

**Parents and Teachers in Education:  
Can Social Exchange Theory  
Explain the Nature of the Relationship?**

by

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**PARENTS AND TEACHERS IN EDUCATION:  
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**MAUREEN F. MAHON**

**A Thesis/Practicum submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of The University  
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**of**

**MASTER OF EDUCATION**

**Maureen F. Mahon 1997 (c)**

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## ABSTRACT

The overall purpose of this study was to assess the efficacy of the social exchange theory model, and in particular the norm of reciprocity, with respect to the relationship between parents and teachers within early years classrooms (kindergarten through grade four). Specifically, the study investigated parents and teachers perceptions of influence and level of satisfaction on issues related to sharing of information and decision making within schools.

In order to achieve the objective, data were collected from a non-probability sample of 41 parents and 17 teachers within the Catholic school system in Winnipeg, Manitoba. A three part, self-completed questionnaire was used to collect the data.

The results of the analysis of covariance suggested that there were no significant differences between parents and teachers mean scores on influence or satisfaction. Further analyses on individual items revealed statistically significant differences between parents and teachers discrepancy scores on the following items: assessment of academic performance, issues related to school budget, staffing, and placement issues.

The social exchange model was an effective tool with which to examine the relationship between parents and teachers. The results of this study have shown that there would appear to be a level of reciprocity between the two groups. Early years educators and parents should continue to strive towards building positive, reciprocal relationships that can then be maintained as the years progress.

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**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

	PAGE
ABSTRACT	i
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	ii
LIST OF TABLES	v
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION	1
Statement of the Problem	2
Definition of Terms	2
Research Hypotheses	3
Delimitations	3
Limitations	4
CHAPTER 2 REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE	5
Social Exchange Theory	5
Early development	5
Recent developments: The work of Blau	7
Reciprocity	9
Parent-Teacher Relationships	13
CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY	19
Research Setting	19
Sample	19
Instrumentation	22
Data Collection	24
Data Analysis	25
Hypothesis 1	26
Hypothesis 2	26
Hypothesis 3	27

<b>CHAPTER 4 RESULTS</b>	<b>28</b>
Analysis of Hypothesis 1	29
Analysis of Hypothesis 2	36
Analysis of Hypothesis 3	43
<b>CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION</b>	<b>47</b>
Recommendations for Future Inquiry	60
Implications for Parents and Teachers	60
<b>REFERENCES</b>	<b>62</b>
<b>APPENDIX A: Teacher Questionnaire</b>	<b>67</b>
<b>APPENDIX B: Parent Questionnaire</b>	<b>72</b>
<b>APPENDIX C: Letter to Division Superintendent</b>	<b>77</b>
<b>APPENDIX D: Covering Letter to Parents</b>	<b>78</b>
<b>APPENDIX E: Covering Letter to Teachers</b>	<b>79</b>
<b>APPENDIX F: Reminder Card</b>	<b>80</b>

## LIST OF TABLES

NUMBER		PAGE
1	Demographics of Selected Schools	19
2	Frequency Distribution of Parents' and Teachers' Responses to Information About Themselves	21
3	Means and Standard Deviations for Parents' and Teachers' Scores for Influence and Satisfaction Scales	28
4	Summary of Analysis of Covariance of Mean Discrepancy Scores for Influence One Has and One Should Have	30
5	Means and Standard Deviations for Parents' Scores for the Influence They Believe They Do and Should Have on Items "a" through "i"	31
6	Means and Standard Deviations for Teachers' Scores for the Influence They Believe They Do and Should Have on Items "a" through "i"	32
7	Means and Standard Deviations of Discrepancy Scores for Parents and Teachers On Items "a" through "i"	33
8	Summary of One Way Analysis of Variance of Mean Discrepancy Scores for Parents and Teachers for the Influence They Believe They Do and Should Have for Items "a" Through "i"	35
9	Summary of Analysis of Covariance of Mean Discrepancy Scores for Influence Other Has and Other Should Have	37
10	Means and Standard Deviations for Parents' Scores for the Influence They Believe That Teachers Do and Should Have on Items "a" through "i"	38



11	Means and Standard Deviations for Teachers' Scores for the Influence They Believe That Parents Do and Should Have on Items "a" through "i"	39
12	Means and Standard Deviations of Discrepancy Scores for Parents and Teachers For the Other On Items "a" through "i"	40
13	Summary of One Way Analyses of Variance of Mean Discrepancy Scores of the Other for Items "a" Through "i"	42
14	Summary of Analysis of Covariance of Mean Scores of the Degree of Satisfaction Over School Matters	43
15	Means and Standard Deviations for Parents' and Teachers' Scores for the Level of Satisfaction Through Involvement with School on Items "a" through "i"	44
16	Summary of One Way Analysis of Variance for Parents' and Teachers' Scores for the Level of Satisfaction Through Involvement with School on Items "a" through "i"	46

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

The importance of involving parents in their children's education has been well documented (Epstein, 1984; Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler, & Brissie, 1987; Power, 1985; Stevenson & Baker, 1987). Research conducted over the past several years has attested to the practical benefits of stronger family-school interactions. Studies looking at the impact of parental or family involvement in schools vary in their focus; with some looking at effects on the child; others, parental effects; and still others, school and community outcomes. Upon reviewing the research, both Powell (1989) and Waller and Goldman (1979) concluded that there are at least some positive effects. Other studies (Chavez, as cited in Cochran & Dean (1991); Davies, 1976; Seeley, 1981) suggest that parental involvement favorably affects children's learning, attitudes towards school, and long-term aspirations. Home-school relations include parental involvement (as school volunteers, in parent-teacher organizations, through elected boards of education), communication (reports, conferences, telephone calls), and parents' activities as teachers of their own children in their homes.

The most well known forms of parent involvement in education have traditionally included such activities as attendance at Meet the Teacher evenings, baking for school fund raising events, attending parent-teacher interviews, and so on. While each of these activities are of value, Swap (1987) argues that these traditional forms of participation marginalize the parents' role. Seeley (1989) and Ziegler (1987) refer to them as "one-way street" forms of communication. Creating more substantial roles necessitates involving parents in determining educational goals for their children (Cochran & Dean, 1991; Epstein, 1987). Doing so, however, is complicated by the fact that relationships between teachers and parents have been described as competitive and conflictual (Burton, 1992; Lightfoot, 1978; Waller, 1961).

This study has attempted to reconcile these differing interpretations of parent-teacher relationships using social exchange theory. It examined whether the norm of reciprocity, in particular, can explain the manifestations of the relationships between parents and teachers in the areas of information sharing and decision making.

### Statement of the Problem

This study explored the relationship between parents and teachers utilizing social exchange theory as a model to interpret parent/teacher relations. In order to look into the relationship between parents and teachers as it currently exists, social exchange theory was used. In addition, speculation was made as to what is likely to happen in the absence of reciprocity, a central tenet of the model.

An existing instrument was modified to measure the influence and needs in the parent/teacher relationship in light of social exchange theory.

The purpose of the modified survey instrument was to assess whether or not there is an association between the influence one thinks one should have and that which one does have for both parents and teachers. In addition, the survey helped to determine the degree of satisfaction with the relationship between parents and teachers.

### Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study the following definitions apply:

**Social Exchange Theory:** That branch of sociology and social psychology that seeks to understand human interactions via the exchange mechanisms that occur in such interactions.

**Reciprocity:** When contributions from one individual to another are prompted by a contribution from the other individual.

**Influence:** The ability one perceives one has to control information sharing and decision-making in an organization.

**Involvement:** Parent participation in schools which may range from passive to active participation with respect to information sharing and decision making. This is not

to be confused with the concept “involvement” used in the social psychology literature.

### Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested in this study:

H1: The discrepancy score related to influence over school matters for parents will be greater than the discrepancy score for teachers. These discrepancy scores were determined as follows. First, the discrepancy between the influence over school matters that parents believe they do have versus what they believe they should have was assessed. Second, the discrepancy between the influence over school matters that teachers believe they do have versus what they believe they should have was assessed.

H2: The discrepancy score as related to the other’s influence over school matters for teachers will be greater than the discrepancy score for parents. These discrepancy scores were determined as follows. First, the discrepancy between the influence over school matters that teachers believe parents do and should have was assessed. Second, the discrepancy between the influence over school matters that parents believe teachers do and should have was assessed.

H3: Teachers will be more satisfied with the degree of influence that they have over school matters than parents.

Using influence and degree of satisfaction as the dependent variables, these hypotheses served to test the reciprocity norm in parent/teacher relationships.

### Delimitations

Generalization of the results of this study may be limited by: (a) The sample was restricted to parents and teachers within the Manitoba Catholic School System, and (b) The sample size was small; 41 parents and 17 teachers. In addition, the schools were not randomly selected.

### Limitations

The following limitations were identified for this study: (a) Parents, teachers, or both may have discussed among themselves in preparing their responses to the questionnaire which would affect the internal reliability of the study, and (b) Measurement of influence is difficult because of the different meanings attached to it by respondents, thus posing another threat to the internal reliability of the study.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

#### Social exchange theory

##### Early development.

Exchange theory is a general theory concerned with understanding the exchange of material or non material resources between individuals and/or groups in an interaction situation. Social exchange theory has been derived from the work of sociologists Homans (1958), Blau (1964), and Emerson (1972a, 1972b). Homans' explanation of exchange theory is grounded in operant psychology as developed by Skinner (1953). In Homans' view, exchange between individuals continues because each finds the others behavior reinforcing to some degree. The behavior might consist of a compliment, an expression of agreement, or assistance in performing some task of mutual interest. Two variables have been derived from the basic propositions inherent in Homans' work. The first involves the frequency of rewards or costs, and the second looks at the value attached to rewards (Chadwick-Jones, 1976).

Some social exchange behaviors entail "costs" while others are essentially cost-free. For example, a compliment (e. g. a flattering remark on the choice of an individual's attire) may be relatively low in cost to the individual receiving it. Other behaviors, however, may produce a substantial cost. For example, two individuals may choose to play a game. This behavior may be thought of as social exchange. Assuming that both individuals receive pleasure from playing, each individual is rewarding the other simply by playing. However, for one of the players, the loser of the game, a cost is incurred. If, over a number of repeated matches, the same player continued to lose, the cost of losing may become too great and that player may decide to stop playing.

Homans relates cost to the *value* of the reward obtainable, acknowledging that value is difficult to measure because there may be fluctuations in value over time for any

individual. Homans' work is based on the assumption that the basic principles of human behavior can best be studied and derived from an examination of small groups of individuals and the interpersonal relations among group members.

Emerson's (1972a, 1972b) approach focused on the exchange relation as the most elementary unit of analysis rather than the behavior or action. Emerson took hypotheses from operant psychology and applied these to human social learning, specifically their application to individuals. He presented a more general theoretical framework for analyzing social interactions, attempting to link individuals involved in social exchange relations together to form structures or networks. Much of this work was based on an earlier work (Emerson, 1962), in which Emerson examined balance, dependence, and power in the context of dyadic relations. Cook (1987) summarized Emerson's notions of balance, dependence, and power as follows:

“Exchange relations are ‘balanced’ if the two actors involved in exchange are equally dependent upon one another; otherwise an imbalance exists in the relation. Dependence . . . is determined by the *value* one actor places on the resources provided by the other actor and the availability of these valued resources from alternative sources. Unequal dependencies result in an imbalanced exchange relation that, according to power-dependence principles, creates a power advantage for the less dependent member of the relation. A power advantage gives an actor the structural opportunity to use the potential power that results from the differential dependencies” (p. 216).

Emerson's analysis begins with an already established exchange relation. This relationship is subject to two basic processes: (1) the use of power and (2) balance. If it is revealed that within an exchange relation one individual (A) is highly dependent on another (B), then individual B would be said to have a *power advantage* over individual A. In Emerson's view a power advantage represents an imbalanced exchange relation which, over time,

tends toward balance. These balancing operations can take four forms. Jacobs (1970) summarized them as follows:

- “1. Reducing the motivational dependency of the less powerful member on the more powerful one.
2. A power imbalance can be reduced by finding an alternate source of satisfaction of a need that cannot be ignored.
3. A frequently occurring way to reduce power imbalance is by obtaining control over some source of satisfaction required by the more powerful member.
4. A final balancing operation consists of developing a source of satisfaction on which the more powerful member can be induced to become dependent, which then provides a means of reducing the unequal exchange that is thought to produce power imbalances” (pp. 218-19).

Recent developments: The work of Blau.

Blau (1987) credits both Homans (1958) and Emerson (1962) as having influenced his conception of social exchange. Blau (1964) argued that it is possible to understand social structure and events that occur within social structures by looking first at individual processes that occur between people and then building on them. His theory of social exchange attempts to do just that. Blau's theory combines principles from operant psychology and economics to provide a conceptual framework for the analysis of social relations. Blau maintains that individuals will enter into and maintain a relationship as long as they can satisfy their self-interests and at the same time ensure that the benefits outweigh the costs. An individual will seek to maximize his or her profits (positive reinforcements, rewards) and minimize losses (negative reinforcements, costs) in interactions with others. In terms of continuing relationships, individuals will try to maintain those exchanges which have proven to be rewarding in the past, to break off those which proved to be more costly than rewarding, and to establish new relations which have a good chance of being more rewarding than costly.



If there is to be exchange, there must be “things” exchanged. Yet, exchange is not solely limited to the economic market. Blau suggested that “neighbors exchange favors; children toys; colleagues, assistance; acquaintances, courtesies; politicians, concessions; discussants, ideas” (p. 88). Individuals have many social resources of various sorts including expertise (which makes one valuable as a colleague in a working relationship), physical beauty or prowess (which is intrinsically attractive to others), or a relationship with some socially desirable or prestigious group. By calculating the value of various resources to individuals in a group, it may be possible to predict how they will interact. Many of the intangible exchanges are readily recognized by those involved. In our daily life, we constantly encounter situations where we are giving favor and assistance in return for something else received in the past, or in anticipation of receiving something else in the future. Individuals often speak of “owing” another a letter; or of being “indebted” to someone for help received. It is probably safe to assume that in our society some sort of reciprocal principle is operating and that for every individual some of his or her behavior is governed by such a principle. Blau included within the category of social exchange all “actions that are contingent on rewarding reactions from others and that cease when these expected reactions are not forthcoming” (p. 6). In other words, any behavior that is motivated by an expected return or response from another falls under the heading of exchange.

A basic assumption that differentiates social exchange from purely economic exchange has to do with trust. A study by Wilson and Kahn (1975) found that subjects volunteered more time to help in a research project when high rather than when low monetary reimbursement was offered. Blau (1964) stated that such arrangements fall within the domain of purely economic exchange. In economic exchange, payment is in set units, with amounts usually fixed beforehand. Payment is immediate. The conclusion of the exchange formally marks the end of the relationship between buyer and seller. In social exchange, on the other hand, there is usually no fixed understanding beforehand about the

rate at which social resources will be exchanged, or about the length of time over which repayment will be made. Exchange as a social process ". . . entails supplying benefits that create diffuse future obligations . . . and the nature of the return cannot be bargained about but must be left to the discretion of the one who makes it" (p. 93). Social exchange may involve intrinsic benefits in which, rather than the acts themselves, it may be an underlying mutual support or friendliness that is being exchanged. For example, an individual seeking advice may be confirming the friendly relations between him or herself and another. Another example is when a couple is invited over to their friend's house for dinner. The two couples typically do not sit down in advance to decide the date for repayment of the debt. The relationship is one founded on trust; trust that eventually, at some point in the future, the couple will reciprocate.

Blau (1964) argued that social exchanges, such as the ones described above, require that individuals trust each other. Assuming that individuals will in fact reciprocate for gifts they have received, social exchange will generate feelings of gratitude and trust. The trust will allow the individuals within the relationship to establish a bond of solidarity between them. If there is no trust, then neither is there social exchange. Furthermore, Blau called attention to the fact that distrust will have a negative impact on social behavior in general. He suggested that trust tends to build up gradually through commitment to a relationship in which there is free communication between those individuals involved.

#### Reciprocity.

A basic assumption of exchange theory is the reciprocal relationship. Gouldner (1960) proposed that reciprocity is a universal dimension of social relationships. He suggested that reciprocity can be broken down into two central elements;

1. people should help those people that helped them; and,
2. people should not injure those people who have helped them.

Here Gouldner is making the assumption that for most participants of a culture, under most circumstances, to reciprocate is compulsory; society has successfully indoctrinated this

norm in most of its members. The reason individuals reciprocate is due to the internalization of this moral norm. There is an expectation that when one receives something of value one returns the benefit to the individual from whom one received it. Thus, inherent in the exchange process, is a principle of reciprocity. Over time, a social "norm of reciprocity," whose violation brings about social disapproval and other negative sanctions, emerges in exchange relations. Gouldner suggests that the norm of reciprocity operates as a starting mechanism for new social relationships because people are willing to begin by helping others knowing that help will eventually be returned.

This does not mean, however, that reciprocity is without conditions; it is dependent on the perceived value of the benefit received or given. Blau (1964) furthered the notion of reciprocity by explaining it in terms of two principles. Turner (1986) described these principles as:

“1. The more people have exchanged rewards with one another, the more likely are reciprocal obligations to emerge and guide subsequent exchanges among those persons; and,

2. The more reciprocal obligations of an exchange relationship are violated, the more are deprived parties disposed to sanction negatively those violating the norm of reciprocity (264).”

Searle (1989) argued that “these principles provided a clear means by which to understand the effects of reciprocity in organizational relationships (354).” Searle’s research on the reciprocity between municipal recreation directors and their recreation advisory boards was based on the conclusion from the literature that such relationships were characterized by mutually satisfying exchange.

Blau (1964) also includes a concept of power in the norm of reciprocity. An individual who helps another obligates him or her to reciprocate and thus acquires power over him or her. The latter is obliged to accede to the former’s requests, and until this reciprocation takes place there is an imbalance of power. Within power relations the

dependence tends to be one-sided; mutual influence or interdependence would, in fact, indicate a lack of power. Anyone who can supply services which are in high demand finds him or herself in a position of power with others who are dependent on him or her for those services and they may subsequently be obliged to comply with his or her wishes.

All exchange operates under the presumption that people who give rewards will receive rewards in turn as payment. Individuals attempt to impress each other by revealing the rewards that they have to offer in an effort to influence others, in accordance with the norm of reciprocity, to reciprocate with an even more valuable reward. At some point in time, however, it becomes clear that some people have more valued resources to offer than others, putting them in a unique position to extract rewards from all others who value the resources that they have to offer.

Blau (1964) illustrates the asymmetry of many relationships where one person is more dependent on another. The first person has less resources, or fewer alternatives than the second, may have less influence and therefore must comply with the wishes of the second person. The balance of reciprocity in the relationship is brought into question. There may be greater costs involved for the person who has to defer to others, yet if the resources of the others are so much greater, then the asymmetry of such an exchange may be considered equitable by the less powerful. Differences in power inevitably create the potential for conflict. Blau states that authority, "rests on the common norms in a collectivity of subordinates that constrain its individual members to conform to the orders of a superior" (p. 208). Although it is quite possible for individuals to arrive at a consensus in the course of the exchange process itself, an initial set of common values facilitates the legitimization of power. They can then enter into exchanges with a common definition of the situation. Without common values, the competition for power may be severe. In the absence of guidelines about reciprocity and fair exchange, considerable strain and tension could persist. Jacobs (1970) suggests that one general way of reducing power imbalance involves the tendency of the less powerful member to increase the distance between

themselves and the more powerful individual. This tendency is reflected particularly through reduced interaction. Blau (1964) concludes that there will be a general tendency for interactions to decrease as the power differential between two persons increases. Jacobs argues that this conclusion must be tempered by the question of how the more powerful individual reacts to an interaction initiation by a less powerful person. If he consistently reacts in an accepting and rewarding manner, the attempts at interaction should increase.

A related, but more recent concept, is interdependence (Condeluci, 1991; Covey, 1989). The term, quite simply, implies an interrelationship. Covey states:

“Independent thinking alone is not suited to interdependent reality. Independent people who do not have the maturity to think and act interdependently may be good individual producers, but they won’t be good leaders or team players. They’re not coming from the paradigm of interdependence necessary to succeed in marriage, family, or organizational reality. Life is, by nature highly interdependent. To try to achieve maximum effectiveness through independence is like trying to play tennis with a golf club - the tool is not suited to the reality.”

Although Covey’s (1989) perspective on interdependence is concerned with relations between individuals, it is relevant to relationships within organizations. Condeluci (1991) notes that a state of interdependence between individuals is conducive to facilitating relationships. Interdependence focuses on relationships that lead to a mutual acceptance and respect between individuals. It promotes an acceptance and empowerment for all. Condeluci’s (1991) work looks at the interdependent paradigm as it relates to individuals with disabilities. He argues that the major problem experienced in an interdependent paradigm is attitudinal; that it is not people who are problems, but the limited viewpoints of others. This perspective, too, can be applied to the relationship between parents and teachers. If the problem of the interdependent paradigm rests with limited supports and attitudinal barriers, then the root of the problem is found in the system. We need to change and extend the educational system to accept and welcome parents. An interdependent

approach sees the challenge resting both with parents and teachers. An interdependent paradigm would allow for and encourage empowerment for all.

Condeluci's notion of interdependence is closely tied to the concept of reciprocity, which is one of the elements of social exchange theory. Gouldner (1960) has observed that the two central elements of reciprocity are that people should help those that help them, and that people should not injure those who have helped them. He argues that reciprocity is a universal norm. In order for interdependence to exist, then, there must be reciprocity, or "give and take", within the relationship. This means that interdependence can and does exist between individuals if both contribute to the relationship by giving and receiving.

#### Parent-teacher relationships

Chadwick-Jones (1976), on reviewing social exchange theory, suggested that many social scientists have found it to be an extremely useful conceptual framework for studying social interaction. It can be utilized to examine the nature of relationships and the degree of influence that different individuals possess (Searle, 1988, 1989). This is a critical concern given the general support in the literature for a cooperative model for parent and teacher relationships.

The social exchange theory model was used to assist in the interpretation of the relationship between superintendents and school board members (Tallerico, 1989). The purpose of this study was an attempt to understand the nature of the relationship between these two groups. Tallerico found that superintendents and school board members possess differing resources which translate, according to exchange theory, into differing bargaining chips. Blau (1964) argued that all social behaviour may be analyzed and understood in terms of an exchange process. Superintendents and board members both had something to gain and both had a price to pay. Analysis of the results showed that reciprocity and exchange were evident and that Blau's social exchange model proved to be a powerful explanatory tool.

An extensive and growing literature documents the importance of involving parents in the education of their children (Epstein, 1984; Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler, & Brissie, 1987; Power, 1985; Stevenson & Baker, 1987). The active participation of parents in the school is believed to have positive effects on children, their parents and their teachers. Stevenson and Baker, using a nationally representative sample of American households, found that children of parents who are more involved in school activities do better in school than children with parents who are less involved. Studies by Epstein (1984) and Henderson (1987) have found parent participation to be significantly related to academic progress, decreased discipline problems, increased self-esteem and social skills, and better school attendance, study habits, and attitudes toward school. In an extensive review of the research, Fullan (1982) notes a consistent message: "The closer the parent is to the education of the child, the greater the impact on child development and educational achievement" (p. 139).

Teachers can also benefit from home-school relations. Research has found that when teachers are committed to promoting parental involvement they become more proficient in their instructional and professional activities; allocate more of their own time to instruction; and become more involved with the curriculum (Conoley, 1987; Hansen, 1986). Epstein (1986) found that when parents were actively involved with their child's school, it gave teachers greater knowledge of their students' home environments. That knowledge can help the teacher to facilitate a successful school experience for each of his or her students. Pugh (1985) concurs when she says, "In the early years . . . the experience of a nursery or small group to a child will be of greatest value if it relates to what happens at home and can complement it" (p. 223).

Hulsebosch (1992) explored parent/teacher relationships. She talked to teachers who had established and maintained a range of relationships with parents. She differentiated two groups of teachers: those who valued the involvement of parents in their classrooms and those who did not. She compared and contrasted the values and practices

of these “high-involvement” and “low-involvement” teachers in an attempt to gain some insight into the relationship between parents and teachers. The results suggested that the differences between the two groups of teachers “are not so much differences in skills or techniques, but are more the result of divergent purposes and visions of what it means to be a ‘professional’ teacher” (p. 129-130). She suggested that the high-involvement teachers formed rich collaborative relationships with parents.

Although educators and parents acknowledge the importance of their mutual relationship, they are involved in a relationship that is too often strained and not meaningful. Schools have typically organized events that do not allow for discussion, negotiation, and problem solving between teachers and parents (Pugh, 1985; Tizard, Mortimore, & Burchell, 1981). Parents are invited to attend social occasions such as Meet the Teacher evenings which are promoted as opportunities for parents and teachers to meet each other and discuss mutual interests. The reality, however, is that these occasions do not provide opportunities for meaningful discussions. Opportunities for discussion are pursued only when dissatisfaction is felt on the part of the parent or teacher. This only contributes to possible conflicts between the two groups. Problems in initiating parental participation have been described from both the teacher's and the parent's perspectives. Power (1985) supported the conclusions of Lightfoot (1978) that the parent-teacher relationship is highly competitive. He studied the attitudes of parents and teachers in the home-school relationship and found that the issues of greatest importance to parents and teachers were concerns about their own and the other's competence. The results indicated that parents and teachers each perceived themselves to be more competent than the other in dealing with children's problems. This, suggests Power, may result in a conflictual, competitive relationship between parents and teachers.

Lightfoot (1979) and Sharrock (1970) described teachers as being defensive of their professional status and occupational image; they are threatened by the possibility of observation and participation by outside people and consequently prefer their doors to be



closed to the outside world. Parents, on the other hand, having been the primary caregivers for the child since birth fear losing control of their children's daily lives and resent someone else becoming the expert and judge of their children's abilities. This provides a further explanation for adversarial relationships between parents and teachers. Lightfoot argues that that the situation is accentuated by the ambiguity of both roles and relationships due to few opportunities for "parents and teachers to come together for meaningful substantive discussion" (p. 27).

Lack of mutual understanding about respective roles may reflect another reason for the adversarial relationship (Covey, 1989; Sharrock, 1970). Unclear expectations in the area of roles and goals can undermine communication and trust between individuals. Just as the school needs to recognize the parents as the first teachers of children, the parents need to be aware of the training and competence of teachers. This is most likely to occur if schools proactively organize opportunities for meaningful dialogue where roles and relationships can be articulated and clarified. Although it is inevitable that teacher and parental expectations will differ, these differences can be positive. As Lightfoot (1978) argued, "creative conflict can only exist when there is a balance of power and responsibility between family and school, not when the family's role is negated or diminished" (p. 42).

There is growing recognition of parents' important contribution to the education of their children. Alternate ways to explore parent involvement and the nature of the parent teacher relationship do exist. Lightfoot's (1978) challenge to build bridges, not boundaries, still exists. Professionals affirm the need to find egalitarian ways for parents and educators to collaborate and bring their different strengths and perspectives to the common task of educating children (Fullan, 1982; Lightfoot, 1979; Schlossman, 1986). Both parents and teachers, in order to foster and maintain a relationship, must actively seek to understand the other. Covey (1989) suggests that "one person's mission is another person's minutia" (p. 190). In order for a relationship to grow, individuals must be aware of what is important to

the other. Both parents and teachers must seek to understand each other and accept the value each places on what they have to say.

Recent research stresses the need for "parent empowerment" (Cochran & Dean, 1991; Condeluci, 1991; Pizzo, 1993). Cochran & Dean define empowerment as "an intentional, ongoing process centered in the local community, involving mutual respect, critical reflection, caring, and group participation, through which people lacking an equal share of valued resources gain greater access to and control over those resources " (pp. 266-267). Empowerment, from their perspective, reflects a true partnership, suggesting an acceptance of equal skills and expertise, of an open-minded sharing of knowledge, skills and expertise, and of a sense that each partner brings something different but of equal value to the relationship. Condeluci (1991) suggests that only in a truly interdependent paradigm can individuals feel empowered. As long as teachers feel that parents are not capable of contributing, there will be a sense of disempowerment. This is equally true of parents not valuing the knowledge and expertise that teachers bring to the school. Pugh (1985) argued that in a partnership, the relationship is one of equality. "Effective relationships between professionals and parents are built on partnership and on mutual respect, with an emphasis on reciprocity that allows people to give as well as to take" (p. 220). A variety of factors, such as work or other family commitments, may limit the opportunities or motivation for involvement. Parents often give these kinds of reasons as explanations for not being involved (Smith, 1980).

The publication of the Plowden Report (1967) was considered a turning point with respect to home-school relations. The potential role of parents in the education of the children was recognized. Parental involvement was believed to be important. Plowden recommended that both the principal and teacher meet the children before the beginning of the school year, that parents meet teachers and see children's work regularly, that teachers visit homes, that parent teacher associations be formed, and that schools be used by the

community outside of school hours. This report represented a radical change in the way it was thought that schools should interact with the home.

More recently, the United States government has taken steps towards fostering a positive relationship between parents and schools. One of the national education goals delineated in the Educate America Act (Public Law 103-227) states that every school, by the year 2000, will promote partnerships that will increase parental involvement and participation (U. S. Department of Education, 1994).

In Manitoba, the government presented Renewing Education: New Directions (Manitoba Education and Training, 1995). This manual outlines new, meaningful roles for parents, principals, and teachers in decision making. It allows for greater parental involvement in educational programming and other school matters. In addition, it recognizes and emphasizes the need for parents and teachers, among others, to work together.

Given the recognition of the need for parent involvement and recent efforts toward parent involvement, why is it that within a given school, parents differ in the degree and/or form of involvement? There are, as previously noted, a number of factors that may contribute to these differences. This study, however, looked at one possibility, that is the degree to which parents and teachers feel that they have a reciprocal relationship.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

#### Research Setting

This study was carried out within four of the 14 schools of the Manitoba Catholic Schools Division in Winnipeg, Manitoba. The size of the 14 schools varied: one spanned kindergarten through grade 12, others ranged from kindergarten through grade 6, while still others ranged from kindergarten through grade 8. One school had a nursery program for children 4 years of age. For the 1997/98 school year, the population of the schools ranged from 145 to 372 students, with the average being approximately 200.

Four of the fourteen schools were selected in order to represent a range of economic and demographic circumstances. The range of grades and number of students within each school is reported in Table 1.

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Table 1  
Demographics of Selected Schools

School	Grade Range	Number of Students
Holy Cross	K - 8	303
Christ the King	K - 6	171
St. Charles Academy	K - 8	201
Msgr. James K. MacIsaac	K - 8	145

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#### Sample

At each school, all teachers of children from kindergarten through grade four were asked to participate. A stratified random sample of parents of children in kindergarten through grade four were selected to participate. Four parents were randomly selected from

each of the five grade levels within each school. This resulted in a total possible sample of 20 teachers and 80 parents.

There were 17 teachers who responded out of the possible 20, representing an 85% response rate. Out of the 80 questionnaires mailed to the parents, one was returned due to an incorrect address. Thus the effective sample size was 79. Out of this total, there were 41 responses accounting for 51.9% of the effective sample.

The demographic breakdown of the sample is reported in Table 2. Totals not equaling 100% in Table 2 are due to non-responses in that category. Three of the variables (sex, age, and level of education) applied to both parents and teachers. Two variables, "occupation" and "number of school age children", were asked only of the parents while "teaching experience" was asked only of the teachers.

There were a total of 3 males and 55 females in the sample. Three male parents and 38 female parents responded to the survey. There were no male teachers in the sample; all 17 teacher respondents were female.

The age range for parents was 17 years, with the youngest being 30 and the oldest 47. The mean age for the parents was 37.1 years. Among the teachers, the age range was 30 years, with the youngest 26 and the oldest 56. The mean age for the teachers was 41.9 years.

The level of education reported by the parents ranged from "some secondary school" to "Master/Ph.D.". Among the parents, 34.2% reported having completed a bachelor degree or higher; 39% attained a diploma from a trade school or community college; 21.9% completed some trade school, college, or university; and the remaining 4.8% reported having completed secondary school or less.

The majority of teachers (94.1%) reported having a bachelor degree or higher level of education. One teacher, representing 5.7% of the effective sample, did not have a bachelor degree.

Table 2  
Frequency Distribution of Parents' and Teachers' Responses to  
Information About Themselves

Variable		Parent		Teacher	
Sex	Male	3	(7.3%)	0	(0%)
	Female	38	(92.7%)	17	(100%)
	Total	41		17	
Age	26-35	15	(36.6%)	4	(26.7%)
	36-45	25	(61.0%)	5	(33.3%)
	46-55	1	(2.4%)	6	(40.0%)
	Total	41		15	
Education	Elementary school	0	(0%)	0	(0%)
	Some secondary school	1	(2.4%)	0	(0%)
	Secondary school grad.	1	(2.4%)	0	(0%)
	Some trade school	0	(0%)	0	(0%)
	Some college	6	(14.6%)	0	(0%)
	Some university	3	(7.3%)	1	(5.9%)
	Diploma trade school	2	(4.9%)	0	(0%)
	Diploma comm. col.	14	(34.1%)	0	(0%)
	Bachelor degree	9	(22.0%)	12	(70.6%)
	Post baccalaureate	3	(7.3%)	4	(23.5%)
	Master/Ph.D.	2	(4.9%)	0	(0%)
	Total	41		17	
Occupation	Homemaker	4	(10%)		
	Unskilled labour	2	(5%)		
	Skilled labour	6	(15%)		
	Management	2	(5%)		
	Professional	15	(37.5%)		
	Clerical	4	(10%)		
	Sales/Service	4	(10%)		
	Other	3	(7.5%)		
	Total	40			
Number of school age children/grade level	K - 4	62	(75.6%)		
	5 - 8	16	(19.5%)		
	9 - 12	4	(4.9%)		
	Total	82			
Teaching experience	1 - 5 years			4	(23.5%)
	6 - 10 years			2	(11.8%)
	11 - 15 years			3	(17.6%)
	16 - 20 years			4	(23.5%)
	21 - 25 years			1	(5.9%)
	26 - 30 years			3	(17.6%)
	Total			17	

Occupations were grouped according to the categorization system employed by Statistics Canada (1981) for census purposes. The dominant employment category among the parents was “professional” (37.5%). The remaining occupation categories (homemaker, unskilled labour, skilled labour, management, clerical, sales/service, and other) were well distributed.

The parents were asked to indicate the number and grade level of school age children in their family. A total of 82 school age children were reported. Of these, 62 (75.6%) were of Kindergarten to Grade 4 level, 16 (19.5%) were in grades 5 through 8, and 4 (4.9%) were in grades 9 through 12.

The number of years of teaching experience reported by the teachers was grouped into 6 levels. The teaching experience, as reported in Table 2, was well distributed across the levels. There were 9 teachers (52.9%) with less than 16 years of experience and 8 teachers (47.1%) with 16 years of experience or more. The mean number of years of teaching experience was 14.9.

### Instrumentation

A survey questionnaire was used to assess the nature of the relationship between parents and teachers. The questionnaire (see Appendix A and B) was based on an instrument developed by Searle (1988) that was originally designed to assess the degree to which the relationship between municipal recreation directors and recreation advisory board members is based on the norm of reciprocity. The original instrument was tested for reliability and found to be satisfactory. Cronbach’s (1951)  $\alpha$  coefficients ranged from a low of 0.83 to a high of 0.95. The validity of the scale was assessed through the use of an appropriateness and relevancy scale sent to a random sample of recreation directors and recreation board members. The results revealed that all items were deemed appropriate and relevant for inclusion in the scale.

The instrument used in the present study was a modified version of the one developed by Searle (1988). The modified instrument used in the present study contained

three parts: (a) Part A, an influence scale on which parents and teachers indicated the degree of influence they believed to have over school matters; (b) Part B, a satisfaction scale on which parents and teachers indicated their level of satisfaction; and (c) Part C, a number of questions which provided demographic data. Internal reliability for each of the five scales was assessed using Cronbach's (1951)  $\alpha$ . All five scales had an acceptable level of internal consistency. The results of the reliability analyses were as follows: (a) influence participants possessed,  $\alpha = .85$ ; (b) influence participant should have,  $\alpha = .80$ ; (c) influence attributed to the other,  $\alpha = .83$ ; (d) influence other should have,  $\alpha = .89$ ; and (e) satisfaction of needs,  $\alpha = .82$ .

Within Part A of the questionnaire, parents and teachers were asked to indicate the degree to which specific needs were met through their involvement with the school. The 9 items in the needs scale were derived from the literature as well as from pilot interviews conducted by Mahon (1994) which attempted to identify the most important issues associated with parent-teacher relationships. In the pilot study, three individuals, with expertise in the area of parent-teacher relationships, were interviewed. The first individual was the Pupil Services Consultant with Winnipeg #1 School Division. The second individual was the Family Life Education Consultant with the St. Vital School Division. The third individual was the Coordinator of Volunteers for Winnipeg #1 School Division. Subjects were asked to identify areas that they felt both parents and teachers should have input into, indicate whether or not they did in fact have input into those areas and speculate on the extent to which reciprocity should and does exist between parents and teachers. Two key themes identified by the participants as being related to the principle of reciprocity were: (a) providing information and (b) decision making with respect to curriculum, discipline, evaluation, budget, staffing issues, class structure and placement issues.



The instrument included a set of questions designed to have the respondents indicate their perceptions of the influence they have, that which they feel they should have, and that which they attributed to the parent or teacher (wherein teachers respond to the former and parents to the latter; see Part A of Appendix A and Appendix B). Issues included in the influence measure were based on the results of the study by Mahon (1994). The scale for the influence measure was a four point scale ranging from “little influence” to “a lot of influence”.

Each respondent was asked to indicate the degree to which they perceived that the 9 need items have been satisfied for themselves through their involvement with the school using a four point scale with 1 indicating “not at all satisfied” and 4 indicating “very satisfied” (see Part B of Appendix A and Appendix B).

Finally, each respondent was asked to complete Part C of the questionnaire. This section included personal information such as age, sex, class and school size, occupation, education, and teaching experience.

As recommended by Fowler (1993), a pretest of the instrument was carried out. The draft instrument was administered to a volunteer sample of 3 parents and 3 teachers. These participants were not included in the final sample. The purpose of this pretest was to ensure clarity of the instructions and the items within the questionnaire. The researcher noted the time taken by each individual so that an accurate estimate of the time required to complete the questionnaire could be given to the respondents in the study. Following the completion of the questionnaire, the sample of individuals were asked to discuss the instrument and give feedback on each question. Based on the results of the pretest, the instructions at the beginning of each of the three parts of the instrument were modified for clarification.

### Data Collection

The superintendent of the school division was contacted to obtain permission to solicit parent and teacher participation (see Appendix C). A letter describing the nature of

the study and the importance of the individual's response was given to each subject (see Appendix D and Appendix E). Respondents were assured of confidentiality and anonymity. A list of all kindergarten through grade 4 teachers as well as families with children in kindergarten through grade 4 was requested from each school. The researcher met with the teachers to briefly explain the nature of the study and the importance of their participation. They were given their letters and questionnaires at that meeting. Teachers were asked to complete the questionnaire and mail it back to the researcher's home address in the envelope provided. When completing Parts A and B of the questionnaire, teachers were asked to give a generalized response.

At each school, four parents from each of the 5 grade levels (kindergarten, grade 1, grade 2, grade 3, and grade 4) were randomly selected to participate. Parent letters and questionnaires were mailed to those families selected. Since some families may have had more than one child attending kindergarten through grade 4 in the school, care was taken to ensure that each family received only one questionnaire. The parents were asked to complete the questionnaire and mail it to the researcher's home address in the envelope provided. Parents with more than one child in the school were asked to give a generalized response when completing Parts A and B. In accordance with recommendations by Dillman (1978), a reminder note was sent seven days after the initial letter and questionnaire (see Appendix F). A period of 4 weeks was allowed for subjects to respond.

### Data Analysis

The purpose of this study was to assess whether or not there is an association between the influence over school matters that one thinks one should have and that which one does have for both parents and teachers. In addition, the study helped to determine the degree of satisfaction that parents and teachers have with influence over school matters.

To evaluate the hypotheses of the study, it was important to control for potential mitigating variables which may have had some effect on the results. Therefore, analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was utilized for data analysis.

The relationship of parent and teacher involvement in schools on the dependent variables, degree of satisfaction and influence, were tested using one-way ANCOVA with age, sex, level of education, class size, and school size serving as the covariates. This procedure examined the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable while holding the effects of the intervening variables constant. In all three hypotheses, the minimum level of significance accepted was .05 probability.

The data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). In order to test for the statistically significant differences between parents and teachers on individual items, ANOVA was used.

### Hypothesis 1.

Hypothesis 1 stated that the discrepancy score related to influence over school matters for parents will be greater than the discrepancy score for teachers. These discrepancy scores were determined as follows. First, the discrepancy between the influence over school matters that parents believe they do have versus what they believe they should have was assessed. Second, the discrepancy between the influence over school matters that teachers believe they do have versus what they believe they should have was assessed.

ANCOVA was used to assess the discrepancy scores for each group with the potential mitigating factors age, sex, level of education, class size, and school size serving as covariates. It can be represented as follows:

$$(D_{self} - S_{self}) \text{ by Teacher vs. Parent}$$

where:

$D_{self}$  = the influence the individual believes he/she does have, and

$S_{self}$  = the influence the individual believes he/she should have

### Hypothesis 2.

Hypothesis 2 stated that the discrepancy score as related to the other's influence over school matters for teachers will be greater than the discrepancy score for parents.

These discrepancy scores were determined as follows. First, the discrepancy between the influence over school matters that teachers believe parents do and should have was assessed. Second, the discrepancy between the influence over school matters that parents believe teachers do and should have was assessed.

ANCOVA was used to assess the discrepancy scores for each group with the potential mitigating factors age, sex, level of education, class size, and school size serving as covariates. It can be represented as follows:

$$(D_{\text{other}} - S_{\text{other}}) \quad \text{by Teacher vs. Parent}$$

where:

$D_{\text{other}}$  = the influence the individual believes the other does have, and

$S_{\text{other}}$  = the influence the individual believes the other should have

### Hypothesis 3.

Hypothesis 3 stated that teachers will be more satisfied with the degree of influence that they have over school matters than parents. Again, ANCOVA was used to assess the difference in the level of satisfaction with school matters indicated by teachers and parents with the potential mitigating factors age, sex, level of education, class size, and school size serving as covariates.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS

The purpose of this exploratory study was to investigate the efficacy of social exchange theory to explain the nature of the relationship between parents and teachers with respect to information sharing and decision making. Three hypotheses were developed to test the social exchange model. These hypotheses will be used as an organizing framework for presenting the results.

The descriptive statistics for each of the scales (influence one has, influence one should have, influence the other has, influence the other should have, and the level of satisfaction) were calculated and the means and standard deviations (S.D.) for each scale are presented in Table 3 (all scales had a four point range).

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Table 3  
Means and Standard Deviations for Parents' and Teachers'  
Scores for Influence and Satisfaction Scales

	Parents		Teachers	
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
Influence One Has	2.113	.617	2.616	.488
Influence One Should Have	2.830	.475	3.341	.345
Influence Parent/Teacher Has	3.084	.417	2.145	.477
Influence Parent/Teacher Should Have	3.414	.302	2.267	.418
Level of Satisfaction	2.834	.495	2.817	.478

---

Based on the descriptive statistics presented in this table, it is clear that teachers perceive themselves as having more influence (2.616) over issues related to information

sharing and decision making than parents (2.113). The teachers also perceive themselves as needing or desiring more influence (3.341) than they currently have (2.616).

Parents believe that their level of influence (2.113) is relatively low. They also perceive themselves as needing or desiring more influence (2.830) than they currently have. Parents indicated that teachers, ultimately, should have more influence (3.414) than parents themselves should have (2.830). Teachers held this same belief, that they should have (3.341) more influence than parents should have (2.267).

The scale assessing the level of satisfaction showed that the mean score for the parents (2.834) was almost the same as that for the teachers (2.817).

Each hypothesis was assessed while controlling for potentially mitigating variables. The influence of specified intervening variables (age, sex, level of education, class size, and school size) was assessed through the use of the analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) procedure. For each analysis,  $p \leq .05$  was used as the criterion for significance.

#### Analysis of Hypothesis 1.

Hypothesis 1 stated that the discrepancy score related to influence over school matters for parents will be greater than the discrepancy score for teachers. As previously explained, these discrepancy scores were determined as follows. First, the discrepancy between the influence over school matters that parents believe they do have versus what they believe they should have was assessed. Second, the discrepancy between the influence over school matters that teachers believe they do have versus what they believe they should have was assessed.

To test this, ANCOVA was used with age, sex, level of education, class size, and school size serving as the covariates. Table 4 reports the effects of these various control variables on the hypothesized relationship.

Table 4  
Summary of Analysis of Covariance of Mean Discrepancy Scores  
for Influence One Has and One Should Have

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Square	F-value	P
Sex	.011	1	.011	.040	.842
Age	.005	1	.005	.017	.896
Education	.102	1	.102	.379	.542
Class size	.060	1	.060	.224	.639
School size	.469	1	.469	1.741	.195
Main effects	.216	1	.216	.801	.376
Explained	.778	6	.130	.481	.818
Residual	10.509	39	.269		
Total	11.287	45	.251		

The overall relationship was not significant when the effects of the intervening variables were held constant ( $p$  value = .376). Therefore, hypothesis one was rejected.

Given that the overall relationship was not significant (i.e. ANCOVA), a number of follow up analyses were conducted to explore potential variations in perceived influence as it related to individual items. The descriptive statistics for items “a” through “i” related to the influence that parents believe they do and should have and the influence that teachers believe they do and should have were calculated. The mean and standard deviation for each item for parent scores have been presented in Table 5 and for teacher scores in Table 6.

The results reported in Table 5 indicate that on each of the items parents believe that they should have more influence than they do. They believe they have relatively little influence on the development of curriculum (1.525), school budget (1.924), staffing issues (1.641) and class structure (1.683). Parents have indicated that they believe they have a fair

amount of influence with respect to opportunities to share information (3.000). However, as was mentioned, they perceive themselves as needing or desiring more influence than they have.

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Table 5  
Means and Standard Deviations for Parents' Scores for the Influence  
They Believe They Do and Should Have on Items "a" through "i"

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	Influence Do Have		Influence Should Have	
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
a. development of curriculum	1.525	.632	2.561	.743
b. development of discipline policy	2.488	1.098	3.128	.748
c. assessment of academic performance	2.100	.860	2.550	.893
d. school budget	1.924	.877	2.683	.789
e. staffing issues	1.641	.821	2.351	.843
f. class structure	1.683	.960	2.615	.825
g. placement issues	2.158	.852	2.949	.835
h. opportunities to share information	3.000	.866	3.390	.586
i. opportunities to interact with decision makers	2.500	1.049	3.244	.799

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The results reported in Table 6 indicate that, similar to parents, teachers believe they should have more influence than they do on each of the items "a" through "i". Teachers believe that they have relatively little influence on school budget (1.824) and staffing issues (1.812). They also indicated that they have a fair amount of influence with respect to



development of discipline policies (3.118), assessment of academic performance (3.765), placement issues (3.059), and opportunities to share information (3.438).

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Table 6

Means and Standard Deviations for Teachers' Scores for the Influence They Believe They Do and Should Have on Items "a" through "i"

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	Influence Do Have		Influence Should Have	
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
a. development of curriculum	1.882	.928	3.353	.606
b. development of discipline policy	3.118	.781	3.765	.437
c. assessment of academic performance	3.765	.437	3.882	.332
d. school budget	1.824	.809	2.765	.562
e. staffing issues	1.812	1.014	2.812	.950
f. class structure	2.000	1.000	2.562	1.059
g. placement issues	3.059	.899	3.588	.618
h. opportunities to share information	3.438	.609	3.875	.331
i. opportunities to interact with decision makers	2.647	.702	3.471	.514

---

Table 7 reports the means and standard deviations for parents and teachers of the discrepancy scores for items "a" through "i" of Part A of the questionnaire. That is, the difference between the influence that parents believe they do and should have and the difference between the influence that teachers believe they do and should have.

Table 7  
Means and Standard Deviations of Discrepancy Scores for Parents  
and Teachers On Items "a" through "i"

	Parents		Teachers	
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
a. development of curriculum	1.036	.728	1.471	.943
b. development of discipline policy	.640	1.033	.647	.606
c. assessment of academic performance	.450	.646	.118	.332
d. school budget	1.925	.877	.941	.659
e. staffing issues	.710	.951	1.000	.935
f. class structure	.932	.950	.562	1.059
g. placement issues	.791	.931	.529	.717
h. opportunities to share information	.390	.802	.437	.609
i. opportunities to interact with decision makers	.744	.930	.824	.809

Looking first at the discrepancy scores between the influence that parents believe they do and should have, there are 3 items which have a reasonably large discrepancy. Parents believe that they should have far more influence than they do on development of curriculum (1.036), school budget (1.925) and class structure (.932). The discrepancy between the influence parents believe they do and should have is relatively low on assessment of academic performance (.450) and opportunities to share information (.390).

Turning our attention to the teachers mean scores, the results indicate relatively large discrepancies between the influence teachers believe they do and should have on

development of curriculum (1.471), school budget (.941), and staffing issues (1.000). The discrepancy scores for assessment of academic performance (.118) and opportunities to share information (.437) were relatively low.

As was reported earlier, the results of the ANCOVA revealed that none of the covariates (age, sex, level of education, class size, and school size) were significant (see Table 4). Further analyses allowed for exploration of possible relationships that may have been masked by the overall mean scores for the parents and teachers scales. A one way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was run for the individual analyses. Table 8 reports the results of the one way analysis of variance of the mean discrepancy scores for parents and teachers on the influence they believe they do and should have for items "a" through "i". The analysis revealed that the differences between the 2 groups were statistically significant on two items. Parents and teachers had significantly different mean discrepancy scores on assessment of academic performance ( $p = .0497$ ) and on school budget ( $p = .0001$ ). This would suggest that parents and teachers have significantly different perceptions of how large a gap there is between the influence they believe they do have and the influence they believe they should have on these two issues. The issues on which there was not a significant difference suggests that parents and teachers share relatively equal perceptions of lack of influence on those matters.

Table 8  
 Summary of One Way Analysis of Variance of Mean Discrepancy  
 Scores for Parents and Teachers for the Influence They Believe  
 They Do and Should Have for Items "a" Through "i"

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Square	F-value	P
<b>a. development of curriculum</b>					
Group	2.270	1	2.270	3.590	.0633
Residual	35.408	56	.632		
<b>b. development of discipline policy</b>					
Group	.001	1	.001	.001	.9803
Residual	48.589	56	.868		
<b>c. assessment of academic performance</b>					
Group	1.327	1	1.327	4.024	.0497 *
Residual	18.475	56	.330		
<b>d. school budget</b>					
Group	11.632	1	11.632	17.270	.0001 *
Residual	37.716	56	.674		
<b>e. staffing issues</b>					
Group	1.009	1	1.009	1.126	.2932
Residual	50.165	56	.896		
<b>f. class structure</b>					
Group	1.645	1	1.645	1.704	.1971
Residual	54.047	56	.965		
<b>g. placement issues</b>					
Group	.821	1	.821	1.073	.3048
Residual	42.870	56	.766		
<b>h. opportunities to share information</b>					
Group	.027	1	.027	.047	.8285
Residual	31.694	56	.566		
<b>i. opportunities to interact with decision makers</b>					
Group	.076	1	.076	.095	.7594
Residual	45.032	56	.804		

\*  $p \leq .05$

### Analysis of Hypothesis 2.

Hypothesis 2 stated that the discrepancy score as related to the other's influence over school matters for teachers will be greater than the discrepancy score for parents. As was previously explained, these discrepancy scores were determined as follows. First, the discrepancy between the influence over school matters that teachers believe parents do and should have was assessed. Second, the discrepancy between the influence over school matters that parents believe teachers do and should have was assessed.

The second hypothesis sought to compare parents and teachers mean discrepancy scores on the difference between the influence one attributed to the other and that which they thought the other should have. The "others" for the parents were the teachers while the "others" for the teachers referred to the parents. To test this, ANCOVA was used with age, sex, level of education, class size, and school size serving as the covariates. The results are reported in Table 9.

The results indicated that there were no significant differences when controlling for the effects of the intervening variables. That is to say, none of the intervening variables were able to explain a significant amount of the discrepancy between parents' and teachers' scores. Therefore, hypothesis two was rejected.

Table 9  
Summary of Analysis of Covariance of Mean Discrepancy Scores  
for Influence Other Has and Other Should Have

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Square	F-value	P
Sex	.001	1	.001	.004	.949
Age	.141	1	.141	.627	.433
Education	.180	1	.180	.804	.375
Class size	.049	1	.049	.219	.642
School size	.057	1	.057	.255	.616
Main effects	.012	1	.012	.053	.820
Explained	.575	6	.096	.427	.857
Residual	8.756	39	.255		
Total	9.331	45	.207		

Given that the overall relationship was not significant (i.e. ANCOVA), a number of follow up analyses were conducted to explore potential variations in perceived influence as it related to individual items. The descriptive statistics for items “a” through “i” related to the influence that parents believe that teachers do and should have and the influence that teachers believe that parents do and should have were calculated. The mean and standard deviation on each item for parent scores are presented in Table 10. The results indicate that parents believe teachers should have at least as much or more influence over school matters than they do. This held true for all of the items.

Table 10  
Means and Standard Deviations for Parents' Scores for the Influence  
They Believe That Teachers Do and Should Have on Items "a" through "i"

	Influence Do Have		Influence Should Have	
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
a. development of curriculum	2.951	.865	3.500	.500
b. development of discipline policy	3.098	.768	3.395	.572
c. assessment of academic performance	3.732	.449	3.800	.400
d. school budget	2.600	.889	3.051	.630
e. staffing issues	2.684	.745	3.194	.584
f. class structure	2.816	.770	3.154	.572
g. placement issues	3.368	.567	3.486	.481
h. opportunities to share information	3.250	.829	3.564	.538
i. opportunities to interact with decision makers	3.256	.621	3.579	.618

Table 11 reports the means and standard deviations for teachers' scores on items "a" through "i". The results indicated that teachers believe parents have more influence than they should have on placement issues (do have = 3.294; should have = 1.054). They believe that parents have about as much influence as they should have on development of discipline policies, assessment of academic performance, school budget, staffing issues, and opportunities to interact with decision makers. Finally, the results indicate that teachers believe parents should have more influence than they do on development of curriculum, class structure, and opportunities to share information.

Table 11  
Means and Standard Deviations for Teachers' Scores for the Influence  
They Believe That Parents Do and Should Have on Items "a" through "i"

	Influence Do Have		Influence Should Have	
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
a. development of curriculum	1.235	.562	1.882	.600
b. development of discipline policy	2.118	.928	2.176	.809
c. assessment of academic performance	1.529	.943	1.529	.874
d. school budget	2.176	.951	2.235	.562
e. staffing issues	1.500	.707	1.438	.609
f. class structure	1.375	.781	1.812	.882
g. placement issues	3.294	.849	2.882	1.054
h. opportunities to share information	3.250	.829	3.625	.599
i. opportunities to interact with decision makers	2.824	.809	2.824	.809

Table 12 reports the means and standard deviations for parents and teachers on the discrepancy scores for items "a" through "i" of Part A of the questionnaire. That is, the difference between the influence that parents believe teachers do and should have and the difference between the influence teachers believe that parents do and should have.

The beliefs of the parents, as reflected in the discrepancy scores, indicates that teachers should possess more influence that they have on each of the items. The largest discrepancy was on the development of curriculum (.549). The smallest discrepancy was on assessment of academic performance (.068).



The teachers' scores indicated that parents should have more influence than they do on the following items: development of curriculum (.647), development of discipline policy (.059), school budget (.059), class structure (.437), and opportunities to share information (.375). The teachers reported that parents have more influence than they should on staffing issues (-.062) and placement issues (-.412). On assessment of academic performance and opportunities to interact with principle decision makers, the teachers reported that parents have as much influence as they should.

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Table 12  
Means and Standard Deviations of Discrepancy Scores for Parents  
and Teachers For the Other On Items "a" through "i"

	Parents		Teachers	
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
a. development of curriculum	.549	.865	.647	.606
b. development of discipline policy	.297	.739	.059	1.088
c. assessment of academic performance	.068	.402	0.000	.354
d. school budget	.451	.945	.059	.748
e. staffing issues	.510	.755	-.062	.747
f. class structure	.338	.711	.437	1.059
g. placement issues	.118	.493	-.412	.939
h. opportunities to share information	.314	.794	.375	1.111
i. opportunities to interact with decision makers	.323	.712	0.000	1.061

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As was reported earlier, the results of the ANCOVA revealed that none of the covariates (age, sex, level of education, class size, and school size) were significant (see Table 9). Further analyses allowed for exploration of possible relationships that may have been masked by the overall mean scores for the parents and teachers scales. A one way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was run for the individual analyses. Table 13 reports the results of the one way analysis of variance for the discrepancy scores of the “other” for items “a” through “i” of Part A of the questionnaire. The analyses indicated that the differences between the 2 groups were statistically significant on two items: staffing issues ( $p = .0108$ ) and placement issues ( $p = .0067$ ). This would suggest that parents and teachers have significantly different perceptions of how large a gap there is between the influence they believe they do have and the influence they believe they should have on these two issues. The issues on which there was not a significant difference suggests that parents and teachers share relatively equal perceptions of lack of influence on those matters.

Table 13  
Summary of One Way Analyses of Variance of Mean Discrepancy  
Scores of the Other for Items "a" Through "i"

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Square	F-value	P
<b>a. development of curriculum</b>					
Group	.116	1	.116	.182	.6716
Residual	35.785	56	.639		
<b>b. development of discipline policy</b>					
Group	.683	1	.683	.937	.3371
Residual	40.788	56	.728		
<b>c. assessment of academic performance</b>					
Group	.056	1	.056	.371	.5447
Residual	8.449	56	.151		
<b>d. school budget</b>					
Group	1.851	1	1.851	2.319	.1334
Residual	44.696	56	.798		
<b>e. staffing issues</b>					
Group	3.941	1	3.941	6.955	.0108 *
Residual	31.733	56	.567		
<b>f. class structure</b>					
Group	.119	1	.119	.174	.6778
Residual	38.146	56	.681		
<b>g. placement issues</b>					
Group	3.373	1	3.373	7.929	.0067 *
Residual	23.824	56	.425		
<b>h. opportunities to share information</b>					
Group	.045	1	.045	.055	.8147
Residual	44.994	56	.803		
<b>i. opportunities to interact with decision makers</b>					
Group	1.250	1	1.250	1.829	.1817
Residual	38.278	56	.684		

\*  $p \leq .05$

### Analysis of Hypothesis 3.

The third hypothesis stated that teachers would be more satisfied with the degree of influence they have over school matters than parents. ANCOVA was used to test this hypothesis with age, sex, level of education, class size, and school size serving as the covariates. The results of these analyses are presented in Table 14.

As with the previous analyses, when controlling for the effects of the intervening variables, there was no significant differences between parents and teachers with respect to their level of satisfaction on the degree of influence that they have over school matters. Consequently, hypothesis three was rejected.

Table 14  
Summary of Analysis of Covariance of Mean Scores  
of the Degree of Satisfaction Over School Matters

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Square	F-value	P
Sex	.071	1	.071	.374	.544
Age	.076	1	.076	.399	.531
Education	.025	1	.025	.133	.718
Class size	.043	1	.043	.224	.639
School size	.323	1	.323	1.698	.200
Main effects	.085	1	.085	.447	.508
Explained	.677	6	.113	.592	.734
Residual	7.428	39	.190		
Total	8.105	45	.180		

Given that the overall relationship was not significant (i.e. ANCOVA), a number of follow up analyses were conducted to explore potential variations in perceived influence as it related to individual items. The descriptive statistics for items "a" through "i" related to

the level of satisfaction on the part of parents and teachers through their involvement with the school was calculated. The mean and standard deviation for each item is presented in Table 15. The results indicate that parents are somewhat satisfied with their involvement with the school. The mean scores ranged from a low of 2.610 (school budget) to a high of 3.195 (opportunities to share information) on a 4 point scale.

Teacher scores had a larger range. The mean scores spanned from a low of 2.000 (school budget) to a high of 3.412 (opportunities to share information).

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Table 15

Means and Standard Deviations for Parents' and Teachers' Scores for the Level of Satisfaction Through Involvement with School on Items "a" through "i"

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	Parents		Teachers	
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
a. development of curriculum	2.625	.620	2.412	1.064
b. development of discipline policy	2.878	.781	3.059	.659
c. assessment of academic performance	2.854	.691	3.059	.556
d. school budget	2.610	.771	2.000	.612
e. staffing issues	2.732	.742	2.471	.943
f. class structure	2.878	.714	3.000	.866
g. placement issues	2.878	.678	3.235	.664
h. opportunities to share information	3.195	.679	3.412	.618
i. opportunities to interact with decision makers	2.854	.853	2.706	.985

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As was previously reported, the results of the ANCOVA revealed that none of the covariates (age, sex, level of education, class size, and school size) were significant (see Table 14). Further analyses allowed for exploration of possible relationships that may have been masked by the overall mean scores for the parents' and teachers' scales. A one way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was run for the individual analyses.

The results of the one way analysis of variance for parent and teacher scores for level of satisfaction on items "a" through "i" are reported in Table 16. These results indicate that there was a significant difference between the two groups on issues pertaining to the school budget ( $p = .0053$ ). This would suggest that parents and teachers have significantly different perceptions of how large a gap there is between the influence they believe they do have and the influence they believe they should have. The issues on which there was not a significant difference suggests that parents and teachers share relatively equal perceptions of lack of influence on those matters.

Table 16  
 Summary of One Way Analysis of Variance for Parents' and Teachers' Scores for the  
 Level of Satisfaction Through Involvement with School on Items "a" through "i"

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Square	F-value	P
<b>a. development of curriculum</b>					
Group	.546	1	.546	.914	.3433
Residual	33.493	56	.598		
<b>b. development of discipline policy</b>					
Group	.393	1	.393	.702	.4057
Residual	31.331	56	.559		
<b>c. assessment of academic performance</b>					
Group	.506	1	.506	1.177	.2826
Residual	24.063	56	.430		
<b>d. school budget</b>					
Group	4.468	1	4.468	8.409	.0053 *
Residual	29.756	56	.531		
<b>e. staffing issues</b>					
Group	.819	1	.819	1.265	.2656
Residual	36.284	56	.648		
<b>f. class structure</b>					
Group	.179	1	.179	.309	.5805
Residual	32.390	56	.578		
<b>g. placement issues</b>					
Group	1.534	1	1.534	3.375	.0715
Residual	25.449	56	.454		
<b>h. opportunities to share information</b>					
Group	.564	1	.564	1.286	.2616
Residual	24.557	56	.439		
<b>i. opportunities to interact with decision makers</b>					
Group	.262	1	.262	.329	.5685
Residual	44.651	56	.797		

\*  $p \leq .05$

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The overall purpose of this study was to assess the efficacy of the social exchange theory model, and in particular the norm of reciprocity, with respect to the relationship between parents and teachers within early years classrooms (kindergarten through grade four). Specifically, the study investigated parents and teachers perceptions of influence and level of satisfaction on issues related to sharing of information and decision making within schools. In order to achieve the objective, data were collected from a non-probability sample of 41 parents and 17 teachers within the Catholic school system in Winnipeg, Manitoba. A three part, self-completed questionnaire was used to collect the data. Three hypotheses were posed as a means of assessing the relationships between parents and teachers in order to understand their level of reciprocity, a central tenet of social exchange theory.

The rationale for this investigation stemmed from two sources. First, previous research clearly outlines the importance of including parents in the education of their children (Epstein, 1984; Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler, & Brissie, 1987; Power, 1985; Stevenson & Baker, 1987). The emerging alliance between homes and schools comes from the recognition that not only are schools important to parents and families but that schools also need the support of parents in order to achieve optimum success. Research, however, indicates that early childhood teachers tend to hold conflict-laden beliefs about the forms that parental involvement should assume (Burton, 1992). Recently, there has been a tremendous push on the part of governments to increase parental involvement in schools (U.S. Department of Education, 1994; Manitoba Education and Training, 1995). Increased involvement necessitates increased parent/teacher interactions. Therefore, increased understanding of the nature of the existing relationship between parents and teachers is an important area of study.



Secondly, although there is an extensive amount of literature on social exchange theory (Blau, 1964; Emerson, 1972; Homans, 1958), this theory has not been used within the field of education as a means of exploring the nature of the relationship between parents and teachers. The model was successfully used to investigate the relationship between recreation directors and recreation advisory board members by Searle (1988). In Searle's study the findings supported the diagnostic capability of the theory to assess relationships. In part, the results indicated that social exchange behaviours related to reciprocity were absent suggesting a lack of exchange behaviour being exhibited by both directors and board members. The purpose of the present study was to determine if the survey instrument developed by Searle could be modified for use within the field of education in an attempt to explain the nature of the relationship between parents and teachers. This was an exploratory study to determine the efficacy of the social exchange model as applied to parent/teacher relationships.

The first hypothesis stated that the discrepancy between the influence over school matters that parents believe they have versus what they believe they should have would be greater than the discrepancy between the influence over school matters that teachers believe they themselves do and should have. The results of the analysis, reported in Table 4, indicated that there was no significant differences between parents and teachers when controlling for the effects of the intervening variables. The covariates age, sex, level of education, class size, and school size did not explain a significant portion of the variance. As a result, hypothesis one was rejected. The parents and teachers perceptions of the influence they had and thought they should have differed about equally. In other words, although both believed that they should have more influence, the amount that both groups desired was about the same. The rejection of the first hypothesis, due to the fact that there were no significant differences found between the two groups, contributes to a confirmation of the element of reciprocity within the social exchange model.

Although the discrepancy scores for parents and teachers differed very slightly, it is interesting to note that the teachers believed that the influence they have should be increased and should *always* be greater than that of the parents (see Table 3). Parents believed that, although they themselves should have more influence than they do, teachers should ultimately have more influence than parents should have. Blau (1964) makes reference to this asymmetry within relationships. Parents are indicating that they want less influence than teachers. This would imply a willingness to comply with the wishes of teachers thereby giving teachers more power. Blau has argued that differences in power inevitably create the potential for conflict. However, he argues further that individuals can arrive at a consensus in the exchange process. Agreement on the part of both individuals on a common definition of the situation, can facilitate the legitimization of power and the relationship can reflect a level of reciprocity. In this study, it appears that the parents have legitimized the power of teachers. They have agreed to this power differential. This then lends further support to the rejection of hypothesis one and further contributes to a confirmation of the element of reciprocity.

Further analyses were done to investigate possible discrepancies on individual items. Table 8 reports the results of the individual item analyses on the first hypothesis. The analyses revealed statistically significant differences between parents and teachers discrepancy scores on two items. The first item, assessment of academic performance, revealed a significant difference between the two groups indicating that the groups had differing viewpoints on the degree of influence they have with respect to the assessment of children's academic progress. The second item, school budget, also revealed a significant difference. Table 7 illustrates the means and standards deviations for parents and teachers scores on the individual item analysis. The mean discrepancy score on the assessment of academic performance for parents was .450 and for teachers .118. The teachers believed they had about as much influence as they should have on this issue. Parents, on the other hand, believed they should have greater influence than they currently have on issues related

to assessment. This would indicate that teachers are more satisfied than parents with respect to their involvement in the area of assessment of academic performance. Looking at the issue of school budget, the teachers and parents both believed they should have a great deal more influence than they do have. The mean discrepancy score for the parents (1.925) was much greater than that of the teachers (.941) indicating less satisfaction on the part of the parents than the teachers.

Enhanced sensitivity to assessment practices within the Province of Manitoba may help to explain the significant difference with respect to assessment of academic performance. The provincial government, as laid out in Renewing Education: New Directions (Manitoba Education and Training, 1995), has set policies regarding the assessment of student achievement. Standardized tests have been developed for mathematics at the grades three and six levels. Tests are currently being developed for the remaining compulsory core subjects areas. The grade three mathematics test was written by all students within the province in June, 1997. Student test results were published and used to contribute to the information parents receive about their child's academic growth and achievement in relation to established provincial outcomes and performance standards. Parental and teacher awareness of the focus on assessment likely impacted on the results. This increased awareness then, may have been a reason for the discrepancy score which indicated that parents wanted more influence.

The second area in which parents and teachers discrepancy scores differed significantly was on their level of influence related to school budgets. This study was carried out within the Manitoba Catholic Schools Division. The majority of these schools are private and therefore require a tuition fee. Each school tends to be relatively small with total populations not exceeding 372 students. Parents voluntarily choose to send their children to these schools. Each school is independently run, with its own school board. Often, the school board is comprised of parents. This small, close-knit environment may lead both parents and teachers to have enhanced expectations as to the level of influence

each has regarding school budgeting issues. In particular, this may help to explain the significance of the discrepancy between parents and teachers on the issue of school budget. In addition, the government document Renewing Education: New Directions (Manitoba Education and Training, 1995), outlines the role that parents should be playing in the schools. Schools are required to establish Advisory Councils comprising parents and community members. These councils will be allowed to, among other things, “participate in the development of the school budget” (p. 24). This too, may have contributed to parents and teachers expectations of the level of involvement related to school budgets as both groups indicated a need for greater influence than they currently have.

In addition, it may be that teachers perceive themselves as wanting or needing more power than parents with respect to some school issues. Included in the norm of reciprocity is a concept of power (Blau, 1964). Researchers have stressed the need for “parent empowerment” (Cochran & Dean, 1991; Condeluci, 1991; Pizzo, 1993). As was previously mentioned, the data in Table 3 indicated that teachers believed they should ultimately have more influence than parents. As long as teachers feel that parents should not be allowed to contribute to the same degree as themselves, there will be a sense of disempowerment. Parents, on the other hand, although wanting more influence than they had, suggested that teachers also should have more influence. This may suggest that the parents were more willing to apply the principles of exchange than were the teachers.

The second hypothesis stated that the discrepancy between the influence over school matters that teachers believe parents do and should have will be greater than the discrepancy between the influence over school matters parents believe that teachers do and should have. The results, which are reported in Table 9, indicated that there were no significant differences between parents and teachers when controlling for the effects of the intervening variables. Parents and teachers both believed that the other should have more influence. As with the first hypothesis, this second hypothesis was also rejected. Rejection of the first and second hypotheses appears to indicate that there is a strong level of

reciprocity between parents and teachers. Both groups have indicated that they feel they have as much influence as they should have and that the other has the right amount of influence. This satisfaction with the amount of influence one has and with the influence the other should have reflects a level of interdependence as suggested by Covey (1989) and Condeluci (1991). Covey argues that real self-respect comes from true independence. Individuals entering into a relationship must have a true sense of self-respect if the relationship is to grow and develop. Interdependence focuses on relationships that lead to a mutual acceptance and respect between individuals which is only achieved by those who are independent. Although it recognizes that all people have differences, as a paradigm, interdependence promotes an acceptance and empowerment for all. Interdependence is closely tied to the notion of reciprocity; there must be give and take. Individuals must work toward an understanding of each other and this necessitates open communication.

As was previously mentioned, the mean discrepancy scores on the influence that one believes the other should and does have, were relatively low for both parents and teachers. Although there were no significant differences on the mean discrepancy scores, an individual item analysis revealed discrepancies on two of the items. The analyses revealed significant differences on the discrepancy scores between parents and teachers as relating to staffing issues and placement issues. The parents believed that teachers should have more influence than they do have on issues relating to staffing (the number and placement of teaching assistants). In addition, the parents believed that teachers have about as much influence as they should have on placement issues (accelerating or retaining a child). Looking at the teachers beliefs, a different picture emerged. The teachers believed that on both issues (staffing and placement) the parents have more influence than in fact they should have.

These results may indicate a lack of satisfaction between the 2 groups with respect to their level of influence on these two issues. There are several possible explanations for

the differences in the discrepancy scores between parents and teachers on issues of staffing and placement. Each issue will be looked at independently of the other.

The issue of staffing will be looked at first. Within the survey instrument, the number and placement of teaching assistants was given as an example of what was meant by “staffing issues”. It may be possible that the discrepancies between parents and teachers on this item were the result of a misunderstanding. It is possible that neither parents nor teachers thought beyond the example given in the questionnaire. Each respondent was invited to share any comments should they wish to do so at the bottom of the questionnaire. One teacher’s comments reflected possible confusion with this item. She stated, “I found ‘staffing’ issues very ambiguous. If in fact you are specifically referring to teaching assistants, then I am fine with the way I’ve indicated. But larger staffing issues revolve around specialists in specific subject areas i.e. computer teacher, gym teacher, music teacher, French/Ukrainian teacher. In many instances this is covered by the classroom teacher at the primary level and has nothing to do with the teacher assistants. Therefore it is a staffing issue of a very different nature”. It may be, then, that the responses given by the parents and teachers may not reflect the true beliefs of either group. However, assuming that both groups were able to generalize and include all issues relating to staffing within a school, other factors may have contributed to the discrepancy.

Lightfoot (1979) and Sharrock (1970) have described teachers as being defensive of their professional status; they are threatened by the possibility of observation and participation by others. As a group, these teachers may be reluctant to allow parents any significant level of influence with respect to the placement of teaching assistants. If this is the case, it could be argued that the teachers are reluctant to enter into a state of interdependence between themselves and parents. Rather, the teachers are wanting to retain a level of independence. Condeluci (1991) has argued that a state of interdependence is what is conducive to facilitating relationships. The findings of Hulsebosch’s (1992) study which compared the values and practices of “high-involvement” and “low-involvement”

teachers would support this. She found that those teachers who were not willing to involve parents believed that their accomplishments as professionals was the result of their ability to be autonomous. They did not need nor desire assistance from others.

Blau (1964) maintains that individuals will enter into and maintain a relationship as long as there is a sense of exchange. Parents will, therefore, enter into and maintain a relationship with teachers, as long as they feel that their own self-interests will be satisfied at some point in time. If however, the teachers do not want to allow parents a significant level of influence over school matters as is the case in this study, the relationship will suffer. Gouldner (1960) would concur. He suggested that reciprocity is a universal dimension of social relationships. The norm of reciprocity operates as a starting mechanism for new social relationships. Individuals are willing to give a little knowing that they will receive at some point in time. Violation of this norm of reciprocity, this “give” and “take”, will only be harmful to the continuation of the relationship.

The discussion, thus far, has focused on the teachers' beliefs that the parents have more influence than in fact they should have. Turning our attention to the parents, the results indicated that they believe teachers should have more influence than they do over staffing issues. This may have some impact on the relationship between the two groups. It may be that the parents believe that they have less resources than teachers; that is to say, they may believe that the teachers are more qualified to make decisions regarding this issue. It is the teachers who work directly with the teaching assistants. The parents may, therefore, feel that the teachers should make those kind of decisions. Blau (1964) has suggested that it is possible, despite the power differential, for individuals to maintain a relationship. There may be greater costs for the parents, but if the resources of the teachers are so much greater, the asymmetry of the exchange may be considered equitable by the parents. The significant difference in the discrepancy scores related to staffing issues between parents and teachers may be the result of any or all of the above influences.

Placement, which referred to the acceleration or retention of students, was the second issue on which parents and teachers scores differed significantly. The parents believed that teachers had as much influence as they should have on this issue. The teachers, on the other hand, believed that the parents have more influence than they should have.

The discrepancy between parents' and teachers' scores on placement issues, may reflect a power differential. Power (1985) studied parents' and teachers' attitudes and concluded that parents' and teachers' greatest concerns were related to their own and the other's competence. He found that parents and teachers each perceived themselves to be more competent than the other. The teachers in this study have indicated that parents should have less influence than they do. This attitude may reflect concerns regarding teachers perceptions of the competence of parents when it comes to placement issues. It may be that the teachers believe themselves to be more able and competent to make the right decisions regarding placement for the children in their care. Lightfoot (1979) and Sharrock (1970) have described teachers as being defensive of their professional status. The teachers in this study may be showing signs of this defensive attitude. They may believe that because they have been trained as educators, they know what is in the best interests of the children. Hulsebosch (1992) would concur. She found that teachers who were reluctant to involve parents, believed that the parents would not maintain the appropriate standards. Furthermore, her findings indicated that "to the 'low involver', there is a superior status that rightfully belongs to teaching - a sense of entitlement . . . When mothers 'dare' to question the teachers' authority, the teachers are unequivocal in their anger, implying that they have lost something in the process of losing power" (p. 127).

Parents, however, have been the primary caregivers for the child since birth. They may resent someone else becoming the expert and judge of their children's abilities. The parents in this study have indicated that teachers have as much influence as they should



over placement issues. There may be a reluctance on the part of the parents to allow the teachers any more control over this matter.

According to exchange theory, behaviours entail some social cost (Blau, 1964). Given the needs of teachers to be autonomous and independent, it would seem reasonable to assume that for a teacher to request assistance from a parent, the cost would be especially high. Just how high is the question. Presumably teachers autonomy would be highest in those areas in which the teacher feels most competent. Placement issues may be seen from the teacher's perspective as an area of expertise. It would seem likely then, that for a teacher to collaborate with a parent on placement issues, the costs may be very high. However, the needs of the teacher for information or reinforcement is what will motivate that individual to act. According to social exchange theory then, the teacher will only enter into a relationship with a parent if the value obtained by satisfying those needs exceeds the social costs incurred by interacting with the individual. In this study, it would appear that the costs were too high. The teachers believed the parents should have less influence over placement issues.

Covey (1989) and Sharrock (1970) have suggested that a lack of understanding about respective roles may contribute to adversarial relationships. Unclear expectations in the area of roles can undermine communication and trust between individuals. Just as schools need to recognize the parents as the first teachers of children, the parents need to be aware of the training and competence of teachers. Social exchanges, according to Blau (1964), require that individuals trust each other. He suggested that trust tends to build up gradually through commitment to a relationship in which there is free communication between the individuals involved. The parents and teachers in this study, may not trust that the other is capable of making the best decision regarding placement for the children . There may be some ambiguity as to roles, in addition to a lack of trust between the two groups. These factors would contribute to a lack of understanding and, consequently, a strained relationship.

Placement issues may also be related to assessment of academic performance. As was previously discussed in hypothesis one, the teachers believed they had about as much influence as they should have. Parents, on the other hand, believed they should have significantly more influence on assessment practices. Assessment is related to placement. The overall assessment of a child's progress would ultimately determine where he or she would be placed the following year. Parents have indicated that they want more influence over assessment. This would ultimately give them more influence over placement issues. These discrepancies reflect a level of distrust between the parents and teachers. Blau (1964) has argued that without trust, there cannot be social exchange. Furthermore, distrust will have a negative impact on the relationship.

The third hypothesis stated that teachers will be more satisfied with the degree of influence that they have over school matters than parents. The results, which are reported in Table 14, indicated that there were no significant differences between parents and teachers with respect to their level of satisfaction on the degree of influence they have over school matters. Consequently, hypothesis three was rejected. The social exchange model (Blau, 1964) contends that satisfaction is fundamental to the nature of the exchange between individuals. That is, without some level of satisfaction on issues that are deemed to be important, there will be little reason for an individual to maintain the relationship. The fact that there were no significant differences between the parents and the teachers in this study indicates a level of reciprocity between the two groups.

Further analyses were done to investigate possible discrepancies on individual items. Table 16 reports the results of the individual item analyses on the third hypothesis which revealed significant differences between parents and teachers on one issue; that is, school budget. The parents' mean satisfaction score was higher than the teachers' mean satisfaction score on issues related to school budget (see Table 15). This difference proved to be statistically significant. This is an interesting result given the findings from the individual item analyses done for the first hypothesis. Those results found that, although

both parents and teachers believed they should have more influence than they do over school budget issues, the discrepancy score for the parents (1.925) was much greater than that of the teachers (.941). One would assume that this would indicate less satisfaction on the part of the parents than the teachers. However, this was not the case.

Historically, parents have had little influence over school matters. Pugh (1985) and Tizard et al (1981) both reported that although there is an increasing commitment on the part of many schools to involve parents, the tendency is still towards a rather one-sided relationship, whereby teachers invite parents to join them on their terms. Only recently have attempts been made to legislate greater parental input into school related issues (Manitoba Education and Training, 1995; U.S. Department of Education, 1994). It may be that the satisfaction scores of the parents surveyed in this study are higher, despite the desire for more influence, simply because they have lower expectations for involvement.

Looking at these results from a social exchange theory perspective, Blau (1964) would argue that the influence that an individual has could make an impact on their level of satisfaction. Further, the influence that an individual perceives him or herself as having must be thought of as fair or equitable in relation to others. This notion of "fairness" is fundamental to the sustaining of a relationship. Gouldner (1960) described the importance of reciprocity in any relationship. If the parents perceive themselves to be in a less influential position than the teachers and this was coupled with a relatively low level of satisfaction, the likelihood is that these individuals could feel exploited. However, the fact remains that the parents reported a higher level of satisfaction than the teachers.

These results may be related to Blau's (1964) concept of power. Given that, traditionally, teachers have had more influence over school matters than parents, the latter group may believe themselves to have fewer resources such as knowledge and skills. The parents have indicated a need to have more influence over school budget issues. However, if they believe that teachers have more resources, more knowledge to make good decisions regarding the issue, they may be willing to defer to teachers. Blau has suggested that under

these circumstances, the asymmetry of the exchange may be considered equitable by the less powerful. This is reflected in the satisfaction scores of the parents as relating to school budget issues.

Although the overall results of this study indicated a level of reciprocity between parents and teachers, the satisfaction scores of both groups leave room for growth. Searle (1989) argued that, "satisfaction affects the degree to which individuals seek to build a mutually reinforcing relationship" (p. 363). The mean satisfaction score for both parents and teachers was moderate (see Table 3). While there was moderate satisfaction with the degree of involvement, both parents and teachers reported a need for more influence than they had. It may be that, generally speaking, the influence parents and teachers have with respect to decision making and sharing of information has impacted on their level of satisfaction.

The social exchange model has been an effective tool with which to examine the relationship between parents and teachers. The results of this study have shown that there would appear to be a level of reciprocity between the two groups. As was previously mentioned, however, there are some issues over which the parents and teachers scores differed significantly.

The present research somewhat contradicts the previous literature which has suggested that there is a lack of reciprocity between parents and teachers on school matters. A part of the explanation may be due to the limitations of this study. The data were collected on a relatively small sample size which was non randomized. In addition, the study was carried out within the private Catholic Schools of Winnipeg. It may be that within these schools, parent involvement is more typical. Schools in this system tend to be smaller and consequently there may be more contact between parents and teachers on a regular basis. Given these limitations, there is a need for future research in this area.

### Recommendations for Future Inquiry

Future research should focus on a number of different areas. First, the data should be collected from a much larger sample. Seventeen teachers and 41 parents responded to the questionnaire developed for the current research. Although this represented 85% of the teachers and approximately 52% of the parents, it cannot be assumed to reflect the beliefs of the majority of either group. Second, the sample should be randomly selected. This would ensure a more representative or unbiased sample. Third, future studies should investigate the perceptions of public school parents and teachers. It would be interesting to note whether or not there are differences in the perceptions of public versus private school parents and teachers. Fourth, the issue of rural versus urban schools could be investigated. Does the relationship between parents and teachers of rural schools differ from that of urban schools? Finally, since relationships are complex and difficult to measure, qualitative methods should be employed in future studies. This may help to provide further insight as to the nature of the relationship between parents and teachers.

### Implications for Parents and Teachers

As was previously discussed, the rationale for the present study stemmed, in part, from the desire for increased parental involvement within schools. Research conducted over the past several years has attested to the practical benefits of stronger family-school interactions. Greater parental involvement necessitates increased parent/teacher interactions. Positive relations between the two groups will be beneficial for all involved (parents, teachers, and especially children).

“It takes a whole village to raise a child.” The ancient African proverb has proven its wisdom over the ages and provides insight into a great deal of what can be improved in education today. Working together, as a “village”, parents and teachers can provide the best possible opportunities for children to succeed. Education can be improved by focusing on the relationship between individuals who contribute most to the success of a child: parents and teachers. Building relationships takes time. The present study has shown that parent

and teacher relations can and do have a level of reciprocity. Early years educators and parents should continue to strive towards building positive, reciprocal relationships that can then be maintained as the years progress.

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## Appendix A

### Perceptions of Influence/Satisfaction of Important Needs

#### Teacher Questionnaire

**Instructions:**

Please answer all of the following questions. The questionnaire will require between 10 and 15 minutes of your time. Upon completion please mail the survey to my home address in the envelope provided.

There are 3 parts to the survey. Please answer each of the questions based on your perception of the situation.

Please be advised that you are free to opt not to answer any individual question. You are also free to stop answering this survey prior to its completion.

## Perceptions of Influence

## Teacher Questionnaire

## PART A

In general, how much influence do you feel each of the following individuals “does have” and “should have” with regard to each of the items listed below. Please circle the appropriate number in the first response set for DOES and in the second response set for SHOULD:

		<u>DOES</u>				<u>SHOULD</u>			
		Little influ- ence			A lot of influ- ence	Little influ- ence			A lot of influ- ence
a. development of curriculum	yourself	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
	parent	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
b. development of discipline policy	yourself	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
	parent	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
c. assessment of academic performance	yourself	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
	parent	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
d. school budget (what the money is allocated for)	yourself	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
	parent	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
e. staffing issues (e.g. number and placement of assistants)	yourself	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
	parent	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
f. class structure (e.g. multi-age; age-segregated)	yourself	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
	parent	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
g. placement issues (accelerating or retaining a child)	yourself	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
	parent	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4

		<u>DOES</u>				<u>SHOULD</u>			
		Little influ- ence			A lot of influ- ence	Little influ- ence			A lot of influ- ence
h. opportunities to share information	yourself	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
	parent	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
i. opportunities to interact with the principle decision-makers in the school	yourself	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
	parent	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4

**PART B**

Please respond to each of the following statements by circling the number in the response set to indicate the degree to which you perceive these needs having been satisfied for yourself through your involvement with the school.

	<u>SATISFIED</u>			
	Not at all satisfied			Very satisfied
a. development of curriculum	1	2	3	4
b. development of discipline policy	1	2	3	4
c. assessment of academic performance	1	2	3	4
d. school budget (what the money is allocated for)	1	2	3	4
e. staffing issues (e.g. # and placement of assistants)	1	2	3	4
f. class structure (e.g. multi-age; age-segregated)	1	2	3	4
g. placement issues (accelerating or retaining a child)	1	2	3	4
h. opportunities to share information with parents	1	2	3	4
i. opportunities to interact with the principle decision-makers in the school	1	2	3	4

**PART C**

This is the final section of the questionnaire and is very important to the interpretation of the results. Please take a few more minutes to complete this section. All responses will be kept strictly confidential. Thank you.

1. Your Sex: Male \_\_\_\_\_ Female \_\_\_\_\_

2. Your Age: \_\_\_\_\_ years

3. The highest level of education you have obtained is:

- \_\_\_\_\_ elementary school
- \_\_\_\_\_ some secondary school
- \_\_\_\_\_ secondary school graduation
- \_\_\_\_\_ some trade school
- \_\_\_\_\_ some community college
- \_\_\_\_\_ some university
- \_\_\_\_\_ diploma/certificate trade school
- \_\_\_\_\_ diploma/certificate comm. col.
- \_\_\_\_\_ bachelor degree
- \_\_\_\_\_ post baccalaureate (pbce)
- \_\_\_\_\_ master/ doctorate degree

4. Teaching Experience: \_\_\_\_\_ years

5. What is the approximate number of students in the class in which you are currently teaching? \_\_\_\_\_ students

6. What is the approximate number of students in the school in which you are currently teaching? \_\_\_\_\_ students

Thank you for your participation in this study. If you have any comments that you would like to share, please note them below.



Appendix B  
Perceptions of Influence/Satisfaction of Important Needs  
Parent Questionnaire

**Instructions:**

Please answer all of the following questions. The questionnaire will require between 10 and 15 minutes of your time. Upon completion please mail the survey to my home address in the envelope provided.

There are 3 parts to the survey. Please answer each of the questions based on your perception of the situation.

Please be advised that you are free to opt not to answer any individual question. You are also free to stop answering this survey prior to its completion.

## Perceptions of Influence

## Parent Questionnaire

## PART A

In general, how much influence do you feel each of the following individuals “does have” and “should have” with regard to each of the items listed below. Please circle the appropriate number in the first response set for DOES and in the second response set for SHOULD:

		<u>DOES</u>				<u>SHOULD</u>			
		Little influ- ence			A lot of influ- ence	Little influ- ence			A lot of influ- ence
a. development of curriculum	yourself	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
	teacher	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
b. development of discipline policy	yourself	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
	teacher	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
c. assessment of academic performance	yourself	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
	teacher	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
d. school budget (what the money is allocated for)	yourself	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
	teacher	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
e. staffing issues (e.g. number and placement of assistants)	yourself	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
	teacher	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
f. class structure (e.g. multi-age; age-segregated )	yourself	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
	teacher	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
g. placement issues (accelerating or retaining a child)	yourself	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
	teacher	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4

		<u>DOES</u>				<u>SHOULD</u>			
		Little influ- ence			A lot of influ- ence	Little influ- ence			A lot of influ- ence
h. opportunities to share information	yourself	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
	teacher	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
i. opportunities to interact with the principle decision- makers in the school	yourself	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
	teacher	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4

**PART B**

Please respond to each of the following statements by circling the number in the response set to indicate the degree to which you perceive these needs having been satisfied for yourself through your involvement with the school.

	<u>SATISFIED</u>			
	Not at all satisfied			Very satisfied
a. development of curriculum	1	2	3	4
b. development of discipline policy	1	2	3	4
c. assessment of academic performance	1	2	3	4
d. school budget (what the money is allocated for)	1	2	3	4
e. staffing issues (e.g. # and placement of assistants)	1	2	3	4
f. class structure (e.g. multi-age; age-segregated)	1	2	3	4
g. placement issues (accelerating or retaining a child)	1	2	3	4
h. opportunities to share information with teachers	1	2	3	4
i. opportunities to interact with the principle decision-makers in the school	1	2	3	4

**PART C**

This is the final section of the questionnaire and is very important to the interpretation of the results. Please take a few more minutes to complete this section. All responses will be kept strictly confidential. Thank you.

1. Your Sex: Male \_\_\_\_\_ Female \_\_\_\_\_

2. Your Age: \_\_\_\_\_ years

3. The highest level of education you have obtained is:

- \_\_\_\_\_ elementary school
- \_\_\_\_\_ some secondary school
- \_\_\_\_\_ secondary school graduation
- \_\_\_\_\_ some trade school
- \_\_\_\_\_ some community college
- \_\_\_\_\_ some university
- \_\_\_\_\_ diploma/certificate trade school
- \_\_\_\_\_ diploma/certificate comm. col.
- \_\_\_\_\_ bachelor degree
- \_\_\_\_\_ post baccalaureate (pbce)
- \_\_\_\_\_ master/ doctorate degree

4. Your Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

5. What is the approximate number of students in the class your child is currently attending? \_\_\_\_\_ students

6. What is the approximate number of students in the school your child is currently attending? \_\_\_\_\_ students

7. How many school age children do you have? \_\_\_\_\_ children

Please check the grades in which you have children.

Kindergarten	_____	Grade 7	_____
Grade 1	_____	Grade 8	_____
Grade 2	_____	Grade 9	_____
Grade 3	_____	Grade 10	_____
Grade 4	_____	Grade 11	_____
Grade 5	_____	Grade 12	_____
Grade 6	_____		

Thank you for your participation in this study. If you have any comments that you would like to share, please note them below.

Appendix C  
Letter to Division Superintendent

Maureen F. Mahon  
 353 Oxford St.  
 Winnipeg, Manitoba  
 R3M 3H9  
 (204) 487-1174

Superintendent  
 Manitoba Catholic Schools  
 Winnipeg, Manitoba

Dear Mr. Lussier,

I am currently working on my thesis to complete a Master of Education degree at the University of Manitoba. I am studying parent-teacher relationships at the Kindergarten through grade 4 level. Within this study, I will investigate the perceived influence and sense of satisfaction that parents and teachers of children in kindergarten through grade 4 believe that they have with respect to information sharing and decision making on school based issues.

I am writing to ask permission to conduct this study within the Manitoba Catholic Schools of Winnipeg, Manitoba. In order to represent a range of economic and demographic circumstances, I have requested the following four schools to participate in the study: Christ the King, Holy Cross, Msgr. James K. MacIsaac, and St. Charles Academy.

At these schools, all classroom teachers of children from Kindergarten through grade 4 will be asked to participate. In addition, a random sample of parents of children in kindergarten through grade 4 will be selected to participate. Four parents from each of the five grade levels within each school will be selected. Care will be taken to ensure that each family will receive only one questionnaire even if they have more than one child enrolled in the school. The researcher will meet with teachers to distribute their letters and questionnaires. Parent letters and questionnaires will be mailed directly to their homes. A letter describing the nature of the study and requesting the individual's participation will accompany the questionnaire. Respondents will be assured of confidentiality and of their right not to participate should they so desire. All respondents will be asked to complete the questionnaire and mail it back to me at my home address in the envelope provided.

I will share information from the research project with you and participating teachers and parents by sending a summary of the results to you directly and to each of the schools.

I would appreciate a letter of permission at your earliest convenience. Should you require any additional information, please contact me at the above address. My advisor, Dr. Kelvin Seifert, may be reached at the Department of Educational Psychology, University of Manitoba. The phone number is: 474-9859. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Maureen F. Mahon

Appendix D  
Letter to Parents

Maureen F. Mahon  
353 Oxford St.  
Winnipeg, Manitoba  
R3M 3H9  
(204) 487-1174

Dear Parent,

As part of my Master of Education degree at the University of Manitoba, I am conducting a study in the area of parent-teacher relationships at the Kindergarten through grade 4 level. Within this study, I will investigate the perceived influence and sense of satisfaction that parents and teachers of children in kindergarten through grade 4 believe that they have with respect to information sharing and decision making on school based issues.

I am writing to ask you to take the time to complete the attached survey about these issues. If you have more than one child in kindergarten through grade 4, I would ask that you give average or generalized responses based on your experiences.

There are three parts to the questionnaire. In total, it will take approximately 10 -15 minutes to complete. Please be advised that you are not required to answer all of the questions. There will be no consequence to you or your child should you choose not to answer this survey in whole or in part. Upon completion of the questionnaire, please mail it back to me at my home address in the envelope provided.

Please be assured that participation in the study is voluntary and that the information collected will be held in strict confidence. All information from the surveys is anonymous. This means that:

- No one at the school or within the division will see the questionnaires. Only I will see them.
- Your name will not appear in any of the reported results.
- Your individual responses will not be reported; all parent and teacher responses will be grouped or averaged together.
- Your questionnaire will be destroyed once all the data has been collected and analyzed.

A brief summary of the results will be mailed to the school upon completion of the study. If you would like your own copy, please contact me and I will mail it to you directly. Should you require any additional information, please contact me at the above address. My advisor, Dr. Kelvin Seifert, may be reached at the Department of Educational Psychology, University of Manitoba. The phone number is: 474-9859. Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Maureen F. Mahon

Appendix E  
Letter to Teachers

Maureen F. Mahon  
353 Oxford St.  
Winnipeg, Manitoba  
R3M 3H9  
(204) 487-1174

Dear Teacher,

As part of my Master of Education degree at the University of Manitoba, I am conducting a study in the area of parent-teacher relationships at the Kindergarten through grade 4 level. Within this study, I will investigate the perceived influence and sense of satisfaction that teachers and parents of children in kindergarten through grade 4 believe that they have with respect to information sharing and decision making on school based issues.

I am writing to ask you to take the time to complete the attached survey about these issues. Please give average or generalized responses based on your experiences.

There are three parts to the questionnaire. In total, it will take approximately 10 -15 minutes to complete. Please be advised that you are not required to answer all of the questions. There will be no consequence to you should you choose not to answer this survey in whole or in part. Upon completion of the questionnaire, please mail it back to me at my home address in the envelope provided.

Please be assured that participation in the study is voluntary and that the information collected will be held in strict confidence. All information from the surveys is anonymous. This means that:

- No one at the school or within the division will see the questionnaires. Only I will see them.
- Your name will not appear in any of the reported results.
- Your individual responses will not be reported; all teacher and parent responses will be grouped or averaged together.
- Your questionnaire will be destroyed once all the data has been collected and analyzed.

A brief summary of the results will be mailed to the school upon completion of the study. If you would like your own copy, please contact me and I will mail it to you directly. Should you require any additional information, please contact me at the above address. My advisor, Dr. Kelvin Seifert, may be reached at the Department of Educational Psychology, University of Manitoba. The phone number is: 474-9859. Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Maureen F. Mahon



Appendix F  
Reminder Card

JUST A REMINDER

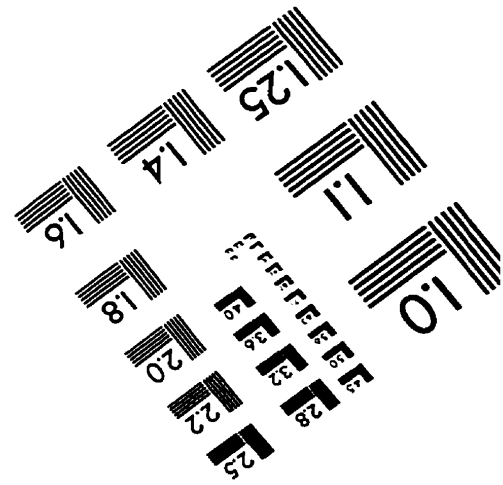
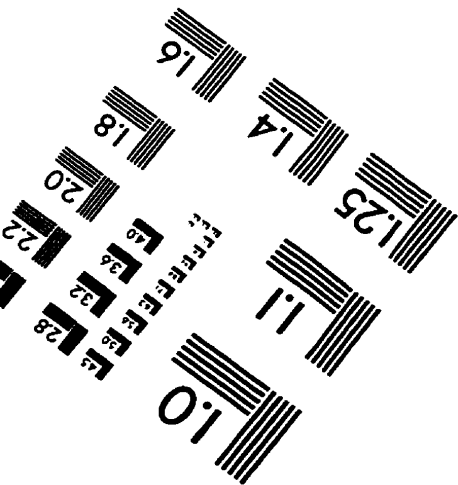
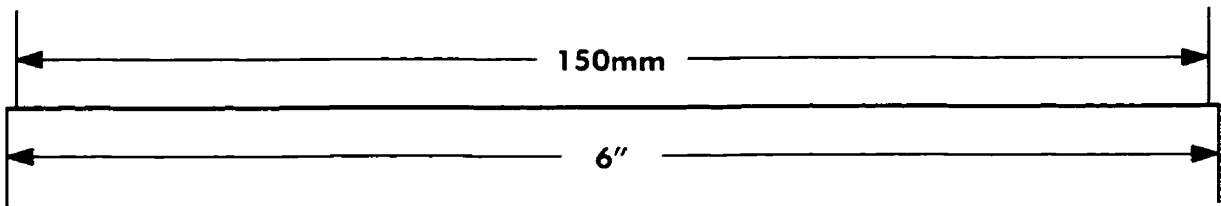
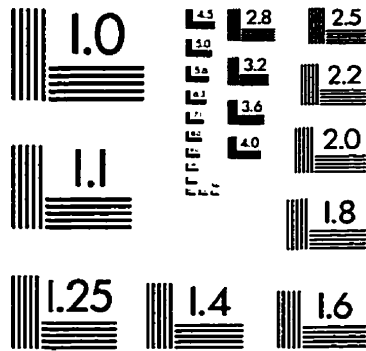
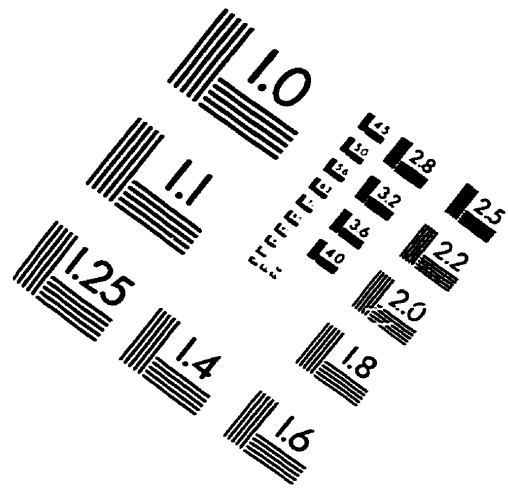
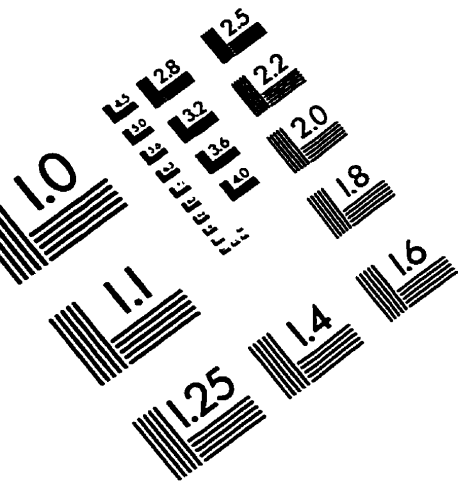
Within the past week you should have received a copy of a survey on parent-teacher relationships. Your participation is very important in order that we may better understand parent and teacher relations.

If you did not receive a copy of the survey, please call me at 474-9018 (Educational Psychology office) or 487-1174 (home) and I will get one to you. If you did receive it, please complete it and mail it to me at my home address in the envelope provided as soon as possible. If you have already completed it, thank you for your support.

Sincerely,

Maureen F. Mahon

# IMAGE EVALUATION TEST TARGET (QA-3)



APPLIED IMAGE, Inc  
1653 East Main Street  
Rochester, NY 14609 USA  
Phone: 716/482-0300  
Fax: 716/288-5989

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