate degree participated in Back-to-School Night (72.8 percent) than parents whose educational level was either an undergraduate degree (60.9 percent) or a high school diploma or less (52.8 percent). The same was true for parent/teacher conferences and PTA meetings. By contrast, there was no significant difference in the percentage of parents who chaperoned school activities. Those with a graduate degree had an 11.1 percent participation and those with an under-graduate degree, 10.9 percent. Those with a high school diploma had the same rate of participation as those with a graduate degree, which was 11.1 percent.

A pattern of participation in school activities with regard to occupation again showed that the three activities--parent/teacher conferences, Back-to-School Night and PTA meetings--were events chosen as most important by all groups despite their occupational level. Although parents who worked in mid-level occupations had the highest attendance at Back-to-School Night (85.7 percent), parents with high-level occupations showed a 76.5 percent attendance rate, and parents working in occupations classified as low-level showed a 63.7 percent attendance rate. Parent/teacher conferences showed parents with mid-level occupations leading again with 71.4 percent, while the rate of attendance for the low-level was

60.4 percent. Parents working in high-level occupations had a 55.9 percent attendance rate. Participation in PTA meetings demonstrated a 38.1 percentage rate for the mid-level, 30.8 percentage for low-level, and those in high-level positions again ranked third at 26.5 percent.

A pattern of providing resources was observed by racial/ethnic backgrounds. Parents of all four groups indicated in large numbers that they provided calculators, dictionaries, newspapers/magazines/books and a quiet and separate place for their child to study. However, even though Hispanics provided less resources than the other three groups, their provisions were at or above the 50 percent level, except in two categories. Those areas where Hispanic parents did not provide resources at the 50 percent level were "making computers available" (34.6 percent) and "having a set of encyclopedia available" at home (38.5 percent). Black parents, on the other hand, showed only one category where they were not at the 50 percent level, and that was "having computers available at home" (44.4 percent).

There was little or no variation when the provisions for children were analyzed with regard to the parents' educational and occupational levels. The data revealed that the majority of parents made a quiet and separate place available for their child to study, and made calculators and dictionaries available. Parents with graduate degrees and high-level

positions reported providing more resources than other parents with less than a graduate degree or a high-level position.

The results indicated that opportunities for extracurricular and out-of-school activities were provided at the highest level by White parents, especially in the areas of family vacations (95.3 percent). The data also showed that parents' provisions in three other categories were at or above the 90 percent level. They were: Use of the public library (90.6 percent), reading for pleasure (92.9 percent) and homework assignments (92.1 percent). Black and Asian parents listed family vacations as a top priority, while Hispanics listed homework assignments (80.8 percent) as their top choice.

Parent Expectations and Parent Participation

When the data which supported the research question, "Is there a significant relationship between parent expectations and parent participation?" were studied, there was the revelation that there is a significant positive relationship between parental participation and parental expectations in nine of the 23 probes. Positive relationships were found in eight additional investigations. Moreover, the discovery was that the significant correlation served as a harbinger for parental participation - the more parents participated in the

various programs, the more they expected of the school and of themselves as well.

Demographic Variables as a Determining Factor

Race or Ethnic Group. Like it or not, race or ethnic grouping is a factor in American life that is often at the core of what is valued. However, when an effort was made to determine how this element influenced parental participation, the data showed that only the Hispanic population fell in the low participation range. All other groups were almost equally distributed in high and low participation categories. Even though the Hispanic parents were highest in the low participation category, their position was not low enough to be statistically significant. Consequently, it was found that race/ethnic background did not significantly influence parental participation.

Educational Background. Based on the study results, the amount of participation in which parents were involved was influenced by their educational background. Parents with a master's or doctoral degree more than tripled the participation of parents in the high school or less category. Parents with graduate degrees had the lowest score in the "Low" participation category (31.8 percent). Those parents

with undergraduate degrees ranked second with a percentage rate of 53.3, while parents with a high school or less educational background showed a percentage rate equal to more than twice that of parents with a graduate degree (83.3 percent). Therefore, the rate of participation was definitely influenced by a parent's educational background.

Occupation. In order to closely examine whether occupation played a role in parental participation, the thirteen occupational categories were divided into three levels. Those parents holding executive and managerial positions or positions of a professional specialty nature were placed in the high level area. Those who held positions of a technical support, marketing and sales, administrative support, or service nature were considered middle level. Those whose status was in agriculture and fishing, mechanics and installers, construction and extractive, production, or transportation and moving category were placed in the low-level range for the purpose of this study, as well as those who were students or presently unemployed.

Nearly two thirds (60.0 percent) of the parents who worked in high-level occupations fell in the high participation category, while just the opposite was true of those parents who spent their time working in low level positions (36.0 percent). A majority of the parents who

worked in middle level occupations had a high level of participation (53.0 percent). Therefore, the revelation was that occupation does play a significant role in influencing the rate of parental participation.

Overall, the survey results provided the skeptics with a picture of agreement about several components which dealt with reasons for parental participation. And, since there is empirical evidence now which shows the importance of parental participation in the education of their children, the findings confirm many of the beliefs held by educators.

Implications

The body of research in existence today on the value of parental participation makes understanding why schools do not do a better job of utilizing this important resource somewhat difficult. Most of the parents of the current student population have a vital interest in their children's academic success. The middle school which does not focus on this resource is missing a wonderful opportunity. Elementary schools often involve parents to a large degree, but many times middle schools fail to pick up where the elementary schools left off.

What all middle school staffs must recognize is that the overwhelming majority of parents, regardless of their race or

ethnicity, occupation or educational background, possess the basic strengths and abilities to help their children achieve. Parents in suburbia, in the inner city and in rural sections care about their children and want very much for them to have a better life than they had.

Until recently, many researchers ignored the middle level student, feeling that their parents could relax when their children reached middle school level. However, Comer, Rich, Henderson and others believe that this is a critical time for parental participation because students who experience failure at this level often become "dropouts" prior to reaching high school.

The responsibility for taking the first steps must fall on school personnel, as the onus is really on the school to provide substantive and suitable opportunities for parents to be involved. Not only do they have the most information but, once they open the doors to parents, parents respond willingly and enthusiastically (Truby, 1987).

Despite the fact that there is much agreement on the importance of parental participation with schools, some teachers view parents as constantly interfering with their ability to carry out their jobs successfully. They see parents causing conflicts that disrupt the learning environment. Mary Futrell, former NEA president, told a gathering that teachers were very concerned about volunteers

coming into the classroom because of reports that some parents had critically evaluated or tried to take control of the classroom from the teacher. This attitude is now somewhat dissipated in some schools, and some educators are beginning to recognize that increased parental support does not mean increased antagonism, but rather a positive quality that can best be achieved by having parents involved.

Since parental participation is a necessity for quality schools, the roles of both parents and teachers should be well defined. A new paradigm for parental participation requires deleting the delegation model where society delegates the role of paying taxes and possibly holding the school system accountable to parents. A change in the basic structure, roles, relationships and assumptions is needed. In order to run an effective program, more than just a few volunteers is needed. All parents or caregivers need to participate in a variety of school, home and community activities.

Schools must take the time to find out why those parents who participate are involved. They must also take the time to determine why parents choose to distance themselves from various programs. A few phone calls or visits to these parents' homes might reveal that these parents have ample time but lack information. A parent hotline might also prove beneficial since it could give parents an opportunity to contact each other about mutual concerns or just to relay

information about upcoming events. According to the survey, parents were ambivalent about the importance of an event as well as the importance placed on their being present. Schools can change this through personal contact. Increasing the awareness and sensitivity of school staffs to a parent's real time constraints is of tremendous importance. Events and meetings must be publicized long enough in advance for parents to arrange to take off from work, if necessary, and/or to adjust their calendars. Some meetings will also have to be held at night and on Saturdays.

Parents, also, revealed their ambivalence about continuing to participate in the education of their children as the child leaves elementary school. They need to be told that their participation is increasingly important, particularly when their children tell them to stay home.

School staffs must be made aware of the fact that some parents feel there is a degree of separatism and elitism that sometimes occurs among those who know the system and are already participating. This type of atmosphere tends to turn those parents off who see this behavior as exclusive; consequently, they assume the announcements and publicity do not apply to them. School staffs must work at preventing this from happening.

Patterns of Participation. The results of the study indicate that parents have many similar attitudes about what is important. These similar attitudes transcend race, occupation, and education. Schools need to recognize that all parents see Back-to-School Night, Parent/Teacher Conferences and PTA meetings as the three main programs to attend, in that order. They must also be aware that all parents regardless of race, education or occupation see chaperoning as an activity of equal importance, since there was no statistical difference in their percentage of participation.

Parents, regardless of occupation, race or education, supported and provided their children a quiet place to study as well as a separate place to study. There was a difference in educational resources provided by parents. Parents with a high-level position and a graduate degree tended to provide more resources. Economics play a significant role in the ability to provide resources, and schools must recognize this and make allowances to compensate for such differences.

Participation and Expectations. Since the test results exhibited a significant and positive relationship among eight of the categories when the null hypothesis "There is no significant relationship between parental participation and parental expectation" was tested, schools will need to plan their course of action based on the following:

- School staffs should welcome less educated parents.
- Parents and teachers should work together.
- Schools should have a handbook for parents.
- Parents should help schools attain additional resources.
- Parents should attend PTA meetings.
- Parents should go with their children to performances and other extracurricular activities.
- Parents should serve as volunteers at their child's school.
- Teachers and principals should get to know parents.

School personnel must be aware of the fact that of the 15 remaining expectations, positive relationships were also found, despite the fact that the relationships were not large enough to be statistically significant. What was of the greatest importance was the revelation that the more parents participated the more they expected of the school and of themselves. This finding has major implications for school staffs.

Demographics. Public schools today are a microcosm of society. Given this, support groups for parents who speak other languages are necessary. There must be media campaigns and hotlines that are bilingual, if not multilingual, for parents who speak limited English. Evening parent conferences

and family nights are necessary for those parents who work at jobs during the day that will not permit them time off without a penalty.

The new definition of "parental" participation goes beyond just the "parent," since it is too narrow. "Family" is a more appropriate terminology. The most significant people in a child's life may be grandparents, aunts, uncles, brothers, sisters or neighbors who provide child care. When the demographics are considered, one must look at all those who play important roles in addition to the economic hardships and language and social barriers.

School staffs have begun to recognize that parents know they are serious about their participation when the parents are invited to participate and their judgment is valued when comprehensive changes are made in curriculum, instruction, organization and school management.

Recommendations for Further Study

1. The findings of this study are a result of the efforts of parents whose educational and professional backgrounds are somewhat unique. Often various groups are confronted with extenuating circumstances that preclude their ability to perform various tasks/duties in the same

manner as others. A study should be conducted to compare and contrast how groups such as inner city parents and parents whose primary language is not English would respond to a similar questionnaire.

2. The study suggested that the parents in this study were more often than not, from two parent homes. However, families that include two natural parents with the mother staying at home are no longer the tradition. Many of the children we see in school today live in one-parent homes, reconstituted or blended families, with relatives, or in a variety of other family situations. Studies which have as their focus parent participation and one-parent or reconstituted families may generate much needed data that will assist schools in performing their tasks.
3. The study suggested that parents did not participate because they did not think it important and because no one asked them. Research is needed on alternative ways of achieving parent participation. Much is being tried today including parents taking courses with their children. Connecting schools and families with school and home computers could provide the kind of breakthrough that is vital to school reform.

Collecting data and making recommendations about such findings could be very influential in terms of the types of parental participation opportunities schools provide. Additionally, perhaps parents could see that they are needed, and some of the communication problems between the home and the school would be abated.

4. The research shows there is an upsurge of interest in parent participation. However, there is considerable evidence that parent participation in the education of middle school students is still quite low among some parents. There is the belief that if school districts adopted well-constructed parent participation policies, parent participation would improve. Thus, research is needed to determine if middle school parent participation has increased in those school systems where school boards have adopted such policies.
5. Researchers across the nation have claimed that enormous benefits are derived from parental participation. However, there does not appear to be a study in existence on why Chapter One parents do or do not participate in the education of their middle school children. Such a study should be undertaken.

6. The research suggests that this study was accomplished during a time of changing demographics in Montgomery County. It is suggested that a follow-up study be done in approximately 5-7 years to determine if the findings are similar.

Researcher's Reaction to the Study

Several aspects of this study are atypical, one reason is that Montgomery County is one of the most affluent counties in the United States. Secondly, it has a very large population of highly educated scholars in all racial/ethnic groups. Thirdly, despite the school system's quest for parent participation, this county already has more parents participating in the education of their middle school children (over 60 percent in the high participation category) than most school systems.

One of the surprising discoveries was that race was not a factor in how much parents participated, nor did race have a bearing on the type of participation that parents provided. The declaration that parents made about not being intimidated by the principal or teacher was incongruous with the literature review (Jackson and Cooper, 1989, Calabrese, 1988).

In conclusion, this study was undertaken to investigate why parents do or do not participate in the education of their

middle school children, to determine the patterns of participation, to examine the relationship between parental expectations and parental participation as well as to ascertain if selected demographics: race, occupation and education influenced middle school parental participation. The findings proved that three school events, Back-to-School Night, parent/teacher conferences and PTA meetings were the most frequently attended activities for all groups regardless of race, education or occupation. It was also discovered that occupation and education made a difference in the level and types of participation. The study pointed out that two of the reasons given by parents most often for participating were: (a) they felt their participation in school activities was very important, and (b) they believed their attendance would help teachers and principals do a better job toward educating their children.

The most frequently mentioned reasons for parental nonparticipation were: (a) no one asked them to attend, and (b) they could not take time off from work. Additionally, there was a significant relationship between parent participation and parent expectation, and overall the difference in racial/ethnic background was not significant.

It is often said that parents, teachers, administrators and school boards would like very much to function as partners in the education of children. In many school systems, all

groups are searching for ways to increase and improve parental participation. The enthusiastic response of parents who participated in this study and their willingness to divulge information regarding why they chose to be involved or chose not to be, will provide a picture for schools to seriously ponder as they begin to create parent participation programs.

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APPENDIX A

NOTICE OF ACTION ON RESEARCH ACTION REQUEST:

**APPROVAL TO CONDUCT RESEARCH
IN A MARYLAND PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM**

Parent Participation

NOTICE OF ACTION ON RESEARCH ACTIVITY REQUEST

by DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY

1. Clearance Recommendation

- Approval, Provisional Approval, Disapproval

2. Remarks (Include specific modifications needed or reason(s) for disapproval, as appropriate.)

RECOMMENDED BY

Name (Signature), Title (PEA), Date (3/11/91)

by OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

1. Clearance recommendation:

- APPROVED, DISAPPROVED

Participation in study is:

- VOLUNTARY, COMPULSORY

2. Remarks

Signature, Date (3/13/91)

IMPORTANT: If the data acquisition activity has been approved:

1. The information in the boxes below must appear on the first page of the form.

Expiration Date (EXPIRATION), Form Number (MCPS Form)

2. The first page of form must also bear the statements checked:

REPORT DISTRIBUTION

- The data collected by this form are for limited use only. A report based on the data collected by this form will be available for general distribution.

COMPLETION BY RESPONDENTS

- Respondents are not required to answer any questions which they believe are an infringement upon their privacy or which they do not care to answer for any other reason. By directive of the deputy superintendent, completion of this form is a compulsory activity for MCPS employees who are designated as respondents.

Name, Telephone No., After (Date)

Parent Participation Questionnaire

**NOTICE OF ACTION
ON
DATA ACQUISITION CLEARANCE REQUEST**

A. To be completed by DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY

IMPACT SUMMARY	Activity/Form <input type="checkbox"/> New <input type="checkbox"/> Revised	Respondent Group	Data Burden _____ Hrs.	Change _____ Hrs.	(Check) <input type="checkbox"/> Inc. <input type="checkbox"/> Dec.
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1. Clearance Recommendation

- Approval
 Provisional Approval (approval contingent on acceptance of modifications indicated below)
 Disapproval

2. Remarks (Include specific modifications needed or reason(s) for disapproval, as appropriate.)

Signature _____

Date 3/11/92

B. To be completed by OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

1. Clearance Action -

If approved, completion of form by respondents is:

- APPROVED
 DISAPPROVED
 VOLUNTARY
 COMPULSORY

2. Remarks

Signature _____

Date 3/13/91

C. Originator Responsibilities If Approval Granted

If the data acquisition activity/form has been approved:

1. The information in the boxes below must appear on the first page of the form.

Expiration Date
(Upper right hand corner)

EXPIRATION

Form Number

(Lower left hand corner)

MCPS Form

2. The first page of the form must also bear statements similar to those checked:

REPORT DISTRIBUTION

- The data collected by this form are for limited use only.

- A report based on the data collected by this form will be available for general distribution. Copies may be obtained from:

Telephone No. _____ After _____

COMPLETION BY RESPONDENTS

- Respondents are not required to answer any questions which they believe are an infringement upon their privacy or which they do not care to answer for any other reason.

- By directive of the deputy superintendent, completion of this form is a compulsory activity for MCPS employees who are designated as respondents.

3. Two copies of the final printed (or otherwise reproduced) form, including any transmittal letter, instructions, or other document being provided to respondents, are to be sent to the Department of Educational Accountability before any data collection activity is initiated.

APPENDIX B

LETTERS TO PARENTS OF THE MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS

P.O. Box 59713
Potomac, MD 20859-9713
March 15, 1991

Dear Parent:

You have been selected to participate in a survey which is exclusively for parents of middle school students. The information you will provide will help educators gain insight on particular factors which will aid them in encouraging parents to participate in the education of their children. Also, this study will assist me in completing the requirements for my doctoral degree.

Please be assured that this survey is strictly confidential, and in no way will the results identify you, your student or your school. Any coding that appears on the form will provide a follow-up procedure.

Please remember the following as you proceed with the completion of this questionnaire:

1. Only one parent/guardian should complete the questionnaire.
2. Participation is voluntary.
3. The questionnaire is approved by the Montgomery County Public schools.
4. All answers are confidential.
5. An interpreter/translator will be provided, if needed, at no cost to you.
6. A Spanish version of the questionnaire may be obtained upon request.
7. Your questionnaire must be returned by March 30, 1991, if your information is to be included in the survey.

Please mail forms in the enclosed pre-stamped envelope.

Please feel free to contact me if you have questions, would prefer a Spanish version of the questionnaire or if you need an interpreter/translator. My daytime number is 929-2025, and my evening number is 299-7099.

Thank you very much for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Marion L. Bell

P. O. Box 59713
Potomac, MD 20859-9713
April 4, 1991

Dear Parent,

I am writing to remind you to please complete and return the questionnaire which you received approximately two weeks ago. Of course, if you have already returned it, please ignore my letter. I am aware of how busy you may be, but the success of this project depends on a large number of the parents completing and returning the questionnaire.

Again, thank you very much.

Sincerely,

Marion L. Bell

APPENDIX C

RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE

SURVEY OF PARENTAL PARTICIPATION WITH MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS

The purpose of this questionnaire is to gather information which will help determine why parents do or do not participate in the education of their children.

Your cooperation is very important to the success of this project. Please answer all items and return the completed questionnaire, sealed in the enclosed envelope. All responses will be confidential; therefore, no reference will be made to either you or your child in reporting the data/responses. Also, the information you provide on this form will not negatively affect you or your child in any way.

Each form is numbered. However, the number will only be used for follow-up purposes.

PLEASE CAREFULLY READ AND ANSWER ALL ITEMS.

IT IS IMPORTANT TO FOLLOW

THE INSTRUCTIONS FOUND IN EACH SECTION.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR ASSISTANCE.

I. SCHOOL PARTICIPATION

A. Please

1. List in COLUMN A, the number of times you/your spouse attended a particular activity/function during the first semester of the 1990-91 school year.
2. In COLUMN B, list ALL of the REASON(S) WHY YOU ATTENDED EACH activity/function by using the letter next to the ANSWER CHOICE found in LIST 1 on the opposite page.
3. In COLUMN C, place an X on the line of each activity/function YOU DID NOT ATTEND.
4. In COLUMN D, list ALL of the REASONS WHY YOU DID NOT ATTEND the indicated ACTIVITY/FUNCTION checked in COLUMN C by using the letter next to the ANSWER CHOICE found in LIST 2 on the opposite page.

Please read ALL of the ITEMS before responding to the questions.

FIGURE I SCHOOL PARTICIPATION

ACTIVITY/FUNCTION	PARTICIPATION IN ACTIVITIES			
	ATTENDED?		NOT ATTENDED?	
	A NO. OF TIMES	B REASON(S)?	C DID NOT	D REASON(S)?
A. Parent/Teacher conference				
B. Back-to-School Night				
C. PTA Meeting				
D. Chaperoned school activity				
E. Tutored in classroom				
F. Informal school discussions (Principal's coffee/tea)				
G. Athletic activities/functions				
H. Booster Club Meeting				
I. Student Awards Night				
J. Choir/Band Concert				
K. Drama/Play/Theatrical function				
L. School Committee Meeting				
M. Volunteered to assist school (Other than chaperoning or tutoring)				
N. Other _____				
O. Other _____				

- B. Use the ANSWER CHOICES in LIST 1 to indicate in Column B on the opposite page WHY you/your spouse participated in the activities/functions listed. Read all of the answer choices and include ALL ITEMS that apply to each statement. EXAMPLE: If you attended Back-to-School-Night because it helps your child's self-esteem and also because your child was a participant, write BOTH "G" & "K" in Column B.

LIST 1 ANSWER CHOICES – REASONS WHY I PARTICIPATED

- A. Because I believe parent participation is important.
- B. Because I believe my attendance will help teachers and principals do a better job toward educating children.
- C. Because I believe my attendance will help my child succeed and stay in school.
- D. Because many parents I know were going to be there.
- E. Because it makes my child happy when I attend.
- F. Because it was an opportunity to meet (new) neighbors.
- G. Because my child was a participant.
- H. Because neighborhood children I know were participants.
- I. Because I felt I needed to support my child.
- J. Because teachers respond better to my child when they know I am interested.
- K. Because it helps my child's self-esteem.
- L. Because it adds to what my child learns in school.
- M. Because it assures that my child is not discriminated against.
- N. Because I do not want my child to embarrass me.
- O. Because my school provides a newsletter.
- P. Because administrators/teachers are willing to hear my concerns about my child.
- Q. Other _____
- R. Other _____

- C. Use the ANSWER CHOICES of LIST 2 to indicate in COLUMN D on the opposite page WHY you/your spouse DID NOT PARTICIPATE in the ACTIVITY/FUNCTION indicated in COLUMN C. EXAMPLE: If the notice was received too late to request time off from work, write A and B in COLUMN D.

LIST 2 ANSWER CHOICES – REASONS WHY I DID NOT PARTICIPATE

- A. Notice was not received in time.
- B. Could not take time off from work.
- C. Did not feel it important to attend.
- D. Was out of town/the country.
- E. Had previous engagement.
- F. Felt intimidated by teacher(s).
- G. Felt intimidated by principal or another school administrator.
- H. Lacked transportation.
- I. Could not leave other children alone.
- J. No one asked me.
- K. Not interested.
- L. Other, please identify _____.
- M. Other, please identify _____.
- N. Other, please identify _____.

D. Mark "X" in the space to indicate resources and activities which have been provided for your child. DO NOT write in the space if an item or activity has not been provided.

- A. Separate place for my child to study at home.
- B. Quiet place for my child to study at home.
- C. Specific time(s) for my child to study at home.
- D. Set of encyclopedia at home.
- E. Dictionary at home.
- F. Calculator at home.
- G. Typewriter at home.
- H. Computer at home.
- I. Maps or world globe at home.
- J. Daily newspaper(s), magazines and/or books at home.
- K. Membership in boys/girls club or community recreation groups.

E. Mark "X" in the space if the statement is true. DO NOT write "X" in the space if the statement is not true.

- A. I see to it that my child participates in extracurricular activities such as athletics, music, drama, student government, etc.
- B. I take my child on family vacations.
- C. I take my child to concerts and the theatre.
- D. I see to it that my child visits the public library to use reference materials or check out books.
- E. I encourage my child to read for pleasure.
- F. I help my child with homework assignments.
- G. I call the school when I have questions or concerns about my child.

II. YOUR PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL CHARACTERISTICS

A. What is your occupation or job? _____

B. What is the occupation or job of your spouse? _____

NOTE: FOR QUESTIONS C and D, Please place "X" or a check next to the response which applies to you

C. What is your racial/ethnic group?

- A American Indian
- B Black/African-American
- H Hispanic
- P Asian/South Pacific
- W White
- O Other _____

D. Highest level of education for:	YOU	SPOUSE
1. Elementary school		
2. Some high school		
3. High school diploma		
4. GED		
5. Vocational training certificate		
6. Some college		
7. Associate degree		
8. Bachelor's degree		
9. Master's degree		
10. Doctoral degree		

III. PARENTAL EXPECTATIONS

	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements:				
A. School staffs should welcome less educated parents.				
B. Parents and teachers should work together.				
C. Schools should have a Handbook for Parents.				
D. Parents should help schools obtain additional resources.				
E. Parents should help children with homework.				
F. Schools should provide workshops which train parents to help their children.				
G. Teachers should try to make parents feel comfortable at conferences.				
H. Parents should be blamed for their child's discipline problems.				
I. Parents should attend PTA meetings.				
J. Parents should go with their children to performances and other extra-curricular activities.				
L. Parents should serve as volunteers at their child's school.				
M. Schools should provide transportation to meetings.				
N. Teachers should take more time to involve parents.				
O. Schools should provide refreshments when parents attend meetings.				
P. School staffs should welcome parents with limited English capability.				
Q. School meetings should be held on Saturdays.				
R. Schools should have more luncheon/dinner meetings.				
S. Schools should have a special room for parents.				
T. Teachers/principals should get to know parents.				
U. Parent participation should end when their child leaves elementary school.				
V. Parents should trust teachers.				
W. Teachers should respect parents.				
X. Teachers should show concern for all children.				

Please list on the back of this form, any concerns/suggestions you or/and your spouse might have that prevent you from participating more at your child's middle school.

THANK YOU AGAIN FOR YOUR ASSISTANCE.

VITA

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