Characteristics of Successful Parent-School

Groups as Seen From Temporary Systems and

Interorganizational Linkages Perspectives

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David William Oborne

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CHARACTERISTICS OF SUCCESSFUL PARENT-SCHOOL

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine whether or not successful parent-school groups exhibit the characteristics of effective temporary systems and interorganizational linkages.

Five schools, identified by a school division superintendent as having successful parent-school groups, were selected for this study. The student population of these selected schools ranged from 109 to 766 while the number of parents serving on the parent-school group ranged from six to twelve. All schools selected for this study were situated in Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Three techniques were used to collect data for this study: (1) the questionnaire; (2) the structured interview; (3) observation. Thirty-four parents and thirty-eight teachers completed questionnaires. The principal of each of the five schools was interviewed and meetings of three of the five schools were observed.

The line of reasoning employed in this study suggested that parent-school groups could be classified as temporary systems from the perspective of the parent participants. The successful parent-school groups studied were compared with input and selected process characteristics of temporary systems and with two selected dimensions of interorganizational linkages.

The findings of this study show that the parent-school groups studied exhibited the input and selected process characteristics of temporary systems. As well, the successful parent-school groups studied exhibited a high degree of reciprocity in their linkage with

their respective schools and a varying degree of intensity in their

linkage with their respective schools.

This study concluded that the temporary systems and inter-

organizational linkages perspectives may be employed in the analysis

of parent-school groups.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Parent involvement in the education of children has long been

an expressed goal of educators. The creation of local school boards,

the development of parent-teacher federations, and the growth of

community schools all attest to the involvement desired by parents

and educators alike. Casual observation would suggest that some

attempts to involve parents in schools have been more successful

than others. The apparent differences in the success of parent-

school interaction deserve some consideration and study.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Parent Involvement in Schools

Parent-school groups are an integral part of the process

which involves parents in the education of their children. These

groups provide a forum for sustained dialogue between home and

school. Increased two-way communication between home and school in

turn promotes greater parent involvement in, and understanding of,

the learning process. Coletta, (1977:8) in a book entitled Working

Together: A Guide To Parent Involvement, observes:

> ... successful home-school programs have demonstrated an increase
> and sustainment in children's achievement, self concepts and
> motivation; also parents have been found to view themselves more
> positively.

Coletta based his statement on the research findings of Bronfenbrenner,

Honing and Sayler (1977:9-11).

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Lopate's (1970:148) findings support Coletta's observations. Lopate offers three reasons for the higher achievement levels attained when parents become involved in the education process: (1) there is a narrowing of the gap between the goals of the home and those of the school, (2) positive changes in teacher attitudes result, (3) the motivation of the child increases.

Coletta (1977:8) cites two matters of broader social significance which would support assertions about the importance of successful home-school programs. First, although interaction between home and school has been historically important, changes occurring within the family have made it necessary for the school to become more helpfully involved with the family. Second, good home-school programs are an effective way of countering the apparent disenchantment felt by parents in their experiences with the school system.

Despite the importance of parent-school groups, little has been done, systematically, to study the elements of their success. Eastabrook and Fullen (1978:7) note in a report entitled <u>School and Community: Principals and Community Schools in Ontario</u> that writings on, and studies of, community-school exchanges have tended to be "atheoretical". That is, they have not been based on theoretical models, but rather have been descriptions of facts or occurrences resulting from value positions which may or may not have been clearly stated. There is a need to develop theoretical models through which parent-school groups can be systematically analyzed.

Much attention has been given, in written presentations, to the "community school" concept. The desire for "community schools" stemmed from the belief of some educators that the traditional

role of the school was not meeting the needs of the community. In a study, Community Schools in Manitoba, Hanna (1980) focusses on public schools designated as "community schools". Hanna's (1980:VI) findings demonstrate that only a minority of schools are described as "community schools" by school superintendents. Moreover, only a few of these schools actually measure up to Hanna's criteria for "community schools". She concludes that the extent of parent participation in the decision-making process of schools is minimal. Hanna's results indicate that the "community school" concept has not fared as well as its proponents might have wished.

It is important to underscore two conclusions which may be drawn in light of Hanna's study of "community schools". First, a structural change in the school's organization has no significant effect on parent participation in school affairs. Second, as a structural change has no significant effect, the dynamics of parent-school groups should be further examined to determine their effects on parent participation in school matters. That is, the traditional non-community school should be reexamined so as to identify those factors which contribute to the success of parent-school groups.

A great deal has been written about parent participation in school activities, but there has not yet been sufficient research designed to analyze the interaction within parent-school groups to identify common factors of success. Due to this lack of an existing supply of research data, an examination of the literature and research in the areas of parent committees, temporary systems and interorganizational linkages was undertaken; the findings of said examination being presented in this study. This review

identified some factors by which, parent committees, as temporary

systems successfully established a link between the parents and the

school.

Temporary Systems

Miles (1964:441-444) identifies temporary systems as groups

in which the members clearly perceive a terminal point for the group.

This terminal point may come either at a specific juncture, or upon

completion of a specified task. Miles reasons that a temporary

system would provide the following functions: it would address a

complex task; it would provide compensation to and maintenance for

the permanent group to which it is attached; it would also induce

change in the permanent system. Bryce (1972:93) asserts that the

temporary system exhibits several characteristics which distinguish

it from a permanent system. These characteristics include: (1) a

sense of finite time; (2) a perceived sense of mission on the part

of the participants; (3) a membership drawn from the ongoing

permanent system; (4) a situation where the members' roles would not

be established by precedent. Bryce's observations concerning the

lack of precedent in the establishment of roles finds support in

Miles, (1964), Dickerson, (1975), Keith, (1978), and Goodman and

Goodman, (1976).

The parent-school group has several of the characteristics

of a temporary system. Parents, as members of the group, envision

their own presence in the group as one terminating at some point

in time. The functions of the parent-school groups parallels

closely Miles' (1964) description of the functions of a

temporary system. First, the task of a parent-school group is complex in the sense that there are a multiplicity of goals seen as needing attention. Second, the parent-school group exists to focus parental attention on the permanent system, the school. Third, the parent-school group inspires the advancement of the permanent system, the school.

If the parent-school group is viewed as a temporary system, then the characteristics of temporary systems would also apply. Bryce (1972:93) indicates that a sense of mission is a characteristic of the temporary system. It follows then that the identification of the members with shared goals and a commitment to attain these goals would be one indicator of success of the parent-school group.

Miles (1964:441) suggests that a temporary system would provide "... a setting for expeditious achievement of short term tasks." It follows then that a second indicator of success would be the ability of the parent-school group to attain the objectives it had set for itself.

Goodman and Goodman (1976:498) found that a blurred role model, contrary to a role clarity model, leads to greater task effectiveness, greater utilization of human resources, and greater professional growth. Miles (1964:467) identifies this concept as equal status role relationship. It follows that a third factor of success of a parent-school group is the extent to which an equal status role relationship has been achieved.

Interorganizational Linkages

A fourth factor of success may be found in the literature

dealing with interorganizational linkages. The nature of this linkage is vital to the parent-school group. As a temporary system, it relies on the permanent system both in terms of definition of its mandate and for its resources. Marrett (Andrews, 1978:2) suggests that there exist four dimensions of interorganizational linkages. These dimensions include: (1) the degree of formalization; (2) the degree of intensity; (3) the degree of reciprocity; (4) the degree of standardization.

The degree of intensity, Marrett suggests, is measurable by the frequency of interaction among the people involved and by the amount of resource commitment of each participating organization. One aspect of reciprocity "is the extent to which the terms of the relationship are mutually agreed upon."

Based on the two dimensions, degree of intensity and degree of reciprocity, the following conclusions may be drawn. The frequency of interaction between the members of the parent-school group and the members of the school as a permanent organization will indicate the degree of intensity of the interorganizational linkage. As well, the amount of resources allocated by the members of the school to attain the objectives of the parent-school group will indicate the strength of the interorganizational linkage. The strength of linkage between the parent-school group as a temporary system and the permanent system, the school, depends on the degree to which parent and teachers agree to the role each plays in relation to the other. That is, does the teacher view the parent group as having a legitimate role in the operation of the school?

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The Major Research Question

The general problem that this study will address may be expressed thus: Are the criteria necessary for an effective temporary system and effective intersystem linkage evident in successful parent-school groups? Consequently, this study will analyze parent-school groups in schools identified by a division superintendent as having successful parent-school groups. The following research questions, based on the deductive examination of the literature, will guide the study.

Research Questions

Research Question 1

Do successful parent-school groups exhibit a high degree of perceived goal attainment?

Question 1.1 Is there a high degree of success exhibited in the achievement of stated objectives.

Question 1.2 Do the members of the parent-school group perceive their efforts to be successful?

Research Question 2

Do the members of successful parent-school groups feel a high degree of attachment towards the group?

Question 2.1 Does the principal facilitate communication and an equal status power structure within the group?

Question 2.2 Why do the parents maintain an affiliation with the group?

Research Question 3

Do successful parent-school groups exhibit a strong linkage to the school as the permanent system to which they are attached?

Question 3.1 Can the intensity of the linkage be characterized as being high?

Question 3.2 Can the reciprocity of the linkage be characterized as being high?

DEFINITIONS

Parent-school group—a group composed of at least the principal and some parents who have children attending the school, whose purpose is to coordinate the efforts of parents and school personnel in relation to the education of the students.

Traditional school—for the purpose of this study a school not designated as a "community school" by a school division superintendent.

Temporary system—for the purpose of this study, a group whose members recognize from its inception that their participation in the group will end at a clearly specified time.

Interorganizational linkage—for the purpose of this study is the degree of the attachment between the school as a permanent system and the parent-school group as a temporary system.

Successful parent-school groups—for the purpose of this study successful parent-school groups are those parent-school groups identified as being successful by a division superintendent.

Success—for the purpose of this study success is defined as a favourable course of parent-school group processes leading to

favourable outcomes. The term is used in a perceptual sense as it relies on the participants' and researchers' perceptions of favourability regarding both process and outcome.

DELIMITATIONS

This study bases its findings on data obtained from five traditional elementary schools deemed by a school division superintendent to have successful parent-school groups. The five schools are not ranked according to the degree of success of their respective groups. The data was collected during April, May, and June 1981, and reflects the operation of the parent-school groups during the 1980-81 school year. The data is perceptual in nature as it was secured by way of interviews, questionnaires and observations.

LIMITATIONS

This study is exploratory and heuristic. It should not be interpreted as an exhaustive study of parent involvement in the school or as being extrapolative of the group of schools studied. This study has chosen to address a selected number of factors. It has excluded other factors such as leadership capabilities of principals and parents. As well, it has ignored variables which would impede the advancement of parent-school groups.

IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

This study has several grounds for justification. The review of the literature referred to in this chapter affirms the importance

of parent involvement in the education of children. It is essential that the dynamics of parent-school groups be carefully explored and evaluated since they can point a sure way to greater and better participation of parents in the schooling of their children.

The dynamics of the parent-school groups should also be examined because they are an important interface between the school and the community. The public image of the school would be greatly enhanced by a more thorough understanding by educators of the school's parent group, its purpose and performance.

As the school takes on more helping functions in a changing society, as noted by Coletta, (1977:11) the role of the parent-school group assumes greater importance.

Administrators must determine criteria to appraise the principal's efforts at involving parents in the school's decision-making process. An understanding of the factors contributing to the success of parent-school groups is essential to the development of criteria governing this aspect of the principal's role.

It is important for educators to examine how a parent-school group as a temporary system can provide the impetus for change in the permanent system, the school, to which it is linked. A major feature of this study is its heuristic and exploratory nature. This thesis provides an initial study of the elements which contribute to successful parent-school groups. The conceptual framework utilized in this study may then serve as a guide in the study of other parent-school groups.

ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

In this chapter, the introduction of the study, the statement of research questions, the definition of terms, the delimitations, the limitations, the importance of the study and its organization have been presented. The balance of the study is organized as follows:

Chapter 2 REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE CONCERNING PARENT
           INVOLVEMENT

Chapter 3 REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE CONCERNING TEMPORARY
           SYSTEMS, INTERORGANIZATIONAL LINKAGES AND THEIR
           APPLICATION TO THE ANALYSIS OF PARENT-SCHOOL GROUPS

Chapter 4 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

Chapter 5 PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

Chapter 6 CONCLUSIONS: MAJOR RESEARCH QUESTION

Chapter 7 SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE: PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN SCHOOLS

In this chapter a review of the literature which deals with the involvement of parents in the school will be presented. In the following chapter an examination of the literature dealing with temporary systems will be presented.

The review of the literature concerning parent involvement in schools was guided by two purposes. First, the researcher wished to explore the literature which demonstrated the benefits, and consequently the importance of involving parents in schools. Second, the literature which analyzed the dynamics of the home-school interaction would be explored in order to establish a conceptual framework to analyze cases of home-school interaction.

IMPORTANCE OF PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Three recurring reasons for treating the involvement of parents with some importance can be garnered from a review of the literature in this area. First, the community and the family need to be supported by the school as an institution. Second, increased parent participation can be seen as developing a source of strength for educators in a climate where confidence in the public education system is being undermined. Third, parent participation can be regarded as having beneficial effects on student learning.

The School as Community Support

The school, it may be argued, can and should provide support in its social setting, both at the community and family levels.

The arguments in favour of the school's support of the community stem from the concept of democracy which enjoys universal acclaim in Canadian society. The democratic ideal implies the rule of the people by the maximum participation of the people (Pateman, 1970:2).

Several writers (Chapin, 1978; Pateman, 1970; Mishler, 1979) have noted two conflicting points of view concerning the value of promoting increased citizen participation in government. One point of view contends that government operates quite well with the current low levels of participation, which allows ruling elites the opportunity to make policy decisions without undue challenges from the general public. The proponents of this point of view note that fewer than 5% (Mishler, 1979:6) of the population can be classified as politically active.

In contrast to this point of view is the argument which promotes the value of increasing the level of citizen participation in government. Those in favour of increased levels of participation argue that the existing low level of participation is harmful to society. Mishler (1979:11) notes:

> The proponents of increased participation insist that apathy is not inevitable but results from the citizen's alienation from society and self and from the resulting sense of personal inefficacy and political awareness.

The proponents of citizen participation advocate the democratization of social institutions as a means of achieving

greater participation in politics by citizens. For instance, Pateman (1970:45) suggests:

> The argument in the participation theory of democracy that the education for democracy that takes place through the participatory process in non-governmental authority structures requires, therefore, that the structures should be democratized, looks on the face of it, rather more plausible.

The supporters of the participation theory, then, argue that the lack of citizen participation is due to the lack of opportunity to participate rather than public apathy. Further, increased public participation will be achieved when social institutions are democratized to allow for citizen participation.

Some educators advocate the application of the participation theory to education as a social institution. Tom Kent, (1980:1-9) Dean of the Faculty of Administrative Studies, Dalhousie University, in an address to the Canadian Education Association argues that in this period of generally perceived alienation, the school is the key to the development of an informed public. By generating involvement in this central social institution, Kent suggests that meaningful democratic involvement on the local level could be rekindled. Kent (1980:1-9) states, "The essence of the democratic process is continual discussion of decision making.... The discussion, if it is to be vital, must be centered where things are actually done—in our case the schools."

Kent clearly sees the school, as an organization, having the responsibility to help lessen the perceived sense of alienation felt by people in modern society.

The school can be seen as a source of support at the level of the family. Coletta (1977:8-9) suggests that the modern nuclear

family and single parent family are placed under much stress.

Moreover, the modern family has expanded the role of mother. She is

a "breadwinner" as well as wife and mother. Coletta (1977:5) notes

that in 1977 more than fifty percent of American mothers worked

outside the home. Statistics Canada (1976) noted that in 1976 50.1

percent of Canadian married women between the ages of 25-34 worked.

This has further reduced the amount of interaction time children

enjoy with their parents.

Bronfenbrenner (1967:60) concurs with this observation. In

a report evaluating preschool programs funded under Project Head

Start he states:

> Children used to be brought up by their parents ... parents and
> children no longer spend enough time together.... This is not
> because parents do not want to spend time with their children.
> It is simply that conditions of life have changed.

In relation to preschool programs, Bronfenbrenner (1967:51)

suggests further work is needed on the part of educators to enlist

parents in the support of the child's activities at school. This

signifies a shift in the responsibility for the welfare of the child

away from the family towards the school.

Schaefer (1972) in a study of cross-sectional, longitudinal

and intervention research in preschool programs concludes that the

school support for the community is vital. He (1972:238) states:

> ... an exclusive focus upon academic education will not solve
> the major educational problems. A major task for our child care
> and educational institutions and professions will be the
> development of a support system for family care and education.

From the literature it may be concluded that the community

does indeed need the support of the school. The twentieth century

community has been characterized by a sense of alienation. Based on

the authors cited, it may be argued that the support of the

community is a societal need of the school system. That is, the

school must develop as a support system for the families it serves.

At the community level the school is viewed as the key to the

reduction of perceived alienation through increasing public involve-

ment in the school's decision making process. At the individual

level the school can be seen as the agent which helps the family

in its task of child rearing.

Community Support of the School

A second area of interest in the literature dealing with

parent involvement in the schools has been the public relations

aspect of the principal's role. The assumption has been that the

public support of the school will increase where parents are

involved in the decision making process of the school. Much has

been written concerning effective communication from school to home.

Lucas and Lusthaus (1977:1) argue that the presence of two-way

communication develops a much greater understanding between the

home and the school than does one-way communication. They point out:

"Conceivably, a school system could go through all the motions of

communicating to parents, and yet remain essentially closed to a

variety of inputs from the parent community."

The involvement of parents, then, is important if the school

is to understand community needs and be able to respond in a manner

which will enlist community support.

Despite the recognized need to establish two-way communication

between parents and school, research has disclosed a remarkable

reluctance on the part of parents to become involved. The Canadian Education Association (1979:36) researchers elicited the following responses when they asked in a survey, "Which of these statements best describes your attendance at home and school or parent teacher meetings?"

Table I

Parent Participation in Schools

"Which of these statements best describe your attendance at Home and School or Parent Teacher meetings?"

always or frequently attended	seldom or never attended	question does not apply
58.3%	36.9%	4.3%

Table I indicates the frequency of parent attendance at school meetings. At first glance 58.3% may seem to be a reasonable number of parents who participated frequently. However, included in the question on parent participation were parent teacher meetings which are typically brief encounters, are few in number, and do little to inspire parent participation in the school. Moreover, even with this broadened definition of parent involvement a full 37% of parents were still uninvolved in the school.

The Task Force (1979:57) concludes: "... Most people would prefer not to run for the school board or to participate in committee work, whether in the school board or in parent-teacher groups at the school level."

While it seems evident that there is little interest on the part of many parents to become involved in the school system,

educators have recognized the need for establishing a good public relations program for their schools. This writer has found that most of the literature dealing with this aspect of parent involvement has tended to be prescriptions for the practicing administrator, and not writings which were a result of extensive research in the field. Notwithstanding the lack of research in this area, the existing literature points to the importance of parent involvement for the continued support of the school's operation.

Parent Involvement and Student
  Achievement

A third thrust of the literature stressing the importance of maximizing parent involvement has been the perceived beneficial effects this involvement has on children's learning.

Honig, (Honig, 1975:10) finds that, despite the short term effects of various models employed in early intervention projects, gains achieved by children participating in the various projects were soon lost when parents ended their involvement in the process. Honig's findings are supported, among others, by a study conducted by Bittner, Rockwell, and Matthews (1977:16) into a preschool program in St. Louis. They found that children of more highly motivated parents retained more than children of less involved parents.

Honig's findings are further supported by the work of Bronfenbrenner. Based on a longitudinal study of preschool programs, Bronfenbrenner (1974:55) states:

> The evidence indicates further that the involvement of the
> child's family as an active participant is critical to the
> success of any intervention program. Without family involvement,

any effects of intervention, at least in the cognitive sphere, are likely to be ephemeral, to appear to erode once the program ends.

Lopate (1970:141) reviewed several studies which addressed the topic of parent participation in schools and pupil achievement. Based on the review of these studies Lopate concludes that, "even circumscribed participation by parents in school affairs correlates with heightened pupil development".

Lopate (1970:142) refers to a study carried out by Schiff who compares the gains made on a reading test by two groups of students. The control group was given the identical reading program as the experimental group. The pupils of the experimental group which encouraged parent participation improved significantly more than did the pupils of the control group.

Lopate (1970:142) refers also to a study by Brookover who compared the progress of three randomly assigned low-achieving junior high school student groups. One group was given weekly contact with specialists in special interest areas. The second group was given weekly counselling sessions. The third group was not offered these options, but rather their parents were encouraged to meet regularly with school officials to discuss the progress made by the students. This group made significant academic gains over the school year, while the other two groups did not show significant gains over the same space of time.

From the studies cited it may be concluded that parent participation in the school does have an effect on student progress. This conclusion is also shared by those involved in special education. Kelly, (1974:8) notes: "Whereas in the past parents have not been

viewed as useful contributors to the educational process, more
extensive involvement in the schools is not increasingly viewed as
essential". Not only does Kelly find that parent participation is
beneficial in special education, (Macdonald, 1971) but he points to
other areas of education such as preschool education (Calvert, 1971)
and the education of disadvantaged groups and culturally different
groups in which research has shown the advantage of involving
parents (Lopate, 1970).

Lopate (1970:148) in her review of the research, quoted above,
on parent involvement concludes:

> Educational research indicates that when parents of school
> children are involved in the process of education, their children
> are likely to achieve better. This heightened achievement may
> be due to the lessening of distance between the goals of the
> schools and the goals of the home, and to the positive changes
> in teachers' attitudes resulting from their greater sense of
> accountability when the parents of their students are visible
> in the schools. The child may also achieve better because he
> has an increased sense of control over his own destiny when he
> sees his parents actively engaged in decision-making in his
> school.

The importance of involving parents has been demonstrated by
several researchers in the field. The outcomes of their research have
pointed to three distinct levels of importance for the involvement of
parents. The school, as an organization can be viewed as a source of
support for citizens in general. As well, it can be argued that the
school should strive to establish a support mechanism for the family.
The involvement of parents in the school also provides a firm base of
support for the school. Finally, researchers have found that the
involvement of parents results in the improved academic performance
of students. Further, the children's feeling of self worth is
enhanced where parental involvement has been encouraged.

THE DYNAMICS OF SUCCESSFUL PARENT-SCHOOL GROUPS

The formation of a parent-school group is an integral part of the process of involving parents in the education of their children. Such a group is tangible evidence of the school's desire to promote parent involvement and is an important first step in that process. A parent-school group has the potential to become the vehicle for two-way communication between the total parent body and the school. The success of the school's attempts to involve parents very much depends on the school's ability to promote a successful parent-school group. The literature dealing with parent participation in the schools was reviewed so as to determine what factors contributed to the success of parent-school groups and in turn to the involvement of parents in the education of their children.

In the course of reviewing the literature this researcher found little research on the dynamics of parent-school groups. In its stead much of the literature has dealt with the American experience, or the "community school" concept. This portion of the literature review will note the lack of research into the dynamics of parent-school groups; discuss the effects the "community school" concept has had on research; offer reasons for not applying research carried out in the United States on parent-school groups.

Lack of Research

Despite the body of literature which demonstrates the importance of parent involvement in the school, there has been a dearth of research into the dynamics of home-school relations. This researcher, despite much time spent researching the topic, was able

to uncover only one article (Jenkins:1974) which looked at the
dynamics of parent-school groups. Other researchers have also found
research lacking in the area of parent participation in schools.
Sharrock, (1970:119) in her book entitled, Home/School Relations:
Their Importance, states: "there has been a dearth of research on
home-school relations".

Eastabrook and Fullen (1978) share this view as well.
Commissioned by the Ontario Ministry of Education to study Community
Schools in Ontario, they were unable to find research into the area
of home school relations. They state:

> In general, the writings and studies of community-school
> exchanges have tended to be atheoretical. That is, they are not
> based on specific theories or models, but are instead statements
> or descriptions of facts (or "desirable" happenings) which have
> occurred because of value positions which may or may not be
> clearly stated (1978:7).

Of the literature reviewed, two areas seemed to attract the
attention of researchers, the American experience, and the
"community school" concept. While these two areas do not address
the area of attention of this study a brief discussion of their
focuses will help to clarify the various avenues research into home-
school relations has taken.

The American experience. The problems faced by American
educators have differed in nature from those faced by Canadian
educators. As a result the focus of research has been different.
Havighurst (1979:25) notes that the American experience has
encompassed the disenchantment of minority groups with the educational
system and as well has seen the rise of sentiment for local community
control. This situation is in sharp contrast to the Canadian

situation where the Canadian Education Association Task Force on

Public Involvement in Educational Decisions (1979:57) found that

Canadians have a high level of confidence in their elected school

officials.

A study undertaken by Gittell (1979:1) also serves to

underscore the differences between the Canadian and American

contexts. The main purposes for the study were:

1. To understand ways in which organizations have an impact

on local decision-making.

2. To understand ways in which organizations work to

increase the responsiveness of public institutions.

3. To understand ways in which organizations enhance the

power of minorities.

The rationale for Gittell's study may well suit the American

experience, however, it would be difficult to find parallel

situations in Canada especially in light of the C.E.A. Task Force

findings. It is important to note that, while there is much to be

learned from American research in the area of home-school relations,

its focus is different from the Canadian focus. Moreover, its

preoccupation with school integration, school taxes, and minority

education are not factors in the Canadian experience.

With the many political issues associated with public involve-

ment in education in the United States it is little wonder that the

dynamics of successful parent-school groups have not received

attention in the literature on parent participation.

Research on community schools. A second area of the

literature deals with "community schools". The "community school" concept, while originating in the United States, has provoked some interest in Canada. The approach tries to integrate the aims of the school with the needs of the community in which the school exists. Much importance is attached to the community's input into the school.

In spite of the amount written on "community school" education, Hanna (1980:1) notes that there has been little original intensive research. She refers to Weaver and Seay (Hanna, 1980:2) who observe: "In their efforts to be practical, community educators have often rejected opportunities to contribute significantly to the knowledge in the field".

Weaver (1972:154) also notes that practices and programs considered essential to the implementation of the community school concept have been widely adopted with little or no research into their effectiveness. Eastabrook and Fullen (1978:9) also note that, while there are a number of philosophical statements about the importance of establishing "community schools", few reflect any theoretical base.

From the observations of these writers it may be concluded that, while there has been a fair amount written about "community schools", the research has not analyzed those factors which contribute to the success or failure of "community schools".

Hanna found that although 17% of Manitoba's elementary schools are classified as "community schools" extremely few meet the criteria for "community schools". Further, Hanna discovered that there is little awareness, even among school division superintendents, of community schools.

It may be concluded, then, that although there has been an expressed interest in the "community school" concept, the topic has not been developed from the standpoint of increased parent participation; nor has it been studied in a systematic fashion. Hence, while one might expect that the literature relating to "community school" concept would contribute greatly to the literature on the dynamics of parent-school groups, in fact, no such help exists.

The Principal As a Key Actor

Although no research was found which dealt with the factors which contributed to the success of parent-school groups, some writers support the view that the dynamics of parent-school interaction are important to the successful operation of parent-school groups.

The principal is important to the successful operation of the group. Estabrook and Fullen (1978:4) state: "It became apparent that the school principal was of primary importance in the initiation and development of community-school exchanges and programs". Coletta (1972:22) suggests that principals, "need to be sensitized and trained in the skills, components and methods of organizing parent involvement programs".

Jenkins (1974) studied the reactions of school administrators to parent-school groups in California where advisory councils were legislated. Jenkins found that the principal might try to control the outcomes of the parent-school group through a variety of techniques. These techniques include:

    1. Dramaturgical loyalty--the promotion of in group

solidarity.

2. Dramaturgical discipline--the maintenance of self-control in all situations.

3. Dramaturgical circumspection--a carefully planned performance employing the following techniques:

(a) the choosing of cooperative members

(b) attempting to select a cooperative audience

(c) limiting the size of the committee

(d) staging an awesome performance or ceremony

(e) limiting the temporal length of the meeting

(f) controlling access to information

(g) controlling the agenda before the meeting

(h) misrepresenting information

Jenkin's study points out the tremendous impact the actors have on the success of parent-school groups. The principal is the key to the success of the group. His or her leadership skills and predisposition towards the group will dictate in large measure the success of the group.

SUMMARY

Chapter 2 contained a review of the literature which deals with the involvement of parents in the school. The review was guided by two purposes. First, the researcher wished to explore the literature in order to ascertain whether or not research supported the popularly held belief in the value of parent involvement in schools. Once the importance of parent involvement in schools was established the researcher turned to the literature dealing with the

dynamics of parent-school groups in an attempt to establish criteria for recognizing successful parent-school groups.

Three reasons were noted for the treatment of parental involvement in schools as a topic of consequence. They were: (1) the central role the school should play to support the family as an institution; (2) the role parental involvement plays in the development of support for the school; (3) the positive effects parental involvement has on children's learning.

An extensive search of the literature yielded little of substance concerning the dynamics of parental involvement in schools. Several researchers have commented on the lack of systematic research in this area. It was found that much of the literature concerning parental participation in schools dealt with either the American experience or with "community schools". These two areas of the literature, while being important issues, proved to be unapplicable to the discussion of the success of parent-school groups. One study, carried out in California by Jenkins, attested to the important role the principal plays in the success of the parent-school group.

Chapter 3

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE: TEMPORARY SYSTEMS
AND INTERORGANIZATIONAL LINKAGES

The review of the literature conducted in Chapter 2

demonstrated the lack of writings concerning the dynamics of parent-

school interaction. As a result of the lack of existing research

into the dynamics of parent-school groups a survey was taken of the

body of appropriate social science theory to find a theoretical

perspective from which to analyze parent-school group dynamics.

Temporary systems theory and interorganizational linkages theory

were selected as theoretical frameworks within which parent-school

groups could be analyzed. In this chapter the literature dealing

with temporary systems and interorganizational linkages were reviewed

in order to ascertain whether parent-school groups could be studied

using temporary systems theory as an analytical framework within

which to examine the dynamics of the parent-school group.

The chapter is organized in the following manner. First, the

definition and theories relating to temporary systems and inter-

organizational linkages will be reviewed. Then the two areas of the

literature will be compared to parent-school groups to determine

whether or not they are applicable to the study of parent-school

groups.

TEMPORARY SYSTEMS

Miles (1964:438) defines temporary systems as groups or

organizations whose members clearly envision either the group's

termination or the termination of their own participation in the

group. The termination of the group or the participants membership

in it may occur at a specific juncture, upon completion of a task,

or upon the attainment of some general state of affairs. Miles

(1964:440) reasons that a temporary system performs the following

functions: it addresses a complex task; it provides compensation

to and maintenance for the permanent group to which it is attached;

it induces change in the permanent system.

Miles (1964:439-41) suggests a conference and a task force

as two examples of temporary systems. A conference is time linked

in the sense that the conference has a predetermined beginning and

closing, while a task force is event linked in that it will disband

once its mission has been accomplished. Some temporary systems

are temporary for only some members of the group. School is a

permanent system from the point of view of the staff but is viewed

as a temporary system from the point of view of the students.

Bryce (1972:93) suggests that temporary systems exhibit

several characteristics which distinguish them from permanent

systems. These characteristics include: (1) a sense of finite

time; (2) a perceived sense of mission on the part of the

participants; (3) a membership drawn from the ongoing system;

(4) a situation where the members' roles would not be established

by precedent. The distinctions made between temporary and permanent

systems indicate the great difference in the dynamics of each system.

A temporary system, at its conception, during its life span, and in

its results differs greatly from a permanent system. Miles (1964:

452-478) describes the unique attributes of temporary systems under the following headings: input characteristics, process character- istics, and output characteristics.

Input Characteristics

Miles (1964:452-457) identifies the following initial defining features of the temporary systems: (1) the participants expect the group to end at some juncture; (2) the goals of the group are defined so as to limit the range of content addressed by the group; (3) membership in the group is limited to a defined category of people; (4) new entries to the group are generally discouraged; and (5) the activities of the group are set apart, both physically and socially, from the ongoing structure to which the group is attached.

Life span. The termination of the group or an individual member's participation in the group is envisaged by the participants in the group from the outset. The shorter the duration of the group, the more keenly felt is the knowledge that the group will end. Participants in a one day conference will have a more intense feeling of time than would participants in a group such as a group of school children who see their involvement extending over a protracted length of time. The heightened awareness of time which is a feature of temporary systems creates a sense of urgency and intensity which is not noted in permanent systems.

Goals. Miles (1964:453) points out that the range of content that the temporary system addresses itself to is limited far

more than the range of content addressed in the ongoing permanent system. This narrowing of the goals of the temporary system, he notes, reduces the anxiety associated with achieving the goals and increases the probability of their successful attainment.

Membership. The membership of a temporary system is limited to a well defined group of people (Miles, 1964:453). The boundaries of the temporary system are generally well defined, and tend to be closed to new entrants. The degree to which this is true depends on the particular temporary system. Those systems which last for shorter periods of time tend to be more closed while those which are longer in time span tend to be more open. The maintenance of a relatively closed boundary minimizes the socialization problems which would occur with a constantly changing cadre of people.

Group isolation. Miles (1964:454) suggests that the participants in temporary systems are likely to be separated socially and at times physically from the ongoing permanent system. This feature of temporary systems is beneficial to the operation of the group, to the individual operating within the group, and as well to the permanent organization to which the group is attached.

Group size. Miles (1964:456) views size as an important input characteristic of temporary systems. He argues that the fewer the number of participants in a temporary system the greater is the chance of change taking place.

The input characteristics, described by Miles, provide the setting in which the uniqueness of the temporary system may be

displayed. In the operation of a temporary system certain features occur which seem to be applicable to all temporary systems. These features will be discussed under the heading of process characteristics.

Process Characteristics

Miles (1964:457) discussed the operation of temporary systems under the following process characteristic headings: (1) time use, (2) goal redefinition, (3) the use of procedures, (4) role definition, (5) communication and power structures, (6) sentiments, and (7) normative beliefs.

Time use. Time assumes a greater importance in the minds of the participants of a temporary system than would normally be the case in a permanent system. The focus of their work seems much more intense resulting in increased pressure on the participants to complete their task in a shorter length of time. Miles (1964:459) notes that two other time related effects occur in a temporary system. The participants tend to develop distorted perceptions of elapsed time. This would be more so in the case of purer forms of temporary systems such as human relations training conferences. As well the pace of the work in a temporary system changes during the course of the systems life. Initially the level of work is low. However, when the end of the system is more clearly perceived by the participants the level of work and output increases dramatically.

Goal redefinition. Although the goals of a temporary system may be more or less explicitly stated at the inception of the

group a process of goal redefinition takes place. This process is essential to the development of a cohesive and committed group. Participants must strike a relationship with each other in order for goal redefinition to occur. Once this occurs the participants become aware of the degree to which they share common goals and begin to develop some previously unthought of group goals. This process of goal redefinition, Miles argues, must occur for the group to be successful. Miles (1964:462) states: "The net effect of goal redefinition is that the person becomes fully engaged or 'engrossed' ... in the world of the temporary system".

The end result of the goal redefinition process is that the work output of the system is much greater than would be expected in a permanent system.

Procedures. Temporary systems adhere closely to accepted order of events and common practice. The adherence to procedures promotes the predictability, controllability, and compellingness of the system. Miles (1964:464) cites the example of a game as a case where the procedures or 'rules of the game' delimit the behaviour of the participants and at the same time allow each participant to know what to expect. Miles (1964:464) notes that the adherence of participants in temporary systems to procedures contributes strongly to the usefulness of temporary systems to produce innovation.

Role redefinition. Participants in temporary systems are freed from the normal role obligations of permanent systems. The freedom from the restrictions of role allows the individual the option of experimenting with new roles in a relatively risk-free setting. In

turn the experimentation with new role behaviours teaches the
individual effective behaviours for the temporary system for the
short term and in the long term for the permanent system from where
he came.

Communication and power structures. The existence of a
temporary system seems to promote communication among the participants
in the system to a greater degree than would be the case in a
permanent system. Miles (1964:467) observes the following factors
which promote increased communication: (1) communication tends to
be restricted to within the group; (2) as role barriers from the
permanent system are broken down new channels of communication are
developed between participants; (3) as more information is shared
the participants become more trusting of others in the group,
resulting in increased communication; (4) with the development of
equal status relationships individuals are not seen as having the
right to withhold information which they ordinarily would have in
permanent systems.

Associated with increased communication is the notion of
equal status relationships. Equal status relationships define the
power structure towards which temporary systems seem to evolve. Miles
(1964:469) cites several examples which describe the power struggle
which occurs until the group can assert its will over the strongest
member of the group. The group, then, seeks consensus rather than
deferring to the opinion of members whose status outside the group
is higher than other members.

Closely allied to Miles' concept of communication and power

structures is Goodman and Goodman's (1976:498) concept of a "blurred role" model. In a study of a theatrical company, Goodman and Goodman found that in the initial stages of a temporary group a blurred-role model helped ensure greater utilization of human resources, and increased professional growth. Goodman and Goodman also advance the belief that this type of role promotes innovation.

A blurred role model is one in which the participants are allowed to be responsible for a wide range of tasks which results in the overlapping and changing of responsibilities of the various participants in the temporary system. This type of role model is in sharp contrast to a role-clarity model in which each participant's role is clearly defined and unchangeable.

Sentiments. Participants in temporary systems will develop various predictable sentiments towards the group. Initially the participants are defensive towards the group. Once a spirit of trust is developed a more spontaneous atmosphere develops where risk taking is possible. As the temporary system develops individuals in the group become more intimate with and accepting of each other. This development of a liking for each other results in what Miles (1964: 472) labels an "esprit de corps".

Normative beliefs. A final feature of the process of temporary systems about which Miles speaks is the existence of a set of normative beliefs which the participants possess concerning the temporary system in which they are operating. Miles (1964:473-476) identifies six norms which seem to operate in temporary systems.

The members of a temporary system believe in egalitarianism.

That is, rather than accepting the hierarchical relationships found in permanent organizations participants feel that each member in the group should have equal status within the group.

A second norm is the belief in the authenticity of others in the group. Members value the honest expression of feelings and ideas. Trust is seen as vitally important.

A third norm detected in temporary systems is the belief in the creative problem solving mode of group work. There is a tendency for the group to develop new solutions for problems rather than rely on old ones.

Miles names a fourth norm of temporary groups "hypothetical-ity". Members of temporary groups place a high value on experimental hypothetical solutions to problems.

Related closely to the third and fourth norms is a norm Miles (1964:475) refers to as "newism". Participants in temporary systems tend to favour change for its own sake rather than adopting old solutions. In this manner members of the group protect each other from nonmembers who are opposed to change and who might criticize the decisions of the group.

The last normative belief, Miles finds characteristic of temporary systems is the belief in the merit of investing much effort on the part of the members in accomplishing the task of the group. Participants expect others in the group to work seriously and expend much effort.

From Miles' discussion of temporary systems and their process characteristics, it is apparent that they develop features which are quite distinct from those of permanent organizations. The degree to

which temporary systems exhibit these process characteristics

relates directly to the success of the group and its output.

Output Characteristics

Miles (1964:476) identifies three output characteristics of

temporary systems: (1) change in individual participants'

attitudes, knowledge, or behaviour; (2) changes in the pre-existing

relationships in the ongoing permanent organization; (3) agreement

on the course of action.

Participant change. Miles notes that changes in the

attitudes, knowledge or behaviour of participants is an important

outcome of temporary systems. The intensity of the temporary

system induces change of individual conduct and outlook in a much

more dramatic fashion than is apparent in a permanent system. As the

temporary system demands a greater intensity of effort and work,

individuals tend to become much more involved, and as a result are

better able to acquire more knowledge. Moreover, they become

disposed, in such a situation, to foster new attitudes towards their

co-participants and the permanent organization to which they are

attached.

Pre-existing relationships. A second outcome of temporary

systems is the change in relationships which occurs as the members of

the temporary system re-enter the permanent system. Miles notes that

the changes which occur during the course of temporary systems are

quite durable. The feelings of camaraderie evidenced in temporary

systems carried through to the permanent system from which the

participants came.

Agreement on action. A third outcome of a temporary system is agreement among participants to proceed with some course of action. This agreement may involve simply actions on the part of individuals or it may involve the extensive restructuring of the permanent organization to which the temporary system is attached.

Miles' description of the outputs of a temporary system points to the far reaching effects such a system can have on the permanent ongoing organization. Dramatic changes may occur in participants' behaviours, in the structure of the organization and in the goals of the organization.

Dysfunctions of Temporary Systems

A word of caution has been advanced concerning temporary systems. Hopkirk (1977:42) notes: "Temporary systems, like any organizational form, are fraught with dysfunctional aspects, some of these resulting from the 'temporariness' of the system". Miles (1964:480-481) cites input overload and unrealistic goal setting as two dysfunctional characteristics of temporary systems. Janis (Hopkirk, 1977:43) cites the phenomenon of "groupthink" as a characteristic dysfunction of temporary systems. Janis 1972:9) states: "Groupthink refers to an abbreviation of mental efficiency reality testing, and moral judgement that results from ingroup pressures". It is important to recognize that the norms which govern temporary systems can produce the "groupthink" type of decisions which may not be reasonable in nature.

Leadership of Temporary Systems

Farqhuar (1973:517) suggests that the dynamics of temporary systems require special management skills not needed in permanent systems. He points out that the leader of a temporary system is not ascribed the hierarchical status common to permanent organizations. As a result the leader must gain credibility and the support of the group on his own merits. The leader of a temporary system requires special human relations skills in order to develop an atmosphere of cooperation and commitment, essential ingredients for success. Moreover, the leader must assess the capabilities of group members and be able to rally group members to his point of view quickly.

Added to these special human relations skills required of a leader of a temporary system are what Farqhuar refers to as integration skills. The leader must so deploy the members of the group that maximum efficiency is achieved. As well, he must assure that the needs of individuals and the demands of the project are in harmony. Further, he must integrate the project efforts with the efforts of the permanent organization so that the product of the temporary system is compatible with the goals of the ongoing organization.

Keith (1978:196) adds that an individual correlate of a temporary system has the greater amount of role strain associated with a temporary system. This too must be taken into account by the leader.

It may be concluded that a major problem associated with temporary systems is the ability of the leader to adapt to the special

circumstances of the situation.

INTERORGANIZATIONAL LINKAGES

An important aspect of the theory related to temporary
systems is the nature of the bond between the temporary system and
the permanent organization to which it is attached. Hillis (1973:37)
states:

> Probably the most debilitating problem associated with temporary
> systems is the problem of the relationships with the permanent
> system. It does little good for a temporary system to develop
> an approach or solution if the product has little chance of
> adoption by the permanent system.

The nature of the relationship between a parent-school group
and the school as an ongoing permanent organization is critical to
the success of the parent-school group. Only with the presence of
an acceptable relationship can the temporary system induce change in
the permanent ongoing system.

The relationship which allows organizations to interact,
Marrett labels as interorganizational linkage, Marrett (Andrews,
1978:2) suggests that there exist four dimensions of interorganiza-
tional linkage. These dimensions include: (1) the degree of
formalization; (2) the degree of intensity; (3) the degree of
reciprocity; (4) the degree of standardization.

Degree of Formalization

The degree of formalization of the linkage refers to the
extent to which the terms of the relationship between the organizations
is explicitly stated. Some organizations are relatively informal in
their relations with other organizations while other organizations

have the terms of the linkage clearly delimited in contract or by
law.

Degree of Intensity

Marrett suggests that the degree of intensity of the
interaction between two organizations is measurable by the frequency
of interaction between the two systems and the amount of resource
commitment by each of the participants. In the case of a linkage
in which there exists little interaction between the two systems,
there appears to be little chance of either system affecting the
others' processes. Consequently, the products of the two systems may
not be compatible, and the members of one system will have a limited
opportunity to understand the thoughts, feelings, and aspirations of
members of the other system. In the case where there exists more
interaction between the two systems there seems to be a good
possibility that each of the systems will affect the processes of
the other. As a result the products of the two systems will more
likely be compatible and the members of each system will have a
better understanding of each other.

The second indicator of the intensity of the linkage is the
amount of resource commitment agreed to by the two organizations
being linked. Where the two organizations do not commit many
resources, it may be argued that the value of the linkage is not a
priority, and that neither organization intends to influence the work
of the other. Where the resource commitment is high, it may be
argued that the value of the linkage between the two organizations
is seen as a high priority. With more commitment on the part of the

two organizations each has a greater stake in the outcomes of the other group.

Degree of Reciprocity

A third dimension of interorganizational linkage suggested by Marrett is the degree of reciprocity exhibited by the two organizations. Reciprocity refers to the extent of acceptance of the legitimacy of one organization by the members of the second organization. Marrett (Andrews, 1978:6) identifies two components of reciprocity: resource reciprocity and definitional reciprocity. Resource reciprocity refers to the extent to which resources are exchanged between the two organizations. Definitional reciprocity refers to the extent to which the terms of the relationship are agreed to by each of the organizations involved. The strength of a linkage between two organizations depends, in part, on the degree of recriprocity between them.

Degree of Standardization

The degree of standardization refers to the degree to which the organizations involved agree to adopt common procedures and methods in order to simplify the linkage between the two groups.

From Marrett's description of interorganizational linkages it may be noted that there are several indicators of the strength of linkage between organizations. These indicators offer the possibility of determining the propensity of two interacting organizations having an effect on each other.

The theories related to temporary systems and inter-organizational linkages lend themselves to the analysis of parent-

school groups. The balance of this chapter will include a description of parent-school groups and an application of the theories on temporary systems and interorganizational linkages to their function.

PARENT-SCHOOL GROUPS

Parent-school groups vary in size, purpose and complexity. Typically, though, they consist of elected or volunteered parents who have children attending the school, the school principal, and one or more staff representatives. The group becomes active each year at school commencement and suspends its activities at the conclusion of the school term. Despite new school years and new parent-school groups it is common for many parents to serve on the school committee for several years in succession.

Gittell (1979:46) indicates that there are essentially three types of tasks in which a parent-school group might become involved. The tasks may be service orientated, advisory in nature, or serve an advocacy function. A service function would involve the parent-school group in the organization of events helping the school fulfill its educational mission. An advisory function would involve the parents in offering their point of view in relation to school programs and procedures. The advocacy function is a political strategy, employed when the group decides to initiate some action with an objective in mind over which there are conflicting points of view.

The three functions referred to by Gittell define the types of aims possible for parent-school groups. Individual groups may pursue one of these functions or they may pursue two or three of them concurrently. The success of the parent-school group in the pursuit of these aims is hinged on the dynamics of the group. If the dynamics of the group can be analyzed from the perspective of a temporary system then some indicators of success might be found.

Parent-School Groups As Temporary Systems

The initial characteristics of a parent-school group can be demonstrated to match the input characteristics of a temporary system as described by Miles. Table II lists the input characteristics of the temporary system and the corresponding initial characteristics of a parent-school group.

Life span. Miles (1964:452) notes that the chief input characteristic of a temporary system is the perception on the part of the group's members that the group will terminate at some point in time. This feature is also true of parent-school groups. It is the understanding of the parents who are members in the group that their participation in the group will end at a given point in time. This termination may be at the end of the school year, at the attainment of some objective, or at the juncture when the member's child leaves the school. For whatever reason the parent clearly perceives an end to his involvement in the group.

Goals. The goals of temporary systems are narrower than the goals of the permanent system to which they are attached. This is

Table II

Comparison of Temporary System Input Character-
istics and Expected Initial Characteristics of
Parent-School Groups

Concept	Temporary System	Parent-School Group
Life span	the termination of the group is seen at the outset	parents see their involvement in the group ending when their children leave the school
Goals	goals are more limited than in a permanent system	parents limit them-selves to the enhancement of the learning process
Membership	membership is well defined and the inclusion of new-comers is generally discouraged	members are elected or selected once each year
Group isolation	the group is isolated socially and at times physically from the ongoing permanent system	groups typically meet at night when regular activity has ceased
Group size	the amount of output expected in the group depends on how small the group is	parent-school groups tend to be small

also true for parent-school groups. They tend to limit their
scope at activity to a portion of the total educational process.
They address only a limited range of the goals attended to by the
school.

Membership. Temporary systems limit membership to a well
defined group of people to which the inclusion of additional members
is generally discouraged. The membership requirements of parent-
school groups in non-community schools usually restrict membership
to those people who have children currently attending the school.
Although schools often have an open door policy in regards to new
members, in fact, parents are usually asked to volunteer at an
initial meeting organized early in the school year and tend to have
little new membership throughout the school year.

Group isolation. Temporary systems typically are isolated
socially and at times physically from the ongoing permanent system.
Parent-school groups as well tend to be isolated from the ongoing
workings of the school. They usually meet when students are not in
classes and have little communication with the majority of teachers
on staff. In this manner they are isolated themselves from the
ongoing business of the school.

Group size. Miles (1964:456) suggests that there seems to
be a relationship between the size of the system and the amount of
change resulting from that system. If temporary systems are large,
Miles notes, they tend to subdivide in order to accomplish their
task. Parent-school groups tend to average under fifteen parents.

In groups whose membership is larger than this number the group usually forms some type of subgrouping such as an executive committee.

From the comparison of the input characteristics of temporary systems and the initial characteristics of parent-school groups it is evident that they are similar in nature. Parent-school groups can be viewed as temporary systems. This is not to say that the parent-school group is a temporary system to the same extent as a T-group or a conference. Nevertheless, parent-school groups are systems in which parents or, as Miles would say, clients--perceive a termination point for their involvement in the group. This point may not be within a short span of time for some parents. Parents might be members for a number of successive years depending on how long their children remain in the school. The parent school-group is a less pure form of a temporary system to the extent that only the parent participants perceive it as a temporary system and as well the life span of the group is a fairly extended one.

It may also be argued that parent-school groups commence and terminate their activities each year. A new committee is formed at the beginning of the school term and the work of the committee is stopped at the end of the school term. The cyclical process that parent-school groups go through seems to start and stop the system, even though all the members in the group might not change.

The processes of parent-school groups may be analyzed by the process characteristics described by Miles. The dynamics of a parent-school group can be viewed as the dynamics of a temporary

system.

SUMMARY

The literature relating to the theory on temporary systems and interorganizational linkages has been reviewed in this chapter. This body of literature was then related to parent-school groups.

Temporary systems are groups in which the members perceive at the outset that the group will end at some juncture. Bryce (1972:93) suggests that the defining characteristics of a temporary system are the following: (1) a sense of finite time; (2) a perceived sense of mission on the part of the participants; (3) a membership drawn from the ongoing system; (4) a situation where the members roles are not established by precedent.

Miles (1964) describes temporary systems in terms of input, process and output characteristics. Input characteristics include the following: the participants expect the group to end at some juncture; the goals of the group are defined so as to limit the range of content addressed by the group; membership in the group is well defined; the group is isolated from the ongoing permanent organization to which it is attached.

Temporary systems exhibit process features which differ from the dynamics of permanent ongoing organizations. These different processes include: time use, goal redefinition, the use of procedures, role definition, communication and power structures, sentiments, and normative beliefs.

Miles (1964:476) describes three output characteristics of temporary systems. These include: change in the attitudes of

individual participants; changes in the pre-existing relationships in the ongoing permanent organization; agreement on the course of action.

The topic of interorganizational linkage was reviewed due to its importance to the relationship of parent-school groups and the schools. Marrett (Andrews, 1978:2) offers four dimensions of interorganizational linkage: the degree of formalization; the degree of intensity; the degree of reciprocity; the degree of standardization.

Parent-school groups were compared to their input characteristics of temporary systems. It was determined that parent-school groups exhibited the input characteristics of temporary systems. It was therefore asserted that parent-school groups were forms of temporary systems and as such their processes and outcomes could be analyzed from the temporary systems perspective.

The following chapter will describe how this relation between temporary systems and parent-school groups was tested.

Chapter 4

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

In this chapter the conceptual framework and research
methodology will be presented. Included in the chapter are the
following: a restatement of the problem; a rationale for the study;
the development of a conceptual framework; a description of the
research questions; a description of the study population; a
description of the research instruments; a summary of data collection
methods and procedures for data analysis; the timetable for the
study.

RESTATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The problem which this study addresses is sketched in
question form as follows. Are the criteria necessary for an
effective temporary system and effective intersystem linkage evident
in successful parent-school groups?

RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

As discussed in Chapter 1 parent involvement in the education
of their children has long been an expressed goal of educators. As
parent involvement in the education process is of such great
significance, it seemed appropriate that a systematic inquiry into
the factors which contribute to the successful involvement of parents
should be undertaken. With this basic premise, the rationale and

conceptual framework for this study was developed from the following themes: the importance of home-school interaction; the findings of research concerning the dynamics of parent-school groups; the relevance of temporary systems theory to parent-school groups; the relevance of interorganizational theory to parent-school groups.

Importance of Home-School
Interaction

As discussed previously there appear to be three recurring reasons for reviewing parent involvement with some importance. First, the school as a social institution has a responsibility to support the family in this era of increasing pressure on the family. Second, the involvement of parents in the school contributes to the support of the school and its programs. Third, the involvement of parents in school has a beneficial effect on student learning.

Parent-School Group Dynamics

Parent-school groups, both in terms of a symbolic and in terms of actual interaction, promote the increased involvement on the part of all parents in the school. Their presence in a school signifies a fairly open environment in which communication flourishes. On the other hand, their absence signifies a closed environment in which two-way communication is greatly hampered.

As discussed in Chapter 2 in spite of the literature which demonstrates the importance of parent involvement in the school, there has been a tremendous lack of research into the dynamics of parent-school groups.

Temporary Systems Perspective

The review of the literature dealing with parent involvement in schools provided no theoretical perspective from which parent-school groups could be analyzed. For this reason the literature emanating from the social sciences was surveyed to find an appropriate model on which an analysis of parent-school groups could be based. As a result, the temporary systems theory was selected to analyze parent-school groups. As discussed in Chapter 3, a temporary system is one in which the participants in the group recognize that the group or their participation in the group will end at some juncture.

In Chapter 3 it was demonstrated that there is a close correspondence between temporary systems and parent-school groups. Based on the similarities between Miles' description of temporary system input features and the initial features of parent-school groups it is concluded that parent-school groups can be viewed as temporary systems.

If parent-school groups are indeed temporary systems, then it would follow that parent-school groups should also exhibit the process and output characteristics which Miles (1964) identifies as features of a temporary system.

The correspondence between temporary systems and parent school groups in relation to the processes evident in both is presented in Table III.

Interorganizational Linkage
Perspective

Parent-school groups exist as temporary systems linked to

permanent organizations, the schools. The terms of reference which a parent-school group assumes are related to the permanent organization, the school. It may be reasoned, then, that a key element in the success of a parent-school group is the strength of the attachment between the parent-school group and the school. Where there is a high degree of attachment evidenced between the two systems, it may be expected that there would be a greater likelihood that the two systems would have a high degree of impact on each other.

Table III

Comparison of Selected Temporary System Process
Characteristics and Expected Process Character-
istics of Parent-School Groups

Concept	Temporary System	Parent-School Group
Communication and power structure	Communication among the participants is increased and equal status relationships are developed	Communication among the group increases and each member is treated equally
Sentiments	Members develop an "esprit de corps"	Members of Parent Committee would be expected to feel high degree of satisfaction want to stay with the group

Marrett (Andrews, 1978:3) proposed the following four dimensions of interorganizational linkages:

(1) Degree of formalization

(2) Degree of intensity

(3) Degree of reciprocity

(4) Degree of standardization

For the purposes of the study the degree of intensity and the degree of reciprocity were selected as appropriate indicators of the strength of the interorganizational linkage. Marrett (Andrews, 1978:5) suggested that the degree of intensity of the interaction between two organizations is measurable by the frequency of inter-action between the two systems and the amount of resources committed to the linkage by the members of each system. She (Andrews, 1978:5) suggested that reciprocity of the linkage referred to the extent to which the members of each system accept the legitimacy of the other system.

From the research dealing with interorganizational linkages, it is apparent that the degree of intensity of the linkage and the degree of reciprocity of the linkage are indicators of the strength of the interorganizational linkage and the effect each system has on the other.

The degree of formalization is not easily applied to the present study for there exist no differences in law in the relation-ship of individual parent-school groups to their respective schools in Manitoba. As well, group constitutions do not seem to result in greater formality and of the relationship between schools and their parent school groups.

The degree of standardization is not easily applied to the present study. The nature of the two organizations under study does not require any attempts to standardize the internal procedures of

each of the organizations.

The two selected dimensions of the theory of interorganizational linkages are useful in the analysis of the relationship between the parent-school group and the school as the permanent ongoing organization. Table IV compares the dimension of interorganizational linkages and its application to the parent-school group's relationship with the school.

Table IV

Comparison of Interorganizational Linkage
Characteristics and the Expected
Relationship Characteristics of
Successful Parent-School
Groups and Schools

Dimension	Interorganizational Linkage Characteristics	Application to Parent-School Groups
(1) Reciprocity	acceptance of the legitimacy of other system	the extent to which teachers accept the role of the parent group in the school
(2) Intensity	frequency of interaction	how often do the members of the parent group interact with the teachers
	resource commitment	how much energy is spent in maintaining the link

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In the rationale for this study, it has been argued that parent-school groups are temporary systems from the point of view of the parent participants. It has also been argued that the impact

which parent-school groups have on the school can be analyzed by using the conceptual framework of interorganizational linkages.

If parent-school groups are temporary systems linked to a permanent organization, the school, then the dynamics of parent-school groups can be analyzed by the process characteristics found in temporary systems and the chances for impact on the school can be analyzed by the two dimensions of linkage discussed.

This study focussed its attention on five successful parent-school groups. In a cross-sectional method, these groups were analyzed to determine whether or not they exhibited the features of temporary systems and interorganizational linkages.

The nature of the study precluded some of the process characteristics discussed in the literature dealing with temporary systems. Those characteristics would be identifiable only if a longitudinal study was undertaken. Due to resource constraints placed on this study, a longitudinal study was not undertaken. As well, it was felt that a longitudinal approach to assessment of parent-school groups generally would prove to be overly cumbersome and time consuming. Therefore, the approach used in this study would be of greater benefit to future studies.

Selected Characteristics

Two process characteristics were selected from the temporary systems theory and applied to this study: communication and power structure; sentiments. Two characteristics were derived from Marrett's theory of interorganizational linkage: the degree of intensity, the degree of reciprocity.

Communication and power structure refer to the amount of information shared among members of a temporary system and as well to the status each member gains in the group. Miles (1964:465) notes that temporary systems encourage increased communication flows among participants and as a result equal status relationships tend to develop.

The sentiments developed in a temporary system indicated that members develop strong attachments to others in the group. Miles characterized this phenomenon as "Esprit de Corps".

The degree of reciprocity refers to the amount of acceptance of the role of other organizations by the members of both organizations.

The degree of intensity refers to the amount of interaction and resources committed to the linkage by both groups.

The characteristics chosen and their application to parent-school groups are presented in Table V.

In order to determine whether or not these characteristics were identifiable in successful parent-school groups, research questions were posed. These questions were related to the various features of temporary systems and interorganizational linkages which the researcher chose to employ. These questions were then answered through three data collection techniques: interview; questionnaire; observation.

Research Questions

This study was guided by the use of research questions. Three questions were posed. These were each divided into two

Table V

Relationships of Theoretical Indicators to Factors
to be Analyzed to Data Collection Methods

Theoretical Indicator of Success	Parent–School Group Feature to be Analyzed	Data Collection Method

Communication and Power Structure	format of meeting
	– the amount of participa-
	  tion in the group by
	  members
	
	– status determinants
	  within the group
		interview
		
		observation

Sentiments	amount of attachment of members to the group	interview questionnaire
Interorganizational Linkages		
Degree of Reciprocity	amount of acceptance of home–school group function by school staff teacher role and visa--versa	questionnaire
Degree of Intensity	frequency of teachers and committee interaction and the amount of resources committed	questionnaire interview

further sub-questions. The research questions and sub-questions used in the study are as follows:

1. Do successful parent-school groups exhibit a high degree of perceived goal attainment?

1.1 Is there a high degree of success exhibited in the achievement of stated objectives?

1.2 Do the members of the parent-school group perceive their efforts to be successful?

2. Do the members of successful parent-school groups feel a high degree of attachment toward the group?

2.1 Does the principal facilitate equal status relationship within the group?

2.2 Why do the parents maintain an affiliation toward the group?

3. Do successful parent-school groups exhibit a strong linkage to the school?

3.1 Can the intensity of the linkage be characterized as being high?

3.2 Can the reciprocity of the linkage be character-ized as being high?

POPULATION OF THE STUDY

The parent-school groups chosen for this study are attached to schools which form a part of a suburban Winnipeg School Division. In the 1981-82 school year, this division enrolled approximately 13,000 students in twenty-eight schools and employed approximately 700 professional staff. Professional staff includes

full and part-time teachers, principals and vice-principals and
central office professionals. The schools selected for the purposes
of this study will be called schools #1, #2, #3, #4, #5. These
schools were chosen because they were identified by a division
superintendent as having successful parent-school groups. Their
June 30th enrollment and professional staff compliment is shown in
Table VI.

Table VI

School Enrollments and Units of Professional
Staff for 1980-81 School Year

School	June 30, 1981 Enrollment	Units of Professional Staff*
#1	188	9.2
#2	109	8.3
#3	652	30.0
#4	766	40.2
#5	224	12.3

*The unit of staff does not correspond one to one with the
actual number of teachers employed as some may be part-time.

The numbers of parents who participated in their parent-
school groups is shown in Table VII.

In smaller schools, principals were asked to have the total
(full and part-time teachers) staff complete the questionnaire for
teachers. In larger schools a figure of ten questionnaires
representing a 30% sample was agreed upon by the principals. The
number of teachers asked to complete questionnaires and the number
who returned the questionnaire are presented in Table VIII.

Table VII

Questionnaire Response Rate of Parent Participants

School	Number of Parent Members	Number of Parents Who Returned Questionnaires
#1	12	9
#2	6	5
#3	8	8
#4	10	8
#5	6	4
Total	42	34

Table VIII

Questionnaire Response Rate of Teachers

Name of School	Number of Teachers Asked	Number of Returned Questionnaires
1	7	6
2	10	8
3	10	7
4	10	9
5	8	7
Total	45	38

RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

Three data gathering procedures were employed in this study:
the personal interview, the questionnaire and direct observation.
The following is a description of each of these methods used.

The Interview

A personal interview was conducted with the principal of
each of the five schools studied. The interview was held with four
of the principals in their respective offices during school time.
In the case of the fifth principal, the interview was held, by his
request, at a restaurant at eight o'clock in the morning over
breakfast.

The interview was designed to elicit the following
information: (1) background information concerning the school,
(2) details of the principal's career, (3) a description of the
make-up and operation of the parent-school committee. Information
gained from the interview was used in the description of each
school and parent-school group. As well, the interview provided
information to answer question 2.1. That question dealt with the
principal's influence on the decision-making process of the parent-
school group.

The researcher conducted the interviews by asking each
principal the same questions from a prepared list of questions. The
interview session was taped. The researcher took care not to
express opinions during the course of the interviews. The tapes
were later studied and the relevant information recorded. A list of
the questions employed is included in Appendix A.

The Questionnaire

Two separate questionnaires were prepared for this study. One questionnaire was designed for parents and one for teachers. Each of these questionnaires was divided into two parts; the first part was aimed at the specific group and the second part was identical in each. It was designed so that parent and teacher opinions over the importance and degree of implementation of various parent-school group functions could be compared. The Questionnaire for Parents is included in Appendix B. The Questionnaire for Teachers is included in Appendix C.

The Questionnaire for Parents was constructed to gather the following information: (1) some biographical detail, (2) the length of involvement which the parent felt they would have in the group, (3) any comment the parent wished to make concerning parent-school groups. Information obtained from the Questionnaire for Parents was used to answer several of the research questions. Those questions included: question 1.2, questions 2.1 and 2.2, questions 3.1 and 3.2.

The Questionnaire for Parents was distributed by the researcher at the parent-school group meetings which he attended. Both an explanation of the Questionnaire and a letter seeking cooperation in completing the Questionnaire were given to the parents at these meetings. The parents were requested both verbally and in the letter, to return the completed Questionnaire to the office as soon as possible. The researcher's postal address was included in the letter in case a parent did not wish to send the Questionnaire to the school office. Where the researcher was unable to attend a

meeting of the parent-school group, the principals involved sent
the Questionnaire and accompanying letter home to the parent members
of the parent-school group.

The initial return rate of the Questionnaire was low. To
help increase the returns the principals were asked to remind
parents to return the Questionnaire. In order to help remind
parents to return the Questionnaires lists of parent members were
obtained from three of the schools. In a fourth school, the
principal declined to provide phone numbers but undertook instead
to contact parent members in order to encourage them to return
their Questionnaires. In the fifth school, the principal phoned
the parent members for the researcher. A second form was sent to
those parents who had not completed the initial questionnaire. All
the returned Questionnaires were then used in the study. Of the 42
parents surveyed 34 returned their questionnaire.

The Questionnaire for Teachers was constructed to gather
the following information: (1) some biographical detail, (2) the
type and extent of the involvement the teacher had with the parent-
school group, (3) opinions of the teacher concerning the value of
having a parent-school group. Information obtained from the
Questionnaire for Teachers was used to answer both sub-questions of
Research Question #3.

The Questionnaire for Teachers was distributed through the
school principals to their respective staffs. The principals felt
hesitant about distributing the Questionnaire to all staff because
they felt that a good number of staff had little experience with the

parent-school group. As well, they were concerned with the amount
of paper work which teachers had and did not want to add too much
more. In the larger schools, it was agreed that a sample of the
teachers to a maximum of ten,and preferably those with some
experience with the parent committee, would be given Questionnaires.
The Questionnaires were accompanied by a letter similar to the
letter attached to the Questionnaire for Parents. It encouraged
the teacher to complete and return the Questionnaire either to the
school or directly to the researcher. The help of the principals
facilitated the return of the Questionnaires. Second Questionnaires
were sent out to the teachers in schools where there appeared to be
low returns. Some teachers were approached directly by the
researcher in school staff rooms. Of 45 teachers asked 38 returned
questionnaires. All of the returned forms were used in the
findings of the study.

The Observation

Meetings of the parent-school groups were observed in order
to collect information about the decision-making process in each
group. The researcher was able to observe meetings in three of the
five schools studied. One school scheduled no meeting during the
data collection period of the study and the second parent-school
group chose not to have their meetings observed.

The meetings attended by the researcher were all held in the
evening and the parents were aware before hand that an observer
would be present. The explanation of my presence was deliberately
vague. The meetings were observed with a special effort made to be

as unobtrusive as possible. The observer positioned himself away
from the group. Notes were made of the various topics covered,
the manner in which decisions were made and the principal's style of
interaction in the group.

The observation of the meetings was designed to gather
information to answer Research Question 2.1. That question dealt
with the manner in which the principal facilitated equal status
relationships.

<div align="center">VALIDITY, RELIABILITY AND OBJECTIVITY</div>

Efforts were made to assure the validity, reliability and
objectivity of the data gathering procedures.

Validity

Validity refers to how well a test or other information
gathering instrument measures what it purports to measure (Dalen,
1962:264). This definition is similar to the definition of validity
offered by Fox who states, "Validity is defined as the extent to
which the procedure actually accomplishes what it seeks to
accomplish or measures what it seeks to measure" (Fox, 1969:367).

Great care was taken to construct valid information gather-
ing instruments. After considerable editing, the Questionnaires
were reviewed by persons familiar with the design of Questionnaire
instruments. After a further revision, the Questionnaires were
submitted to several teachers in the field for their comments and
revision. The interview schedule for principals was prepared in a
similar manner. Care was taken to tape record answers so that

human recording error at the time of the interview could be
eliminated. Care was taken as well to formulate a clear plan for
the observation of parent-school group meetings. The observation
process was discussed with a person knowledgeable in observation
techniques well in advance.

Reliability

Reliability refers to the dependability of an instrument to
measure what it purports to measure (Wiseman, 1968:5). That is,
has the research been conducted in such a manner that one may
assume that similar results may be obtained if the research were to
be repleted with other populations?

The research design was non-statistical in nature. Therefore,
no analysis was performed to determine statistically the reliability
of the data collected. Other than having successful parent-school
groups, the sample population chosen was deemed to be representa-
tive of an urban population. As well, the data collecting
instruments were designed so as to eliminate as much judgement in
the data collection process as possible.

Objectivity

Fox (1969:380) defines objectivity as "the extent to which
the data obtained are a function of what is being measured". That
is, how closely to what actually exists does the collected data
reflect. To what extent does the observer or interviewer, by his
point of view sway the data obtained.

The data is more likely to be less objective when the data
collector plays an active role in the determination of the data.

Similarly, the data will be less objective if written instructions tend to suggest the content of the response.

The following precautions were taken to ensure that the data were as objective as possible.

1. Interviews were conducted using a schedule of questions. No debate or argument was entered into. The principals were interviewed at their convenience and an effort was made to set them at ease.

2. Questionnaires were written with care so as not to suggest a particular response. Further, as indicated previously, they were checked against a reference group.

3. Care was taken during observation sessions to be as unobstrusive as possible. Similar items were watched for in each meeting and noted in writing.

TIMETABLE OF STUDY

The data collection period spanned the months of April, May and June 1981. The following represent significant dates in the data collection process.

1. March 1981--A superintendent of the school division under study was contacted on the researcher's behalf by G. Nicholls, Superintendent of the Seven Oaks School Division. The nature of the study was explained and a request was made for the names of five schools which had successful parent-school groups.

2. April 14, 1981--The principals of the five schools were

phoned and personal interviews were arranged.

    3. April 27 to May, June 9, 1981--Parent Committee
meetings were observed in this period.

    4. April 14 to June 12, 1981--The questionnaires to
parents and to teachers were distributed and collected.

    5. July to September 1981--The findings were tabulated.

    6. September 1981 to April 1982--The findings were
analyzed.

SUMMARY

This study attempted to answer the following research
question: Are the criteria necessary for an effective temporary
system and effective intersystem linkage evident in successful
parent-school groups?

This study was deemed necessary because of the importance
of increased home-school interaction. Three areas of importance
are found in the literature: (1) the need to help the family as
an institution, (2) the development of parent support for the
school, (3) the beneficial effect increased parent involvement has
on learning.

The study was based on temporary systems theory and
interorganizational linkage theory. Based on these two theories,
several characteristics of parent-school groups were analyzed to
determine whether or not they corresponded to a temporary system.
These included: communication and power structure; sentiments; the
belief in egalitarianism. As well, the parent-school group
was analyzed within the framework of the degree of intensity which

are indications of the strength of intersystem linkage.

Several data collection procedures were used in the study, including the structured interview, the Questionnaire and observation.

The study population consisted of five elementary schools, located in a larger school division in Winnipeg, Manitoba, which were identified by a division superintendent as having successful home-school groups.

The data was collected between May 1st and June 30th, 1981. The analysis of data will be presented in the following chapters.

Chapter 5

FINDINGS

In this chapter the findings based on the research questions
are presented. However, before answering the research questions,
a description of each school and its parent-school group is
presented.

SCHOOL DESCRIPTIONS

The schools chosen for this study are located in a large
urban school division located in Winnipeg, Manitoba. The division
comprises approximately 13,000 students and 700 professional staff.

Although the school division favours the participation of
parents in the educational process and principals are encouraged to
initiate parent-school groups, there exists no written board policy
governing the composition or operation of such committees.

School #1

Description of school. School #1 is situated on a quiet
street in a community of single detached dwellings. The school is
an older building which in previous years has served larger numbers
of students than the 1980-81 enrollment of approximately 188
students. The school employs seven full-time teachers, several
part-time teachers and a full-time principal. The principal has
been an educator for twenty-six years, thirteen years of which has

71

been spent as a principal. He has occupied his present position for eleven years.

Parent-school group. The parent-school group is composed of twelve parents, the principal and two staff representatives. The group elects officers and governs its activities by a written constitution which mandates two sub-committees: the education committee to be responsible for the provision of educational programs for parents; the resource committee, responsible for fund raising and the execution of special events for the children attending the school. Parents are elected to the parent-school group for a one year term at a meeting held for that purpose in the fall. However, in practice, parents tend to become involved for periods of time longer than a year.

The principal remarked that these longer periods of service on the parent-school group engendered a greater degree of continuity than could otherwise be expected. Of the nine parents who returned questionnaires, four had been involved with the group for five years, one for four years, two for three years, and two for two years. In response to the question, "When do you see your involvement in this committee coming to an end?" eight of the parents indicated that their involvement would end when their children left the school. The ninth parent offered no response to this question.

Parent-school group activities. The parent-school group focussed its attention through its two component sub-groups on projects which were of a service orientation. Activities organized by the parent-school group during the 1980-81 school term included:

activity days for the children, a fun fair for the community; an information booklet for the community; the purchase of additional playground equipment; a series of lectures for parents. Neither the principal nor any of the parents listed any items which could be classified as an advisory or advocacy function.

School #2

Description of school. School #2 is set in a residential community in an area of single detached homes. The enrollment in this school has declined in recent years, to the concern of both parents and staff. The 1980-81 enrollment at the school was 109 students. Despite the small numbers, there were six full-time teachers, five half-time teachers and a half-time principal employed at the school. The principal had been an educator for seventeen years; ten as a teacher and seven as principal of this school.

Parent-school group. The parent-school group is composed of six or seven parents, the principal, and one or two staff members. Although the group has no constitution it has elected officers who are chosen at a general meeting held each fall, for a one year term.

The principal indicated that in practice the committee members are simply nominated or asked to assume the responsibility for the year. The principal observed that the fall meetings were not usually well attended since only those who would be interested in serving attend. After this initial meeting the parent-school group schedules approximately four meetings for the year. Of the five parents who returned questionnaires, two had been involved in the

group for a period of five years, one for a period of four years,
and two for a period of two years. In response to the question,
"When do you see your involvement in this committee coming to an
end?" one responded "in one or two years", one responded "in three
or four years", one responded "as soon as I get someone else to do
it", and two offered no response.

Parent-school group activities. The parent-school group had
been involved in a variety of projects and issues during the 1980-81
school year. The principal stated that the issue of paramount
importance to the parents was the problem of declining enrollment.
The parents had devoted much time preparing briefs to the school
board, which the principal felt, were responsible for the absence
of split classes in the school. As a result of the parent's actions
the school has been in the enviable position of having exceptionally
low class sizes. Further, the principal felt that the parents'
discussions with the school board had resulted in more specialists
being assigned to the school than would normally be warranted by the
school population. The parent-school group had also expended some
effort in an attempt to have the school boundaries altered, a move
which would remedy the declining enrollment problem. As well they
had prepared and distributed a flyer in a neighbouring school's
territory which advocated parents transferring their children to
School #2 from the neighbouring school. During the past several
years, the group had been involved with the operation of a nursery
at the school. The principal stated that a major reason for the
interest in this project was the effect the nursery class had in

bolstering the small enrollments in the kindergarten class. A number of students who had resided outside of the school catchment area and who had enrolled in the nursery program remained at the school rather than returning to their home school.

Apart from these politically orientated activities, the parent-school group had been involved in several service orientated activities. These included: a parent run activity centre, a parent run perceptual motor program, a spring fun fair, and a playground project.

School #3

Description of school. School #3 is a large elementary school, recently built in a new sub-division serviced by the school board. The school houses approximately 670 students, twenty-eight teachers, a principal and a half-time vice-principal. The principal had been an educator for twenty-two years, eleven of which had been spent as a principal, and eight of which had been spent in his present post.

Parent-school group. The parent-school group is composed of interested parents who meet once each month to discuss issues affecting the education of their children. The chairmanship is the only elected position in the group, although elections may be held to serve on the body itself. The principal would resort to this procedure only if there proved to be an unmanageable number of parents seeking to sit on the parent-school group. During the 1980-81 school year, eight parents regularly attended the monthly meetings

of the group. They were joined at these evening meetings by the

principal, vice-principal and a staff representative.

Of the eight parents responding to the questionnaire, three

had been involved in the group for a period of three years. Each

one of the others had been involved with the committee for periods

of one, four, five, six and eight years respectively. In response

to the question "When do you see your involvement in this committee

coming to an end?" two indicated that their involvement would end

this year, three indicated their involvement would end when their

children left the school, and three were uncertain about when they

would stop participating.

Parent-school group activities. The parent-school group

fulfilled advisory and advocacy functions solely. The principal

felt quite strongly that activities such as school teas and fun fairs

were not proper functions of parent-school groups. As a result, the

group initiated no service orientated activities, but instead acted

as an instrument through which the school expressed its point of

view to parents and gathered the community's reactions school

programs. In addition, the principal felt that the parent-school

group was the legitimate vehicle through which the parents might

initiate political action in order to improve the educational

situation at the school. During the 1980-81 school year, the group

had submitted a brief to the school board concerning the overcrowding

at the school. In an advisory role the parent-school group focussed

its attention on matters of school policy and curriculum.

School #4

Description of school. School #4 is situated on a busy
traffic artery in Winnipeg. The physical plant, consisting of an
older building and a more recent addition, differs from the other
schools in the study by virtue of the fact that it houses a junior
high school as well as an elementary school. Approximately 770
students were enrolled in the school during the 1980-81 school year,
of which 440 were junior high school students and 330 elementary
students. Forty full and part-time teachers were employed at the
school. The school had been allocated one principal and one vice-
principal.

Parent-school group. Although the parent-school group
numbered approximately fifteen parents, a number of these people had
attended infrequently, and only ten of the committee attended on a
regular basis. The group elected officers and used a memorandum
from the Manitoba Department of Education as its constitution.
Parents were officially invited to join the group each year and a
new slate of officers was elected each fall. Of the eight parents
who responded to the questionnaire for parents, five had participated
in the committee for a period of one year, one for a period of two
years, and two for a period of four years. In response to the
question "When do you see your participation in the committee coming
to an end?" one felt that his/her involvement would end when the
committee's usefulness declined, two would end their participation
when their children graduated, and five were not sure when their
participation would end. The majority of members were not sure about

the length of their involvement in the group.

Parent-school group activities. The parent-school group had

been involved in all three types of functions during the 1980-81

school year. Their activities included: discussion of new

curriculum, the presentation of a brief to the board requesting that

a new addition be added to the school, and the erection of new

playground equipment. The request for new facilities had been a

long standing issue with no prospects for a successful conclusion

while some funds had been raised for the playground project.

School #5

Description of school. School #5 is located in an older

residential area. The school houses 240 students and employs

fourteen full and part-time teachers, and one principal. The

principal had been a teacher for seven years and a principal for six

years, of which three years had been at this school.

Parent-school group. The parent-school group was comprised

of six parents, the principal, and a teacher representative. The

group boasted a constitution and elected officers at an annual May

meeting. Four of the parents sitting on the committee responded to

the questionnaire. One of these parents had sat on the committee for

two years, two parents for five years, and one for seven years. In

response to the question "When do you see your involvement in this

committee coming to an end?" two responded that they would leave the

committee when their children left the school, and the other two did

not respond.

Parent-school group activities. The parent-school group

confined its activities to the service and advisory types of

functions, partly because the principal was reluctant to allow the

group to assume the advocacy orientation. The principal referred to

one situation where she had dissuaded the parents from petitioning

the board over a high enrollment at a particular grade level. In an

advisory capacity the parent-school group had formulated a survey

for parents in relation to proposed revisions in the school's report

card. In a service capacity the parent-school group had raised

funds, bought and erected playground equipment, and organized social

events at the school.

Summary of Parent-School Group
 Characteristics

The parent-school groups studied here exhibited a high degree

of similarity with each other and conformed as well to Miles' input

characteristics of temporary systems.

Similarities among parent-school groups. All the parent-

school groups studied held an annual meeting at which they elected

officers for one year term. Although only two groups had actually

written their own constitutions, a third parent-school group used a

government document as its constitution and the two remaining groups

adhered to past practice and consensus.

The parent-school groups exhibited a wider range of opinion

in response to being asked when parents expected to end their

participation in their respective groups. While the majority of

participants in three of the parent-school groups indicated that

their involvement would end when their children left the school
there appeared to be some doubt in two of the groups. The parents
of school #2 indicated that their involvement would end within a
period of two to four years. As no contact was possible with these
parents this research was unable to determine whether these dates
were linked to the expected graduation of offspring or to some other
event. The parents of school #4 were more uncertain as to when
their involvement would end. Only two of the eight parents who
responded indicated that their involvement would end when their
children graduated. One member stated that his/her involvement
would end if the committee's usefulness declined and five parents
were uncertain about the length of their involvement. Information
gathered from the research instruments and through direct
conversation with the parents suggested that some of the parents
did not perceive the group as being successful. The lack of a
definitive answer to the question "When do you see your participation
in the group coming to an end?" may be attributed to the poor feeling
of success expressed by several of the parent-school group members.

The parent-school groups were similar in terms of size. They
varied in size, irrespective of school size, from six to twelve
parent members. The groups exhibited many similarities in
comparison with each other. The only significant differences
occurred in the area of expected length of involvement. The variance
was explained by local differences in perceived success.

Parent-School Group Compared to Temporary
    System Input Characteristics

In Table IX the input characteristics of temporary systems

Table IX

Comparison of Temporary System Input Character-
istics and Studied Characteristics of Parent-
School Groups

Concept	Temporary System	Parent-school Groups Studied
Life span	the termination of the group is seen at the onset	parents generally saw their involvement in the group ending when their children leave the school
Goals	goals are more limited than in a permanent system	parents limited themselves to service, advisory and advocacy functions
Membership	membership is well defined and the inclusion of new-comers is generally discouraged	officers were elected or selected once each year and the groups official-ly invited new members at an annual meeting
Group isolation	the group is isolated socially and at times physically from the ongoing permanent system	all groups met at night when regular activity had ceased
Group size	the amount of change expected in the group depends on how small the group is	parent-school groups ranged from 6 to 12 members

are compared to the observed characteristics of the parent school groups studied.

The comparison of input characteristics of temporary systems and the observed characteristics of the parent-school groups studied, suggests a high degree of agreement between the definition of input characteristics and what are actually observed as the characteristics of the parent-school groups studied. One may conclude that the parent-school groups studied can be viewed as a form of temporary system.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The second part of this chapter will be a presentation of the research findings based on the research questions. The findings from each school will be listed under the heading of each research question, not for the comparison of the relative success of each parent-school group, but rather to facilitate the identification of general results or trends.

Research Question 1

Do successful parent-school groups exhibit a high degree of perceived goal attainment?

Research question 1.1. Is there a high degree of success exhibited in the achievement of stated objectives?

Findings. The findings applicable to research question 1.1 came from two data gathering instruments; the interview and the questionnaire. One was used to collaborate the other. In some cases

minutes of parent-school group meetings were available. However,
these documents were often incomplete and consequently inadequate
in assessing the amount of effort each project demanded.

Interview and questionnaire. Each principal was asked,
"What activities and/or issues has your parent-school group been
involved in this year?" The questionnaire for parents contained a
similar question. A compilation of answers from these two questions
are presented in Table X.

Conclusion to question 1.1. In response to research question
1.1 the parent-school groups studied exhibited good but varying
degrees of success in the accomplishment of their stated goals.

A good deal of difficulty was encountered in attempting to
quantify the amount of success the groups actually experienced in
the execution of their various projects and/or issues. For example
the parent-school group from school #1 organized a fun fair. This
activity was not clearly defined in the groups' minutes nor were any
criteria for the success or failure of the project identified.

It is to be understood then that in answer to question
research 1.1 all that may be concluded is the number of projects
and/or issues which resulted in some success as opposed to those
which obviously failed to achieve any results. Furthermore, the
importance of the project to the group cannot be evaluated. The
relative success of the projects is probably better left to the
perceptions of the participants in these committees and can be more
accurately reflected in response to research question 1.2.

Although all the parent-school groups studied were presented

Table X

Summary of Parent-School Projects

School	1980-81 Projects or Issues
#1	(1) Activity days for children. (2) Fun Fair. (3) Information booklet for community. (4) Purchase of playground equipment. (5) Organization of a series of lectures for parents.
#2	(1) Brief to board concerning declining enrollment. (2) The preparation and distribution of a flyer which promotes the selection of school #2. (3) Ongoing operation of a nursery. (4) Parent run activity centre. (5) Parent run perceptual motor. (6) A spring Fun Fair. (7) Playground project.
#3	(1) Presentation of a brief to the school board concerning overcrowding at the school. (2) Discussion of school programs and policy.
#4	(1) Discussion of new curriculum. (2) Presentation of a brief to the board requesting that a new addition be added to the school. (3) Purchase of playground equipment.
#5	(1) Conducted a community survey concerning proposed changes in the school's reporting system. (2) Purchased and installed playground equipment. (3) Organized social events at the school.

*Table IX indicates the level of activity for each of the schools studied. The projects listed would require a good deal of effort on the part of the parent-school groups, especially when one considers that they are volunteer organizations.

as successful groups it is apparent that they were not all equally successful. Schools #1, #2 and #5 experienced success in all their projects and/or issues attempted in the 1980-81 school term. School #3 experienced some success in relation to a presentation to the school board concerning overcrowding at the school as the board recognized the problem and planned some zoning changes to partially alleviate the problem. School #4 was able to buy some playground equipment and consequently was successful in this venture. However, an overriding issue was the addition of a new portion to existing school which parents had lobbied for over several years with no success.

Of the five parent-school groups studied, three experienced success in all identified goals and two exhibited partial successes. It may be concluded then that there is a high degree of success exhibited in the achievement of stated objectives.

Research question 1.2. Do the members of the parent-school groups perceive their efforts to be successful?

Findings. In order to answer research question 1.2 two data collection methods were employed: the questionnaire and the interview.

Interview and questionnaire. The questionnaire for parents asked the respondents to indicate on a five point scale the degree of success experienced by the parent-school group in the pursuit of their 1980-81 objectives. One on the scale indicated that the group was unsuccessful, while five indicated that the group was very

successful in accomplishing their objectives. The mean scores for

the five schools studied is presented in Table XI.

Table XI

The Degree of Success Parents Felt About Their
Parent-School Group Projects

School	Mean Score
#1 (N = 9)	5.0
#2 (N = 5)	3.9
#3 (N = 8)	3.7
#4 (N = 8)	2.9
#5 (N = 4)	4.8

Parents of four of the schools studied, found their parent-

school group very successful in attaining the objectives it had set

for that school year.

The school which gained the highest score for perceived

success was school #1. This parent-school group had dealt

successfully with several service projects, but had not listed any

advisory or advocacy projects. Parent-school #5 also gained a high

rating among its parents. The projects listed by respondents included

service orientated, advisory orientated activities which had

successful outcomes.

Parent-school groups #2 and #3 demonstrated somewhat less

feelings of success than did schools #1 and #5.

Parents on the parent-school group from school #3 expressed

some frustration at an observed committee meeting over the lack of

response from the board to parent requests for action on the over-

crowding being experienced by the school. No explanation was given for school #2's rating except that the principal felt that parents were pleased with the group's performance.

School #4 experienced the lowest degree of satisfaction over the accomplishments of the parent-school groups. The parent-school group had been trying unsuccessfully for several years to have a new building added to alleviate overcrowding problems. There was also frustration felt among committee members over the apparent disinterest on the part of parents at large in the activities of the group.

Conclusion to question 1.2. Most of the parent-school groups studied did perceive their group as being successful in the 1980-81 school year. On a scale of one to five with five representing "very successful" four of the groups recorded mean responses of 3.7 or higher. The one group which recorded a lower mean response had experienced a good deal of frustration over a perceived need to expand the facilities and to involve more parents in the committee.

Conclusion to Research Question 1

On the basis of data collected it may be concluded that the successful parent-school groups examined exhibited a high degree of perceived goal attainment.

Research Question 2

Do the members of successful parent-school groups feel a high degree of attachment towards the group?

Research question 2.1. Does the principal facilitate communication and an equal status power structure within the group?

School #1

Interview - The principal valued an informal type of parent-school group meeting. He stated that he preferred to see decisions made in a more relaxed manner rather than formal vote taking.

Observation - One meeting of the resource subcommittee was observed. The meeting was scheduled in the evening when the regular school activities had stopped, and five parents, a teacher and the principal attended the meeting whose purpose was to plan a fun fair. One of the parents acted as chairman. The principal had changed from his daytime business attire to leisure wear. He helped the meeting start but did not interfere with the role of the chairman. The principal's comments were informational in nature and were phrased in a manner which did seem not to influence the decisions of the committee. The meeting was dominated by the discussion of two parents and the more occasional comments of the other parents. The teacher participated fully in the group, presenting what the teachers hoped to do at the fun fair. The discussion tended to be diffuse, with much extraneous information added. The speakers were in general agreement with each other so that while not many decisions were made, various members were able to agree to look into options on the group's behalf.

School #2

Interview - The principal described the group's decision-making process as being information and consensus seeking.

Observation - This researcher was unable to assess the decision-making model employed by the parent-school group or the principal's posture in shaping the decision-making process. The parent-school group preferred not to have its meeting observed, and did not offer any reason for this decision.

School #3

Interview - The principal characterized the parent-school group meetings as being informal and usually relaxed.

Observation - The one meeting observed by this researcher was scheduled on a week night and was attended by parents, two staff representatives, the vice-principal and the principal. The principal had indicated in a personal interview that he tended to dominate the group. The observer found this statement to be correct. However, the principal took care to elicit opinions from the parents. The meeting followed a written agenda for most of the meeting. Then items which had not been included on the agenda were brought up by the principal and staff. The discussion became much more open, and parents were encouraged to express their point of view.

School #4

Interview - During the course of a personal interview, the principal was asked to describe a typical parent-school committee meeting. He indicated a quorum was required to start a meeting, and that an agenda was followed which usually was drawn up by the principal in conjunction with the group chairman. Rules of order for the meeting were loosely followed, with decisions made in an informal manner.

Observation - The one meeting of the parent-school group

was attended by this researcher in the evening. The principal was casually dressed in an open-necked sport shirt as opposed to the business suit worn during the day. Only five parents, and the principal were present. No staff member attended the meeting. The principal reported on several matters and talked about the playground project. Some points of clarification were sought by individual parents.

School #5

Interview - The principal described the parent-school groups meetings as informal, when decisions were arrived at by consensus.

Observations - This observer was unable to attend a meeting of the parent group as the last scheduled meeting of the year had occurred before the data collection period. As a result, no analysis of the principal's actions in promoting a democratic decision-making process could be made.

Conclusion to question 2.1. The interview and direct observation techniques of data collection were utilized to gather information in response to research question 2.1.

Interview - All principals interviewed favoured an informal approach to parent-school group decision making. One principal felt that a quorum would be needed for a meeting to start while the others felt that they need not worry about rules of order or quorums.

Observation - Three meetings were observed. The state of communications and the perceived power structure in each meeting were

perceived to be different.

School #1 exhibited open communication, and an equal status relationship. School #3 exhibited open communication but a hierarchical power relationship. School #4 exhibited more closed communication and tended towards a hierarchical relationship.

It may be concluded that principals involved with successful parent-school groups espouse equal status relationships. However, they may not always operationalize this principle.

Research question 2.2. Why do the parents maintain an affiliation with the group.

School #1 - Question numbers eight and nine of the Questionnaire for Parents were written to determine the nature and strength of the parent's sense of affiliation to the group. Although question eight asked parents to isolate the one best reason for joining the group some offered more than one reason. Five of the parents indicated that one reason for their joining the group was a sense of duty to the school. Six parents felt that by joining the committee they would be better informed about happenings in the school. Two parents listed the desire to see changes made at the school as one reason for their becoming involved with the parent-school group. Three parents indicated that they wished to help broaden the school experience for the children attending the school. One parent indicated that he/she had been asked to join.

When asked why they had remained active in the group several parents stated that they enjoyed the experience of working with other parents. Several parents were happy to be associated with the group

because it was accomplishing its goals and consequently benefitting the students. Still others cited the obligation parents have to help in the educational process.

School #2 - In a similar manner to the parents of School #1 these parents offered more than one reason for joining the group. Three parents cited their obligation to become involved as a reason for joining the group. Three parents responded that they joined to be better informed as to school activities. One parent added, "The community school atmosphere at this school is worth fostering and further development."

When asked why they have remained active in the parent-school group the parents responded with the following reasons. One parent felt obligated to remain. Two parents wanted to see some projects completed and issues brought to conclusion. One parent continued because he/she was the Block Parent chairman for the area and as well was a member of the board of directors of the nursery school located in School #2. One parent indicated that he/she was interested in maintaining an affiliation with the school as he/she was a former teacher.

School #3 - The members of this parent-school group were quite definite in their reasons for joining the group. All eight of the parents surveyed were able to cite individual reasons for joining the group. Six of the eight parents joined the group because they wished to be better informed about activity at the school. One joined to establish a liaison between the school and the community. The eighth joined because, "felt I might in some way help with school problems with a parent's input."

Five parents indicated that they were maintaining their affiliation with the group because they felt they were fulfilling a role by providing input to the school from the community and at the same time acting as communicators of school programs and policies to the community. One parent indicated that he/she enjoyed working with the principal. One parent cited his/her belief in the principle of parent-school groups as the reason for remaining active. One parent offered no reason for remaining active.

School #4 - When asked why they had joined the group, four parents responded that they felt obligated to do so. Five parents wanted to be better informed about what was happening at the school. One felt that he/she had joined in part to affect some change in the school.

No consensus of opinion emerged when the parents were asked why they had remained active in the group. Two indicated that they wished to be well informed. One indicated that he/she had enjoyed the group. One felt that his/her interest was waining. Two offered no reason for remaining in the group.

School #5 - Two parents indicated that they joined the group to be better informed and to initiate some changes at the school. One joined because he/she enjoyed working with other parents. The fourth joined because he/she thought the experience would be of personal benefit.

Two parents remained active in the group because of their desire to see extra equipment and services provided for the students. One parent offered no reason for continuing affiliation with the group.

Conclusion to question 2.2. Many reasons were cited by parents for their initial decision to participate in the parent-school group and their inclination to stay involved. The wish to be better informed and the sense of obligation were often given as reasons for joining the group, with the wish to be better informed most often given as reason for joining the group.

When asked why they remained in the parent-school group a broader range of responses were obtained. These included: the desire to remain well informed, the feeling of satisfaction derived from a task accomplishment; the pleasure derived from associating with the group; the sense of duty; desire to accomplish the objectives set for group. The broad range of responses reflected the differences among parent-school groups, both in their activities and in their feelings of attachment for the group. The groups which expressed higher feelings of success were more disposed to remain because of accomplishment or strong attachments to the group. On the other hand those belonging to groups where the participants rated the groups' success less highly tended to cite such reasons as wishing to be informed, or sense of obligation.

Conclusion to Research Question 2

The parents of successful parent-school groups do experience a high degree of attachment towards the group. Principals espoused the desirability of encouraging parent participation as equal status partners in the group. Parents generally indicated that they joined the group for more information as to what was occurring in the school. Their reasons for staying in the group shifted, however, to a desire

to complete projects and a sense of value attached to the group's togetherness and mission. It may be concluded then that the members of the successful parent-school groups examined do feel a high degree of attachment towards the group.

Research Question 3

Do successful parent-school groups exhibit a strong linkage to the school as the permanent system to which they are attached?

Research question 3.1. Can the intensity of the linkage be characterized as being high?

The degree of intensity of the linkage betwen the parent-school groups stated and their respective schools was measured by the frequency of interaction between the committees and the school staff. Through the parent questionnaire, parents were asked to indicate on a scale of one to five the frequency of their contacts with teachers. The scale designated one as seldom and five as often.

The average responses of the parents to the question, "How frequent are your contacts with teachers?", are listed in Table XII.

Table XII

Frequency of Parent Contacts With Teachers

School	Average of Responses
#1 (N = 9)	3.9
#2 (N = 5)	3.8
#3 (N = 8)	3.9
#4 (N = 8)	3.2
#5 (N = 4)	3.3

Discussion. The range of responses to the question
concerning frequency of interaction ranged between 3.2 and 3.9.
Parents felt that their contact with the teachers was neither often
nor seldom. The principals interviewed unanimously agreed that the
majority of staff was uninvolved with the parent-school group except
for those occasions when help was needed to stage some large event.

In the normal course of events only those elected from staff
to serve on the parent-school group interacted with the parent
members of those committees.

Conclusion to question 3.1. The intensity of the linkage
between the total teaching staff and the parent-school group is not
consistently high. Interaction tends to be higher obviously for
those serving on the committee and at times when greater staff
input is necessary such as is the case where coordination is needed.

Research question 3.2. Can the reciprocity of the linkage
be characterized as being high?

The findings in relation to the degree of reciprocity of the
linkage between the parent-school groups and their respective schools
were drawn from the sections of the Questionnaires for Parents and
Questionnaires for Teachers titled "Functions of Parent-School Group."
The questionnaires asked the respondents to rate on a scale of
one (low importance) to five (high importance) the importance of
various possible parent-school group functions. The respondents
were then asked to rate the degree of implementation of the described
function in their school on a scale of one (low implementation) to
five (high implementation).

The mean parent rating of the importance and degree of implementation of each item was then compared to a corresponding teacher mean rating. For purpose of comparison the differences between the parent rating and the teacher rating were also tabulated.

The findings in relation to research question 3.2 are presented for each school in Tables XIII to XVII.

School #1 - Table XIII is presented here.

Agreement between the parents and the teachers on both the importance of the various functions of parent-school groups and the degree to which these functions had been implemented at the school was high. In only three of the twenty-eight comparisons made were there differences greater than one on the scale of one to five. Parents were much less assured than teachers that they were succeeding at the task of advising the school of parents' views concerning curriculum matters. In response to statement number six of the survey, parents rated the importance of organizing social activities such as school teas, at 2.5. Teachers assigned the item a much higher importance. The largest difference occurred in relation to item number eight of the survey. This item dealt with the communication of parent concerns to the school board. Parents felt that the parent-school group had implemented this function to a far lesser degree than the teachers felt they had. The parents had rated the implementation of the item at 1.4 while the teachers had rated the implementation at 3.7 a difference of 2.3.

School #2 - Table XIV indicates a high level of agreement between the parents and teachers concerning the functions of a parent-school group. In four cases out of twenty-eight the difference

Table XIII

Mean Scores of Teacher and Parent Ratings of the
Importance and Degree of Implementation of
Various Possible Parent-School Group
Activities in School #1

Question #		Mean Parent Rating (n = 9)	Mean Teacher Rating (n = 6)	Differences of Ratings
1	importance	3.25	4	.75
	implementation	2.25	3.2	.95
2		4.55	5	.45
		4.77	5	.23
3		4.3	4.8	.5
		4.5	4.8	.3
4		2.38	3.16	.78
		1.6	3.16	1.56
5		4.55	4.16	.39
		3.55	4.00	.45
6		2.5	4.16	1.66
		3.5	4.3	.8
7		4.0	3.83	.17
		3.87	3.5	.37
8		3.1	3.66	.56
		1.4	3.66	2.26
9		1.28	1.66	.38
		1.00	1.66	.66
10		1.14	1.4	.26
		1.00	1.4	.4
11		3.2	3.00	.2
12	.	3.25	3.16	.09
		3.25	3.00	.25
13		3.37	4.00	.63
		3.37	3.83	.46
14		3	3.83	.83
		2.5	3.16	.66

Table XIV

Mean Scores of Teacher and Parent Ratings of the
Importance and Degree of Implementation of
Various Possible Parent-School Group
Activities in School #2

Question #		Mean Parent Rating (n = 5)	Mean Teacher Rating (n = 8)	Differences of Ratings
1	importance	4.8	4	.8
	implementation	3.6	3.62	.02
2		3	2.87	.13
		2	3	1
3		4.2	3.71	.49
		2	3	1
4		4.2	2.75	1.45
		2.6	2.71	.11
5		4.8	4.5	.3
		2.8	4.12	1.32
6		3.6	3.75	.15
		3.4	4	.6
7		4	4.12	.12
		4.2	4.12	.08
8		4.8	4.37	.43
		4.6	4.5	.1
9		1.25	2	.75
		1	1.37	.37
10		1.75	2.25	.5
		1	1.62	.62
11		3	2.42	.58
		2.33	2.42	.09
12		4.66	4.25	.41
		3.33	4.37	.04
13		3	3.87	.87
		2.66	3.87	1.21
14		2.33	3.71	1.38
		--	3.57	--

between the two average scores exceeded one. The teachers felt that the parent-school groups' function of advising the school of parents' views was of much less importance than did the parents who responded to the questionnaire. The parents saw the fund raising function as being a high priority item, but not as being highly implemented in the school. The teachers saw it as a low priority item and as being implemented as such. Disagreement arose as well over question number five. The parents and teachers agreed with the importance of promoting dialogue between the home and the school. However, the parents were not nearly as satisfied that this item was being well implemented in the school. It was difficult to assess items twelve to fourteen as only three parents chose to respond to these questions.

School #3 - Table XV indicates a very high level of agreement between parents and teachers concerning the functions of a parent-school group. In only two cases out of twenty-eight did the difference between the parent score and teacher score exceed one. In response to the importance of regulating the community use of the school as an activity of the parent-school group the table shows a difference of one. Parents felt that this activity was of slightly greater importance than did the teachers surveyed. A difference arose as well in how well the parent-school group implemented its function of informing the parents of programs being offered in the school. The teachers did not feel that it was as well implemented as did the parents.

School #4 - Table XVI indicates a high level of agreement between parents and teachers concerning the functions of a parent-school group.

Table XV

Mean Scores of Teacher and Parent Ratings of the
Importance and Degree of Implementation of
Various Possible Parent-School Group
Activities in School #3

Question #		Mean Parent Rating (n = 8)	Mean Teacher Rating (n = 7)	Differences of Ratings
1	importance	4.37	4.28	.09
	implementation	4	3	1
2		3.25	2.28	.97
		3	2.57	.43
3		3.14	2.77	.37
		2.71	2.42	.29
4		4.5	4.28	.22
		3.62	3.28	.34
5		4.87	4.57	.3
		4.62	4.14	.48
6		3.5	3	.5
		3.37	2.85	.52
7		3.25	2.57	.68
		3	2.51	.94
8		4	4	--
		4	4	--
9		1.62	1.14	.48
		1.14	1.14	--
10		1.87	1	.87
		1.42	1	.42
11		2.87	1.85	1.02
		2.37	1.71	.66
12		4.28	4.57	.92
		4.14	3.57	.57
13		4	4	--
		3.85	2.71	1.14
14		4	4.14	.14
		4	3.85	.15

Table XVI

Mean Scores of Teacher and Parent Ratings of the
Importance and Degree of Implementation of
Various Possible Parent-School Group
Activities in School #4

Question #		Mean Parent Rating (n = 8)	Mean Teacher Rating (n = 7)	Differences of Ratings
1	importance	3.75	3.88	.13
	implementation	3.16	3.62	.46
2		2.5	2.11	.39
		2.83	1.75	.08
3		1.5	2.85	1.35
		1.5	1.75	.5
4		4.25	3.88	.37
		3.66	3	.66
5		4.5	4	.5
		3.5	3.71	.21
6		1.71	2.77	1.06
		1.75	2.42	.67
7		2	2.5	.5
		2	1.83	.17
8		4.62	4.22	.40
		4.33	3.57	.76
9		1.57	1.28	.29
		1.75	1	.75
10		1.83	1	.83
		1.5	1	.5
11		2.2	1.4	.8
12		4.25	3.66	.59
		3.33	3.28	.05
13		4.5	3.44	.06
		3.66	3	.66
14		4.87	2.77	2.1
		3.66	2.71	.95

A notable difference of opinion occurred in three of the twenty-eight items. The teachers felt that the raising of funds was a more important function of parent-school groups than did the parents who responded to the questionnaire. Similarly, teachers felt that organizing events such as school teas, was a more important function than did the parents. On the other hand the parents thought that the task of educating parents about current educational philosophies was a much more important function of parent-school groups than did the teachers.

School #5 - The findings in Table XVII indicate a moderate level of agreement between the parents and the teachers over the role of parent-school groups. Seven items out of twenty-eight yielded a difference of greater than one. The following differences occurred.

1. The teachers felt that the parent committee did not do as well as the parents felt it did in advising the school of parents' views concerning curriculum matters.

2. The teachers did not feel that such things as organizing school teas were as important a function or as effectively done as did the parents.

3. The teachers felt that communicating parent concerns to the board were not as high a priority for parent committees as did the parents surveyed.

4. Teachers felt that the parents were not effectively implementing their role of informing the community of current educational philosophies. On the other hand the parents felt that their implementation of this function was more than adequate.

5. The parents felt that the functions of selecting teachers

Table XVII

Mean Scores of Teacher and Parent Ratings of the
Importance and Degree of Implementation of
Various Possible Parent-School Group
Activities in School #5

Question #		Mean Parent Rating (n = 8)	Mean Teacher Rating (n = 7)	Differences of Ratings
1	importance	4.5	4	.5
	implementation	2.6	2.5	.1
2		3.5	4.28	.78
		3	3.85	.85
3		4.5	4	.5
		4.33	3.85	.48
4		4.25	3.42	.83
		4	2.57	1.43
5		4.66	4.57	.09
		3.66	3.14	.42
6		4	3	1
		4.5	3.42	1.08
7		3	3.16	.16
		3	2.66	.44
8		4.5	2.71	1.79
		2.5	1.85	.65
9		3	1	2
		1	1	--
10		3	1	2
		1	1	--
11		2.5	2.42	.08
		2	1.14	.86
12		4.5	3.71	.79
		3.33	2.57	.76
13		4	3.42	.58
		2.33	2.28	.05
14		4	3.28	.72
		3.66	2	1.66

and principals were more important functions than did teachers.
However, it should be noted that only two parents responded to those
questions, and one of those felt that the items were of extreme
importance.

Conclusion to question 3.2. The comparison of parent and
teacher attitude demonstrated a high degree of agreement between the
two groups.

Where disagreement did exist no general pattern emerged, but
rather the disagreement reflected the past history of parent-group
involvement with the particular school cited.

It may be concluded then that the reciprocity of the linkage
is high in the linkage between successful parent-school groups and
the schools to which they are attached.

Conclusion to Research Question 3

It may be concluded that successful parent-school groups do
enjoy a strong link to the school to which they belong. This linkage
is primarily bonded by the agreement of both parents and teachers on
the role which the parent-school group should play in the life of the
school. Then, based on need, the intensity of the linkage will vary
from event to event.

SUMMARY

In this chapter a description of each school and its parent-
school group has been presented. The description included: a brief
description of the school and its employees, a description of the
parent-school group; a compilation of the projects and/or issues the

group had addressed during the past school year.

The second part of the chapter presented data in response to each of the research questions posed.

Research Question 1

A list of projects and/or issues addressed by each of the parent-school groups was generated. These projects and/or issues included service, advisory, and advocacy activities. The number of activities cited demonstrate a high level of success achieved by the parent-school groups.

Through interviews and questionnaires it was discovered that the majority of participants in four of the parent-school groups perceived a high degree of success for their respective groups. One school's parent-school group demonstrated a lower perception of success.

Research Question 2

The style of decision-making was observed to see if it promoted open communication and equal status relationships. The principals interviewed all advocated concensus decision-making after informal discussions have occurred within the group.

The parent-school groups were observed to identify the style of decision-making, the amount of communication and the type of relationships.

Parents were asked why they joined the parent-school group, and why they remained in the group. Parents felt that they stayed because of the accomplishment the group had made and the commaderies

they felt with other participants in the group.   In some cases parents

remained out of a service of duty or to be better informed.

Research Question 3

The frequency of contact between parents and staff were rated

as more occasional than often.   This finding applied equally to all

five schools.

By means of a questionnaire, parents and teachers were asked

to rate the importance of various possible functions of parent-school

groups and how well the parent group had fulfilled these functions.

The responses gained from teachers were compared with the responses

of parents in order to identify areas of agreement or disagreement

surrounding role and operation of the respective parent-school groups.

It was found that the staffs were in agreement with parents

on a majority of the possible functions, with disagreements resulting

more from local histories than from any other factor.

The results presented in this chapter will be analyzed in

Chapter 5 in order to answer the major research question.

Chapter 6

CONCLUSIONS: MAJOR RESEARCH QUESTION

The major research question posed in this study was stated
thus: Are the criteria necessary for an effective temporary system
and effect intersystem linkage evident in successful parent-school
groups?

Elements of Parent-School Group
Success

The major research question has identified two concepts which
together serve to describe the overall success of a parent-school
group in its relationship with the school. These are the temporary
systems perspective and the concept of interorganizational linkage.
Interorganizational linkages and temporary systems both deal with
distinctly different considerations of a parent-school group's
success. The discussion of parent-school groups as temporary systems
focusses attention on the success of the group itself. On the other
hand, discussion of the parent-school group as it relates to the
ongoing permanent system, the school focusses on the success of the
linkage between the two groups.

The two dimensions of success discussed are important to
the overall success experienced by the parent-school group. A parent-
school group must experience success internally first. But, it then
must transform this internal success into a successful linkage with
the permanent organization, the school.

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In order to answer the major research question the internal and external dimensions of parent-school group success will be analyzed separately.

Temporary Systems and Successful Parent-School Groups

The internal dynamics of parent-school groups have been studied to determine whether or not they exhibit the characteristics of effective temporary systems. The data gathered in answer to this question may be classified into two areas: data relating to input characteristics of temporary systems; data relating to the process characteristics of temporary systems. Each of these areas will be dealt with individually in order to answer the research question posed.

Comparison of successful parent-school groups and input characteristics of temporary systems.

As previously discussed Miles (1964:438) defines temporary systems as systems where the participants envisage a terminal point for the group. Some temporary systems are temporary for all the participants of the system. However, as Miles (1964:439) points out, there can exist an "impure" type of temporary system which involves a permanent cadre, but an ever changing group of clients whose stay in the group is defined as temporary.

As well as defining temporary systems Miles offers several characteristics of temporary systems which can be seen as defining characteristics. These characteristics Miles labels as input characteristics. They include the following: life span; goals; membership; group isolation; group size.

The descriptions of the five successful parent-school groups, included in Chapter 5, support the view that the defining characteristics of successful parent-school groups do indeed match the input or defining characteristics of temporary systems for the following reasons.

1. Life span - This study found that with the exception of one school, parent participants in parent-school groups did perceive a terminal point for their participation in the group. Most parents saw their participation ending when their children left the school. This fulfilled the requirement for the first input characteristic of temporary systems. That is, the termination of participation is seen at the outset.

2. Goals - The scope of activity engaged in by the parent-school groups proved to be relatively narrow in comparison to the range of goals addressed by the schools. The activities ranged from understanding to enhancing the learning environment in which the students lived. However this activity was always ancillary rather than central to the learning process.

3. Membership - The membership of the successful parent-school groups studied conformed to Miles' description of membership input characteristics of temporary systems. All of the groups studied held annual meetings with the expressed intent to elect or acclaim members for the next school year. At this time officers for the new committee are also elected or "volunteered." This group then was expected to work over the next school year as a unit. Membership in these groups was foreseen by the principals interviewed as being relatively stable for the balance of the school year.

4. Group isolation - It was found that all the parent-school groups studied met at night, when regular activity in the school had ceased. As a result little contact occurred with the day-to-day operation of the school. This isolation of the parent-school group from the every day activity of the school fulfills a fourth input characteristic identified by Miles, that of group isolation.

5. Group size - Miles maintains that the amount of change occurring in a temporary system is inversely proportional to its size. That is, smaller groups have greater prospects for change than do large ones. This study found that all the parent groups studied were relatively small in size. They ranged in size from six to twelve parents.

Conclusion. From the above discussion it may be concluded that parent-school groups do conform to the input or defining characteristics of successful temporary systems as defined by Miles.

The second area of comparison of parent-school groups relates to selected process characteristics.

Comparison of successful parent-school groups and process characteristics of temporary systems. Two process characteristics were deemed to be applicable to the present study. The rationale for selecting communication and power structure and sentiments was that they could be studied at one point in time, which corresponded to the cross-sectional approach of this study. Other process characteristics are seen only at some stages of the group's life or can only be assessed in longitudinal analysis.

Communication and power structure - As discussed previously

in Chapter 3 Miles (1964:467) observes the following factors which

promote increased communication in temporary systems:

(1) communication tends to be restricted to within the group; (2) as

role barriers break down new channels of communication are developed

among participants; (3) participants become more trusting of others

in the group, resulting in increased communication. As a consequence

of increased communication equal status relationships define the

power structure towards which temporary systems seem to evolve.

The data collected to determine whether or not this process

feature of temporary systems is as evident in successful parent-

school groups was presented in Chapter 5 in answer to Research

Question 2.1.

All principals associated with the parent-school groups

studied favoured an informal, consensus seeking approach to parent-

school group decision-making. This approach would promote equal

status relationships among participants and increase communication.

In observing three of the parent-school group meetings evidence of

this type of communication and power structures was found to varying

degrees. The differences between groups may have been affected by a

number of factors, not the least of which being the leadership style

of the principal within the group.

In summary each of the principals involved with the parent-

school groups studied saw open communication and equal status

relationships as desirable and each of the groups exhibited this

process characteristic to some degree. It was concluded that

successful parent-school groups correspond to the process character-

istic, communication and power structure described by Miles.

Sentiments: Miles (1964:472) notes that a second process characteristic of temporary systems is the attachment participants of the system feel towards the group. Miles describes this attachment as "esprit de corps." The data gathered in response to this process characteristic is located in Chapter 5 in response to Research Question 2.2.

It was found that parent members of parent-school groups did develop attachments to the group. This conclusion was based on the differences found in why parents joined the group and why they remained. Most parents surveyed initially joined out of a sense of duty or a desire to be informed. When asked why they remained in the group these parents shifted their reasons to what could be described as group and goal centered reasons. They wanted to complete objectives or projects and they experienced personal satisfaction in their involvement with the parent-school group.

Conclusion. It was concluded then that successful parent-school groups do exhibit sentiments similar to that process characteristic as identified by Miles.

Summary. Both in the area of input or defining characteristics and in the area of selected process characteristics the features of effective temporary systems can be identified in parent-school groups.

Discussion. Although all the parent-school groups selected in this study were deemed to be successful by a divisional superintendent it became apparent during the data collection period that:

(1) the groups studied experienced varying degrees of success;

(2) differing orientations were experienced in the various committees.

Varying success: The feeling of success indicated by parents in the

various committees ranged on a five point scale from 2.9 to 5.0.

The feeling of success was related to a sense of accomplishment of

stated goals. As was noted in the findings some groups were able to

achieve objectives while others were not as successful. The goals

with which the greatest chances of failure were associated were those

which involved some political action. School #3 attempted to have

its population reduced somewhat and achieved only partial success.

School #4 experienced repeated frustration in not obtaining approval

for a new addition to the building. School #2 on the other hand

experienced much success in its attempts to maintain a full program

in the school. The feeling of success expressed by parents (3.9)

reflects the accomplishments of the group in this political activity.

The two schools which did not engage in political activity experienced

the greatest amount of perceived success among parents.

Differing orientations: As well as actual successes experienced by

the parent-school groups, parent members also perceived the success

of the group in terms of the operation of the group itself. This

conclusion was drawn from the manner in which parents participated

in the various group meetings observed. In School #1 in which

parents gave the highest perceived success rating of 5.0 the meeting

exhibited much communication from all members of the committee.

Various members took leadership roles at various times during the

meeting.

The parent-school group attached to School #3, while allowing

for an open exchange of ideas, did not exhibit an equal status
relationship to the extent that the meeting was dominated and
essentially directed by the principal.

The parent-school group attached to School #4, in the meeting
observed, did not exhibit the process characteristic of equal status
relationships. The principal dominated the meeting and parents
offered no real input.

Interorganizational Linkages and Successful Parent-School Groups

The relationship between the parent-school group and the
school has been studied to determine whether the actions of the
parent-school group had an effect on the school and whether or not
the parent-school group was responsive to the school. The relation-
ship between the parent-school group and the school is an important
factor in determining the overall success of the group. From
Marrett's (Andrews, 1978) definition of interorganizational linkages
the following two indicators of the strength of the linkage were
addressed: the degree of reciprocity; the degree of intensity of
the linkage.

Degree of intensity. Marrett (Andrews, 1978:5) defined the
degree of intensity of a linkage as the frequency of interaction
between members of the two organizations involved in the linkage and
the amount of resource committment made by the two organizations.

In order to ascertain the degree of intensity of the linkage
between the parent-school groups studied and their respective
schools, the parental perceptions of the frequency of contact with

teachers was elicited. The data gathered in relation to the degree

of intensity of linkage is presented in Chapter 5 in response to

Research Question 3.1.

The frequency of contact with teachers ranged from 3.2 to

3.9 on a five point scale with five representing interaction

classified as often. Principals indicated that many staff were

uninvolved with the parent-school groups. Some staff represented

the faculty's point of view on the parent-school committee. As a

result there was not a perceived need on the part of the school for

more frequent contact by the total staff or an increase in the number

of staff interacting with the parent-school group. The number of

staff who interacted with the parent-school group varied from time to

time during the school year, depending on the parent-school group

activities. Activity days or other school related events would mean

greater staff involvement until that activity ended.

This seemed to meet the expectations of parents, several

of whom commented on the good support offered by their respective

staffs.

In conclusion, although parents did not perceive that

interaction with staff was high, the degree of intensity of the

linkage did seem to vary from activity to activity, increasing as

the need arose.

Degree of reciprocity. Marrett (Andrews, 1978:5) defined

the degree of reciprocity as the extent to which both organizations

accept the legitimacy of the role of the other organizations.

As a measure of the reciprocity of the linkage between the

parent-school groups studied and the respective schools a comparison
was made between the views of teachers on the importance and extent
of implementation of various possible parent-school group functions
and the views of parents on the importance and extent of implementa-
tion of these functions.

The data gathered in relation to the degree of reciprocity
experienced in the linkages between the parent-school groups and
their respective schools is presented in Chapter 5 in response to
Research Question 3.2.

The data demonstrates a high level of agreement between
parents and teachers over the importance of various possible functions
and the degree to which the parent-school group attended to the
functions. Of twenty-eight functions offered, the number of notable
disagreements ranged from three to seven with most schools showing
three or four items of disagreement. From this data it was concluded
that successful parent-school groups do demonstrate a high degree of
reciprocity with the school to which they are linked.

Conclusion

The findings demonstrated a high degree of reciprocity in the
linkage between the parent-school group and the school. The degree
of intensity proved to be more difficult to assess because the
frequency of interaction and resource committment would tend to vary
considerably over each school year.

SUMMARY

This study found that the successful parent-school groups

studied did exhibit the characteristics of effective temporary

systems and effective intersystem linkages.

The findings demonstrated the existence of the characteristics

of effective temporary system input and selected processes character-

istics and two dimensions of interorganizational linkages to varying

degrees in each of the five parent-school groups studied.

The implications of these findings will be discussed in

Chapter 7.

Chapter 7

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of this chapter is to present (1) a summary of
the study and its findings, (2) some conclusions based on the
findings, (3) implications for practice, and (4) suggestions for
future research.

SUMMARY

Study Purpose, Focus and Research
  Questions

Purpose. The primary purpose of this study was to examine
the features of successful parent-school groups in order to determine
whether or not they exhibited characteristics of effective temporary
systems and effective interorganizational linkages.

Focus. The focus of this study was to explore an important
aspect of parent involvement in schools, the parent-school group.
This focus was deemed to be important on the basis of literature
cited in Chapter 2 and the perceived importance of parent-school
groups in promoting parent participation in schools.

Based on a review of the literature dealing with temporary
systems and interorganizational linkages it was reasoned that
successful parent-school groups should exhibit the characteristics
of effective temporary systems and effective interorganizational
linkages.

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The following input and process characteristics of temporary systems were employed: life span; goals; membership; isolation; size; communication and power structure; sentiments.

The degree of intensity and the degree of reciprocity were employed in this study as two dimensions of the interorganizational linkage.

Research questions. The main research question addressed in this study was phrased thus: "Are the criteria necessary for an effective intersystem linkage evident in successful parent-school groups?"

In order to answer the main research question, the following research questions were posed:

1. Do successful parent-school groups exhibit a high degree of perceived goal attainment?

    1.1 Is there a high degree of success exhibited in the achievement of stated objectives?

    1.2 Do the members of the parent-school group perceive their efforts to be successful?

2. Do the members of successful parent-school groups feel a high degree of attachment toward the group?

    2.1 Does the principal facilitate a democratic decision-making process?

    2.2 Why do the parents maintain an affiliation toward the group?

3. Do successful parent-school groups exhibit strong linkages to the school?

3.1 Can the intensity of the linkage be characterized as being high?

3.2 Can the reciprocity of the linkage be characterized as being high?

Study Population

The parent-school groups selected for this study were associated with schools located in a Winnipeg school division. The superintendent of this division was asked to identify five schools which had succesful parent-school groups operating in them. All five schools identified were used in this study. The size of the school populations ranged from 109 students to 766 students. The size of the parent-school ranged from six parent participants to twelve. The data relating to these groups were obtained in the period April to June 1981.

Conceptual Framework

Temporary systems. The concept of temporary systems was employed in this study as an analytical tool with which parent-school groups could be studied. A temporary system is defined as any system in which the members of the system clearly see a terminal point either for the group or for their participation in the group.

It was reasoned that one should expect to identify temporary system input characteristics in parent-school groups. The input characteristics of temporary systems and the expected initial characteristics of parent-school groups were summarized in Table II.

It was also reasoned that one should expect to identify

temporary system process characteristics in successful parent-school

groups. Two process characteristics were selected because of their

appropriateness to the nature of this study. They were: communica-

tion and power structure; sentiments. The selected process character-

istics of temporary systems and the expected process characteristics

of successful parent-school groups were summarized in Table III.

Interorganizational linkages. The concept of inter-

organizational linkages was selected to analyze the success of the

relationships between the parent-school groups and the schools to

which they were attached.

Two dimensions of interorganizational linkage were employed

in this study: (1) degree of intensity of the linkage; (2) the

degree of reciprocity of the linkage.

Degree of intensity - The degree of intensity of the linkage

refers to the frequency of contact between members of the two

organizations as well as to the amount of resource committment by the

two organizations in order to maintain the linkage. This study

analyzed the frequency of contact between parent members of the

parent-school group and members of the school staff to determine

the degree of intensity of the linkage.

Degree of reciprocity - The degree of reciprocity of the

linkage refers to the extent to which the members of the two

organizations agree on the legitimate functions of one organization

as they affect the other. This study analyzed the degree of agreement

between parent members of parent-school groups and teachers in

relation to the legitimate functions of parent-school groups.

Data Collection

The data used in this study were collected through the use
of the structured interview, the questionnaire, and observation.
The interview and questionnaire instruments are presented in Appendices
A, B, and C respectively.

Data Treatment

The data was organized in response to each of the research
questions posed in the study.

Summary of Research Findings in
    Relation to Research
    Questions

Research question 1. Data obtained in response to research
question 1 demonstrated a high degree of perceived goal attainment
on the part of parent-school groups. This finding related both to
actual projects completed and to parents' perceptions of the success
experienced by their groups in achieving these projects.

Research question 2. Data obtained in response to research
question 2 demonstrated a high degree of attachment felt by parents
towards the parent-school group. The findings suggest that the
principals interviewed desired an informal manner of operation in
the group. As well, parents cited a desire to complete projects and
a feeling of satisfaction associated with group membership as reasons
for remaining in the group.

Research question 3. Data obtained in response to research
question 3 demonstrated a high degree of reciprocity in the linkage

between the parent-school groups and their respective schools. It was found that the intensity of the linkage was more prone to fluctuation, depending on the nature and scope of parent-school group projects being pursued by the parent-school group at any given point in time.

Major research question. Based on the findings of the research questions it was found that the five successful parent-school groups studied did exhibit the characteristics of effective temporary systems and effective interorganizational linkages.

CONCLUSIONS

The conclusions are divided into two sections: (1) general conclusions in relation to various aspects of this study, (2) conclusions in relation to the conceptual framework which guided this study.

General Conclusions

Instrumentation. A post-application review of the data collection instruments indicated that there may have been some weaknesses in the instrument. This could have been expected due to the experimental nature of the instruments developed for the study and the lack of previous testing of the instruments. Future use of the research instruments should consider the following suggestions.

1. Where at all possible the personal interview should be considered for use as a data collection technique in place of written questionnaires.

2. Principals' Structured Interview: A replication of this study might consider ways to elicit the principal's philosophy concerning appropriate parent-school group functions.

3. Parent Questionnaire: The following alterations of the parent questionnaire may be considered in any further use of the questionnaire.

(a) Question 9 might be changed to offer parents some alternate reasons for remaining active in the group.

(b) Question 10 might be reworded to ask parents how many times they had spoken to teachers regarding parent-school group projects in a certain time frame.

(c) Question 13 might be rewritten to offer a choice of occasions on which parents might choose to terminate their participation in the group.

(d) A question might be added to determine whether or not parents see the group itself ending at the end of the school year as opposed to simply recessing.

4. Teacher Questionnaire: The following alterations to the teacher questionnaire might be considered in any further use of the questionnaire.

(a) Consideration might be given to streamlining the questionnaire to include some biographical data and the section dealing with the functions of parent-school groups.

(b) Consideration might be given to the use of the personal interview of teachers presently serving in the parent-school group in relation to their perceptions of the dynamics of the group.

Limitations posed by the data. Limitations posed by the data appeared to have some effect on this study. The data collected was perceptual in nature. It was assumed, therefore, that the respondents were able to provide valid perceptions in relation to the research questions.

A second limitation was posed by the nature of the study population. Teachers and parents were generally reluctant to complete questionnaires. Moreover, April, May and June proved to be awkward months in which to observe meetings in that group activities were concluding in anticipating of school closing. One parent-school group effectively stopped the use of observation as a data collection instrument by not allowing this researcher to attend their meetings.

A third limitation involved the assembling and interpretation of data. Some responses were anecdotal rather than quantitative. The researcher perceptions in judging in which category these comments should be placed may have caused some misinterpretation of the data collected. Where judgement in the collection of data was required the researcher attempted to record the specific comments in the findings. The population also presented a limiting factor due to its small size.

Uncontrolled influences. It is recognized that there may have been many influences upon the perceptions of the respondents in the study. The history of past parent-school group accomplishments and possible covert motives of group members serve to affect the data obtained.

<u>Research questions</u>. Research questions proved to be useful in the analysis of parent-school group dynamics. Due to the exploratory nature of this study research questions were found to offer greater flexibility of inquiry than testable hypotheses.

The Study Purpose and the Line of Reasoning

The purpose of this study was to determine whether or not successful parent-school groups exhibit the characteristics of effective temporary systems and effective interorganizational linkages.

The findings of the study demonstrated that the successful parent-school groups studied did indeed exhibit the input and selected process characteristics of temporary systems and two selected dimensions of effective interorganizational linkages.

IMPLICATIONS

The implications of this study are presented in two sections: (1) implications for practice and (2) implications for further research.

Implications for Practice

The use of the temporary systems and interorganizational linkage models in the analysis of parent-school groups has practical implications for school principals and school division superintendents.

<u>School principals</u>. This study has noted several characteristics of temporary systems and interorganizational linkages which are present in successful parent-school groups. Some possible

implications of these characteristics for those working with parent-school groups are as follows:

1. Communication and Power Structure - The principal might consider the importance of developing increased communication and equal status relationships within the group. Consideration of this process feature of temporary systems would affect the principal's role within the group. The outcomes suggested by Goodman and Goodman would be a more creative problem solving mode of decision-making.

2. Sentiments - The principal may consider ways and means to foster a sense of cohesiveness and "esprit de corps" among group members. The temporary systems perspective would suggest that this feature is important to the sense of satisfaction experienced by members of the group.

3. Degree of reciprocity - Principals might consider the link between the parent-school group and the school staff as an important component in the overall success of the parent-school group. The principal might consider working towards a consensus between parents and teachers in relation to the legitimate functions of the parent-school group.

4. Degree of intensity - The principal may consider ways and means of providing opportunities for increased parent interaction with school staff.

Division superintendnets. This study has generated several implications for practice for division superintendents in relation to their involvement with principal evaluation and inservice.

1. Observation of parent-school group meetings might be

considered in order to evaluate the principal's interaction with parents in parent-school meetings.

2. A questionnaire to parents may be considered to ascertain the strength of attachment parents have towards the group and the feelings of success parents have in relation to the group's achievement.

3. An evaluation may be undertaken to determine the degree of agreement between members of the parent-school group and the teaching staff regarding the legitimate functions of the parent-school group.

4. Superintendents might consider providing opportunities for inservice for principals on the topic of small group dynamics from the temporary systems perspective.

Implications for Further Research

The exploratory nature of this study has provoked a number of suggestions for future research. A partial list includes the following:

1. The conclusions of this study were heuristic and thus should be considered as a guide for further study.

2. Longitudinal study - It was noted in the development of the conceptual framework for this study that several process characteristics of temporary systems could only be assessed in a longitudinal study. Consideration might be given to the undertaking of a longitudinal study of parent-school groups over a period of time which takes into account the process characteristics not addressed in this study.

3. It was apparent while collecting data that the principal was a key element in the perceived success of the parent-school group. A study might be undertaken to ascertain the manner and extent to which the principal's influence on the parent-school group affects the success of the group.

4. A study might be considered which would replicate this study but include a large number of schools in a variety of settings.

5. An ethnographic study might be considered which would trace the life of a newly formed parent-school group.

6. A study might be considered which would arrive at a more definitive rating of the success of parent-school groups.

7. A study might be considered which would examine the relationship between parent-school group success and other parent participation in the school.

Conclusion

In light of the increasing recognition of the benefits of increased parent participation in the education further research in this area is vital.

Parent-school groups offer an excellent vehicle for increased participation and the accompanying benefits for children in school. All aspects of parent-school groups should be investigated so that this resource may be more fully utilized.

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR PRINCIPALS

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PRINCIPALS

1. How many years have you been in education?

2. How many years have you been a principal?

3. How many years have you been a principal in this school?

4. How many students are enrolled in this school?

5. How many teachers are there in this school?

6. Do you have a parent-school group operating this year?

7. If so, how many parents serve on this committee?

8. How often does this group meet?

9. Which of these statements best describes your parent-school group:

   - There are no elected officers, nor is there a constitution.
   - There are elected officers but there is no constitution.
   - There are elected officers and there is a constitution.

10. What activities and/or issues has your parent-school group been involved in this year?

11. What has been their success in dealing with these activities or issues?

12. How are parents appointed to the parent-school group?

13. How long is their term?

14. Has the school community been interested and active in forming a parent-school group?

15. How accepting are the school's teachers of the parent-school group?

16. Are there staff representatives to the parent-school group?

17. If so, how many?

18. Are there occasions other than parent-school group meetings when teachers meet with the members of the parent-school group?

19. If so, how often?

20. If so, on what occasions?

21. Has the existence of the parent-school group meant extra work for you?

22. If so, in what ways?

23. Has the existence of this group meant extra work for your teachers?

24. If so, in what ways?

25. Have teachers been willing to comply with the parent group's requests?

26. What benefits do you see resulting from the operation of the parent-school group?

27. From your experience in dealing with parents, what are some of their reasons for maintaining an affiliation with the group?

28. Please describe a typical parent-school group meeting?

29. How closely are rules of order followed in meetings?

30. How are decisions made?

31. How does this committee compare to committees of other years?

APPENDIX B

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PARENTS

Winnipeg, Manitoba
R

Dear Parent,

The attached questionnaire forms a part of a study I am
undertaking into the nature of parent-school committees.

I would greatly appreciate your cooperation in responding
to the attached questionnaire. Please return the completed
questionnaire to your school office or mail it directly to me.

I would be most happy to answer any questions you may have
concerning the study.

Sincerely yours,

David Oborne

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PARENTS

1. How many children do you have attending this school? _____

2. In which grades are your children enrolled? _____

3. How long have you been a member of this parent-school group?

   _____

4. How many meetings have you attended this year? _____

5. How many meetings have you not attended this year? _____

6. What projects and/or issues did your group become involved in
   this year? _____

   _____

7. How successful was the group in dealing with these projects and/
   or issues?

unsuccessful				very successful
1	2	3	4	5

   _____

   _____

   _____

8. Which of these statements best describes the reason for your
   joining the parent-school group?

   _____ I joined because I felt obligated because my children were
   attending this school.

   _____ I wanted to be better informed as to what was happening at
   school.

   _____ I joined because there were some changes I wanted to see
   made at the school.

   _____ other (please elaborate) _____

   _____

9. Why have you remained active in this group? _____

_____

_____

_____

10. How frequent are your contacts with teachers?

<u>seldom</u>   <u>often</u>

   1   2   3   4   5

11. How does the staff help in carrying out parent-school group projects?

_____

_____

_____

_____

12. How supportive has the school staff been of the parent-school group?

<u>non-supportive</u>   <u>totally supportive</u>

     1   2   3   4   5

13. When do you see your involvement with this committee coming to an end? _____

14. Please include here any other comments you would like to make concerning your involvement with the parent-school group.

_____

_____

_____

_____

FUNCTIONS OF PARENT-SCHOOL GROUPS

The following statements are possible functions of parent-school groups. Please, on a scale of one to five, indicate their importance and the degree to which your parent-school group has implemented this function.

1. To represent the point of view of parents when dealing with matters of school policy.

	Low				High
importance	1	2	3	4	5
implementation	1	2	3	4	5

2. To raise funds for the school's programs, not covered by school by school board budgets.

importance	1	2	3	4	5
implementation	1	2	3	4	5

3. To raise funds for projects initiated by the parent-school group.

importance	1	2	3	4	5
implementation	1	2	3	4	6

4. To advise the school of parents' views concerning curriculum matters.

importance	1	2	3	4	5
implementation	1	2	3	4	5

5. To promote dialogue between the school and the parent community.

importance	1	2	3	4	5
implementation	1	2	3	4	5

6. To organize social activities such as school teas.

importance	1	2	3	4	5
implementation	1	2	3	4	5

7. To organize volunteers to assist in school programs.

importance	1	2	3	4	5
implementation	1	2	3	4	5

8. To communicate parent concerns to the school board.

	Low				High
importance	1	2	3	4	5
implementation	1	2	3	4	5

9. To assist in the selection of teachers.

importance	1	2	3	4	5
implementation	1	2	3	4	5

10. To assist in the selection of principals.

importance	1	2	3	4	5
implementation	1	2	3	4	5

11. To regulate community use of the school.

importance	1	2	3	4	5
implementation	1	2	3	4	5

12. To provide the school personnel with parent perceptions of the school.

importance	1	2	3	4	5
implementation	1	2	3	4	5

13. To inform parents of the programs offered in the school.

importance	1	2	3	4	5
implementation	1	2	3	4	5

14. To educate parents about the current educational philosophies affecting their child's education.

importance	1	2	3	4	5
implementation	1	2	3	4	5

APPENDIX C

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TEACHERS

145

Winnipeg, Manitoba
R

Dear Teacher,

The attached questionnaire forms a part of a study I am
undertaking into the nature of parent-school committees.

I would greatly appreciate your cooperation in responding to
the attached questionnaire. Please return the completed questionnaire
to your school office or mail it directly to me.

I would be most happy to answer any questions you may have
concerning the study.

Sincerely yours,

David Oborne

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TEACHERS

1. How many years have you been in the teaching profession? _____

2. How many years have you taught at this school? _____

3. Have you served as staff representative to the parent-school group? _____

4. Have you felt comfortable in filling that role? yes ____ no ____

    Comment: _____

    _____

5. Have you been asked to help the parent-school group achieve an objective which they have set this year? yes ____ no ____

6. If so, what was the nature of your contribution? _____

    _____

    _____

7. How successful has the parent-school group been in achieving their objectives?

    unsuccessful   very successful

       1   2   3   4   5

    Comment: _____

    _____

8. From your experience with parent-school groups, why do parents become, and stay involved in these groups?

    _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

9. Please include here any further comments you would like to make about the role of parent-school groups in the school.

    _____

    _____

FUNCTIONS OF PARENT-SCHOOL GROUPS

The following statements are possible functions of parent-school groups. Please, on a scale of one to five, indicate their importance and the degree to which your parent-school group has implemented this function.

1. To represent the point of view of parents when dealing with matters of school policy.

	Low				High
importance	1	2	3	4	5
implementation	1	2	3	4	5

2. To raise funds for the school's programs, not covered by school by school board budgets.

importance	1	2	3	4	5
implementation	1	2	3	4	5

3. To raise funds for projects initiated by the parent-school group.

importance	1	2	3	4	5
implementation	1	2	3	4	5

4. To advise the school of parents' views concerning curriculum matters.

importance	1	2	3	4	5
implementation	1	2	3	4	5

5. To promote dialogue between the school and the parent community.

importance	1	2	3	4	5
implementation	1	2	3	4	5

6. To organize social activities such as school teas.

importance	1	2	3	4	5
implementation	1	2	3	4	5

7. To organize volunteers to assist in school programs.

importance	1	2	3	4	5
implementation	1	2	3	4	5

8. To communicate parent concerns to the school board.

	Low				High
importance	1	2	3	4	5
implementation	1	2	3	4	5

9. To assist in the selection of teachers.

importance	1	2	3	4	5
implementation	1	2	3	4	5

10. To assist in the selection of principals.

importance	1	2	3	4	5
implementation	1	2	3	4	5

11. To regulate community use of the school.

importance	1	2	3	4	5
implementation	1	2	3	4	5

12. To provide the school personnel with parent perceptions of the school.

importance	1	2	3	4	5
implementation	1	2	3	4	5

13. To inform parents of the programs offered in the school.

importance	1	2	3	4	5
implementation	1	2	3	4	5

14. To educate parents about the current educational philosophies affecting their child's education.

importance	1	2	3	4	5
implementation	1	2	3	4	5