Investigating Differences of Parental Involvement in Secondary Education across Child Gender, Ethnicity, and Year Level

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Abstract

Parental involvement is widely considered to be an important part of the educational process throughout the years of schooling. However, few studies have discussed parental involvement at the secondary level, which is the focus of this thesis. The Parental Involvement in Secondary Education Questionnaire (PISEQ) was created to measure the type and level of parental involvement in children's secondary education, and the degree of differences in parental involvement across gender, age, or ethnicity. The PISEQ includes both quantitative measures based on Likert scales and qualitative items to allow for more personalized and idiosyncratic responses. Individual subscales include Parent Communication, Parent Event Participation, Parent Facilitation of Study Environment, and Parental Involvement with School Work, School Facilitation of Parental Involvement, and School Communication with Parents. The PISEQ was administered to 163 parents (83.4% female) of a co-educational Decile 7 high school (years 9-13) in Christchurch, New Zealand. Parent participants were primarily of Pakeha/New Zealand European ethnicity (83%; 6% Asian; 5.4% Other Ethnic Group; 3% Pacific Islander; and 2% Maori) with mean age of parents 46.5 years (S.D. = 6.3). Results showed no differences between child gender groups for all parental involvement measures. As a group, ethnic minority parents were more involved with their child's homework than Pakeha/European New Zealand parents. In addition, across the entire sample, parents of older children were less likely to facilitate a home study environment and assist with homework. Qualitative data showed that parents felt that the school communicated well, yet specific types and content of communication required development. Suggestions for improvement of parental involvement at secondary school level were discussed.

Introduction

Definition and Conceptualisation of Parental Involvement

The involvement of parental figures within the educational process is considered to be paramount by researchers, teachers, students, and parents themselves. Many different aspects of parental involvement have been identified as effective in increasing academic success in students at all levels of education; primary, intermediate, and secondary school (e.g. Bojuwoye & Narain, 2008; Fan, 2001; Hill & Tyson, 2009). Due to the documented positive effect that parental involvement has on academic success it remains an important aspect of the schooling process and a constantly evolving topic of academic research.

Despite the volume of research conducted since the 1980's, most studies have incorporated a similar conceptualisation of parental involvement as the one devised by Epstein and Dauber (1991). Epstein and Dauber's (1991) early conception of the parental involvement framework included five levels of involvement. The five levels of parental involvement discussed in their research are; (1) the basic obligations of families which include child rearing practices, providing adequate health care and safety which enable the child to learn and develop effectively; (2) the basic obligations of schools which includes communication between the school and families; (3) involvement at the school which involves parents and other volunteers, students and school administration, and parent's attendance at sport, cultural and academic events; (4) involvement in the child's learning at home, which includes teachers giving parents guidelines and assistance so they may help their children with learning experiences at home and completing required homework; and (5) parents involvement in decision making which includes parents actively participating in committees such as the PTA or sports/cultural committees and so forth.

In later writings, Epstein (1992) describes the sixth type of parental involvement as the communication and engagement of the school with the community services that are associated with the child's education such as after-school care, health care services and other resources. However, most research does not use this sixth type as a measure within their studies. Although widely used by researchers (Fantuzzo, Tighe, & Childs, 2000; Georgiou & Tourva, 2007), Epstein's conceptualisation of parental involvement was founded upon the data gathered from studies including participants (parents and children) from the elementary (primary) and middle (intermediate) school community.

Parent active participation has been identified as a factor in parental involvement that is more important than the parental occupation, level of education, and even the family's socioeconomic status (Snodgrass, 1991). Yet, it is likely that the mentioned factors, and many others, do play an integral part in the parent's ability to provide that participation. The Hoover-Dempsey model (Walker, Wilkins, Dallaire, Sandler, & Hoover-Dempsey, 2005) provides a practical explanation of how all of the mentioned factors interact with one another when considering parental involvement.

As a theoretical counterpart to Epstein's parental involvement conceptualisation, Walker and colleagues (2005) proposed the revised Hoover-Dempsey model of the parental involvement process to suggest how parental motivations are linked to their subsequent involvement. Rather than specifically focusing on the typology of parental involvement, the Hoover-Dempsey model also includes reasons, motivations and barriers for effective parental participation in their child's education. The Hoover-Dempsey model puts forward three major factors that affect motivation for involvement in a child's education. The first factor that has an influence on motivation is a parent's beliefs. These beliefs can include such things as self-efficacy for helping their child to achieve at school, and the constructed role as a parent. The second is the parent's perceptions of invitations to be involved, such as invitations from the

school, and specific invitations from the child and teachers. The third influential factor of motivation includes the parent's life context variables that influence the type of involvement and the amount of time that is spent being involved. These variables include skills and knowledge applicable for involvement, and the time and energy parents have available for participation, and the resources that they are able to provide.

The second level of the model involves the type of involvement the parent may contribute; school-based or home-based involvement. This involvement will then in turn influence the child's outcomes at school, which will overall be effected by the variables within the family's life and environment, such as socio-economic status, life events, ethnicity and so forth (Green, Walker, Hoover-Dempsey, & Sandler, 2007). With the carefully thought-out, dual-layered model, Walker and colleagues, (2005) provide an idea of the depth and complexity of parental involvement, and the potential barriers that parents may face when trying to provide their children with educational support.

In accordance with previous research (Epstein, 1991; Walker et al, 2005), Fan (2001) discusses the idea that parental involvement is most likely to be multidimensional. However, she notes an important difference in her understanding of the multi-dimensionality of the parental involvement phenomenon. Using a meta-analysis of previous parental involvement research, Fan (2001) notes that although it may be multi-dimensional in definition, these dimensions are not made equally and some are more important and influential than others. Depending on the different definitions of parental involvement used in such research, the correlations between parent involvement and student academic achievement can differ. In the meta-analysis conducted by Fan and Chen (2001) the correlation between student achievement and parent involvement varied between .09 and 0.34 depending on how the specific author/s defined the multifaceted concept.

Alongside other literature, Catsambis (2001) shares the notion that parental involvement is multidimensional, and discusses the importance of the multiple dimensions of parental involvement as overlapping and influential on each other, in a similar fashion to Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory. Seginer (2006) also shares this perspective, and believes that the many factors that parental educational involvement comprises of should be considered alongside Bronfenbrenner's micro-, meso-, exo-, and macro-systems in order to effectively research the subject. In this case, sharing a likeness to Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) suggests that parental involvement is thus influenced and affected by several different aspects such as: personal attitude, financial demands, family structure, school facilitation of involvement, societal pressures, ethnicity and cultural beliefs.

When considering the complicated nature of parental involvement and both Epstein's conceptualisation and the Hoover-Dempsey model, it becomes apparent that this topic is complex and multi-faceted, and therefore is equally difficult for both parents and schools to facilitate effectively. The intricate nature of parental involvement highlights the importance of continuing this line of research, and subsequently providing schools and parents with effective and practical consultation about the facilitation of parental involvement.

Barriers to Parental Involvement

As previously mentioned, the Hoover-Dempsey Model (Green et al, 2007) highlights several aspects of personal circumstance, societal pressure, and family structure that can potentially act as barriers between the parents and the school. Some or all of these barriers will almost always exist between the two parties in any given school environment, and have the potential to hinder effective and positive parental involvement.

Hornby (2011) also discusses the barriers that can be present when considering a parent's role in their child's education. In agreement with the Hoover-Dempsey model

(Walker et al, 2005) he highlights the many different aspects that can affect a parent's motivation, and/or limit their availability to be involved in their child's education. In addition to the parent's beliefs about parental involvement, their perception of invitations to be involved, current life contexts, and class, ethnicity and gender, as discussed by Green and colleagues (2007), he also considers how behavioural problems, parent-teacher relationships, learning difficulties and disabilities, the child's gifts or talents, and the child's age, can act as barriers to positive parental involvement (Hornby, 2011).

The parent-teacher or parent-school relationship has the potential to make a huge difference in the quality and quantity of parental involvement. Just like an individual parent may change the dynamics of parental involvement, individual teachers may also dictate the way that they deal with the issue of involving their student's parents. A teacher's past bad experiences of parents may further influence the interactions and communication between the two, and consequently this communication may become primarily negative and therefore unhelpful (Hoover-Dempsey, Walker, Jones, & Reed, 2002). The trust the parent has in the school may also make a difference to parental involvement. A parents who has trust in the school and teachers, will be more likely to be positively involved in their child's education rather than being resistant, which may lead to "conflict-based involvement" (Rosenblatt & Peled, 2002, pg. 353).

Whilst there are many barriers to parents becoming involved in their child's education, there is some small movement from one New Zealand workplace towards overcoming one major barrier that a large majority of parents face: the amount of time they spend at work. Presbyterian Support Upper South Island (PSUSI) have piloted an initiative that allows parents 20 hours of 'Family Leave' to attend family matters such as school events, and parent-teacher interviews, as well as tending to other family members. This initiative was found to produce positive outcomes for parental involvement (Quinn & Mowat, 2010). The

barrier of work commitments can be overcome for some parents, however, this proposal highlights the fact that not only do parents and schools need to work together, but support at the community level needs to also be included.

Parental Involvement and Student Achievement

The link between parental involvement and positive student academic achievement has been well established in the existing literature with samples of primary school, intermediate and secondary school age groups. High levels of both paternal and maternal involvement have been significantly related to the young adolescent's school achievement (Paulson, 1994), and in particular, it has been suggested that home-based learning can enhance a 5th grader's (10-12 years old) academic outcomes (Rogers, Theule, Ryan, Adams, & Keating, 2009). Recently, Chen and Gregory (2010) decided to investigate whether parental involvement predicts the variance of low achieving adolescents' grade point average (GPA). After controlling for gender and ethnicity, results showed when parents were perceived to have high educational aspirations for their child, their children maintained higher GPA's and were more engaged in the classroom (Chen & Gregory, 2010).

Throughout the last 25 years, a majority of studies have mainly included samples that are a majority of European students (e.g. Shanahan & Walberg, 1985; Paulson, 1994; Green et al, 2007), yet recently, many recent studies have begun to investigate whether the link between parental involvement and student achievement is also evident in other cultures. A study using a sample of secondary school students in Abu Dhabi (United Arab Emirates) concluded that, along with motivation and a less physically crowded classroom environment, parental support was also associated with the students who achieved higher education levels (Halawah, 2006). Again, even after considering several factors of Egyptian teenagers' environments, such as family structure, school disengagement, and the level of parental education, Abd-El-Fattah (2006) noted that the perception of parental involvement at home

and at school remained the most important factor that directly affected their child's academic achievement.

It is also through indirect effects that parents can have a positive influence on their child's education. Limiting the time that their child watches television and making sure they spend a sufficient time on their homework can positively influence achievement at school (Keith, Reimers, Fehrmann, Pottebaum & Aubey, 1986). Sukkyung and Nguyen (2011) considered whether students in Korea would also achieve better depending on the level of parental involvement they experienced. Again, it was found that the parental involvement was effective, due to indirect effects. Parental involvement practices at home were found to influence the psychological well-being (self-concept and locus of control) of the Korean students, and students who experienced increased psychological well-being also experienced better grades (Sukkyung & Nguyen, 2011).

Parental involvement has been clearly linked with student achievement for several decades, and with populations from different ethnicities. Even though there have been numerous authors who have highlighted the importance of parents being actively involved in their child's education and the numerous advantages it can provide, there still remains no set national policy for New Zealand schools to facilitate parental involvement. Hornby and Witte (2010) interviewed 21 principals of secondary schools in Canterbury about their school's facilitation of parental involvement and found that only one school had a separate written parental involvement policy. Why no set national policy does not exist remains a mystery, however, continued research in New Zealand on the topic of parental involvement and its effects may prompt a review of the current complacency.

Although there seems to be limited research conducted that connects student achievement with parental involvement within the New Zealand high school population, the amount of international research literature that already exists on this topic may suggest that

any data from such a study may yield the same, or similar results in New Zealand. Research that investigates the numerous other factors that influence a parent's participation may be more valuable. It is possible that there are other factors of New Zealand society that may be more influential on the mechanics of how and why parents become involved in their adolescent's education.

Evolution of Parental Involvement at the Secondary Level

A large majority of the research surrounding this topic defines parental involvement in similar ways, many referring to all or some of the Epstein conceptualisation (Epstein & Dauber, 1991) or the Hoover-Dempsey model (Walker et al, 2005). However, as a child grows older and makes the transition from primary school to intermediate, and then on to secondary school, parental involvement is subject to an evolution of its own.

At the primary school level, Reynolds (1992) defines parental involvement as interactions between a parent and child that influences or contributes to the child's development and participation in school activities for the child's interest. This may include often visiting the classroom, attending school camps/field trips, helping the child with homework projects, and keeping regular contact with school. But as children reach adolescence and transitions to intermediate and secondary school, there are many changes that take place within their educational environment. These developmental and social changes will in turn transform the dynamics of parental involvement. Adolescents may have to change schools, they will face many new teachers, manage new friendships and peer-groups, and will be challenged with more complex academic work at school and challenging homework assignments (Grills-Taquechel, Norton, & Ollendick, 2010).

Parental involvement seems to be at its lowest level when children reach the secondary school age (Hornby, 2011) which may reflect the amount of change that is present in this environment. As children progress through the education system, it is suggested that

there is less parent-teacher communication, and fewer parents participating in school events such as the PTA and open days (Snodgrass, 1991). Factors such as parents finding their child's work more challenging and feeling as though they either are unable to help, or the child refuses their help (Eccles & Harold, 1996), and the reality that some parents cease to closely monitor their adolescents academic progress (Hill & Taylor, 2004), may also contribute to the decline in parental involvement.

When considering the secondary school age student, teachers also feel that parental involvement evolves into more of a supportive and home-based role. Teachers specifically described parent involvement as supporting the teachers and the school to educate their child, to be there as "back-up", rather than in terms of active participation (Crozier, 1999, pp 221). But there also seems to be the expectation that parents would be the source of enforcement to complete homework and to make sure that children have the necessary equipment for learning (Crozier, 1999b). The assistance with homework (Epstein & Sanders, 2002), the supply of study materials and space, and the monitoring of leisure/social time (Fantuzzo et al, 2000), are all suggested as important aspects of a parent's involvement. As mentioned in the literature noted above, the majority of parental involvement for the secondary school age-group happens at home. Perhaps instead of parental involvement becoming "a much less frequent phenomenon" (Leon, 2003, p.32), it becomes more of involvement that is less visible and obvious, but not less important.

In agreement with the research that suggests a decline in the school-based type of involvement, adolescents themselves prefer parents to take a more covert and home-based approach to their involvement. This change in the typology of parental involvement is evident in the adolescent opinions discussed in the literature below.

A small part of the Crozier (1999) study included open questions where the 15 year old participants were able to voice their opinions on the topic at hand. Parental help with

homework, in order to achieve higher grades, was the most valued type of involvement by the male sample; whereas the female sample valued the support of parental involvement as a whole. The female sample stated that their parents' involvement made them feel cared about and increased their confidence about school work (Crozier, 1999). While this demonstrates a difference between male and female perception of parental involvement, it also supports an important notion that adolescents are far more appreciative of 'behind-the-scenes' involvement and moral support. As children reach adolescence, their developmental pathway leads them to seek autonomy (Bukatko, 2008) and consequently, the strength of the attachment relationship between children and their parents can be at its lowest at this time in the child's life (Song, Thompson, & Ferrer, 2009). Having parents being involved in the classroom and participating in school activities can be an embarrassment for secondary school aged students (Leon, 2003) as they search for independence from their parents. The active participation of parents within the school and classroom is a type of involvement that is most effective at the primary school level (Snodgrass, 1991). At this critical period in time, adolescents are also seeking less involvement with their parents and more with their peers (Trost, Biesecker, Stattin & Kerr, 2007). Parents may be more successful in supporting this new-found independence rather than monitoring and controlling their child (Catsambis, 2001), again suggesting the role of support rather than being actively involved.

The definition of parental involvement also changes when considering the perspective of those involved. Parents, teachers and students differed in their understanding of what they considered to be parental involvement (Harris & Goodall, 2008). Yet, for effective parental involvement to happen, it is perhaps best that at least parents and teachers work together, and share common goals in order to provide the best environment for the student's learning.

In the Harris and Goodall (2008) study a majority of the respondents in this study agreed that it was important to have parental involvement. However, the understanding of a

parent's participation in education, and what it should entail, differed depending on who the respondent was, and what role they had within the student's life. Some schools viewed parent involvement as being the role of enforcement of attendance and good behaviour (Brain & Reid, 2003) and in a supporting role for the school, whereas parents viewed parental involvement as support for the students (Harris & Goodall, 2008). The students also saw their parents' participation in their education as a supportive role, but more specifically as moral support, and support via interest in their progress (Harris & Goodall, 2008).

It is clear that parental involvement evolves when children reach the secondary school level, influenced by the developmental stages of the adolescents and the perspectives of the parties concerned. However, what may not be so clear is exactly what type of parental involvement works best at this level of education, or how parents and schools should be working together to ensure effective parental involvement within our secondary school education system.

Parental Involvement and Secondary Year Levels

Not only is there a stark contrast between levels of parental involvement in primary and secondary education, but there may also be subtle differences in the type of involvement provided to students, and their perception of this involvement, depending on their year level at high school. These subtle differences may include topics such as the initial selection of new school subjects and selecting college courses and career paths (Hill & Tyson, 2009. As Year 9 students enter the new phase of secondary education, they may require more support from parents than a Year 13 student with several years of experience and knowledge of the high school system. Within the New Zealand education system it is not until the third year of high school that the child will participate in "high-stakes" external assessments and examinations (Hirschfeld & Brown, 2009) that will have implications for their future. The introduction of these assessments and examinations may prompt a change in the adolescent's

perception of schooling. It is safe to assume that, as the student progresses through secondary school and faces the challenges of puberty, plus social and academic pressures and the consideration of their future, the role of parents and subsequently their involvement, will also develop during this time.

Previous research has demonstrated that adolescents in their first year of high school report that the parenting practices they experience (maternal and paternal demands, responsiveness, and parental involvement) have important influences on their achievement (Paulson, 1994). While the current study included a sample of adolescents aged 14-16 years (American 9th Grade), we cannot say whether these parenting practices, and more importantly parental involvement, have the same positive effect as the adolescent progresses through high school. Therefore, it is important to consider all year levels and the possibility of the changes that may occur throughout the entire secondary education stage.

Gender and Ethnicity

Gender and ethnicity are undeniably important aspects of all types of research as they are part of who we are as people. While many studies will control for these differences, it is also useful to investigate what differences may occur in order to better accommodate young people and their needs. Alton-Lee and Praat (2000) have provided New Zealand literature with a succinct definition of just how important gender differences are within our lives, and specifically within the educational context:

> '*Our gender deeply influences the ways we experience, negotiate, and participate in social life. For the children and teachers in our society, negotiating gender identity and the gendered influences on educational practices is a task that inescapably shapes the constraints upon and possibilities within our lives.*' (Alton-Lee & Praat, 2000, pg. 23).

Gender differences exist in almost all aspects of society and learning, yet few policies that deal with issues of gender differences exist in educational practice in New Zealand (Alton-Lee & Praat, 2000). There are many examples of differences within adolescent males and females when considering their education. In one study adolescents were given measures to test their self-discipline and self-control, and results showed that girls tend to be more self-disciplined on all five measures, which may in turn explain why girls generally achieve higher academically at school than boys (Duckworth & Seligman, 2006). Girls were also found to report more anxiety in general than boys at middle school age (Grills-Taquechel, Norton, & Ollendick, 2006). In a study using data from the International Assessment of Educational Progress (IAEP), boys were found to out-perform girls in science in two age groups (9 and 13 years of age), and mathematics achievement (Beller & Gafni, 1997). The authors suggest that this gender gap may have been present at the time due to males having a greater interest in careers geared towards mathematics and science (Beller & Gafni, 1997). It is certainly plausible that gender differences are influenced by societal stereotypes, but parental role modelling may also contribute to this aspect of the child's identity.

When specifically considering the topic of parental involvement, previous studies have demonstrated that there appears to be some conflict about whether differences exist when it comes to the nature of involvement, depending on whether parents have boys or girls. Bogenschneider's (1997) study demonstrated that both mother's and father's involvement was equally beneficial to both sons and daughters and, despite the variance in ecological environments of some families, the positive link between parent involvement and student success was present in a majority of different contexts.

On the other hand, a study involving participants 13, 15, and 17 years of age investigated gender differences in the influences that parental involvement may have, and found that girls in this sample discussed high school more often with their mothers, and

conversations with fathers were more to do with disciplinary action or behavioural problems (Muller, 1998). In contrast, when it came to the boys, Muller (1998) found that both parents were more likely to intervene in their son's education, but only for behavioural issues.

As previously mentioned, the Crozier (1999) study included the opinions of the students themselves and what ways they preferred their parents to be involved. Gender differences were present, specifically the male sample preferred practical help with homework, while girls valued the parental support as a whole. Carter and Wojtkiewicz (2000) discussed parental involvement differences in relation to gender socialisation and the patriarchal values of society. Their results also showed that girls discussed their schooling more often with their parents. However, it was not clear whether this was due to gender socialisation and therefore female dependency on parents, or that parents were simply more involved with their daughters. Parents in this study were also seen to have had higher educational expectations for their daughters.

Ethnicity is an equally important consideration in parental involvement research both in New Zealand and around the world. The Social Report of 2010 (Ministry of Social Development) has highlighted Statistics New Zealand predictions which suggest that by 2016 the ethnic composition of children zero to 17 years of age who identify with at least one ethnicity, will be 26% Maori, 13% Asian, and 15% from the Pacific Islands. These predictions indicate that there will be a large percentage of children who identify with at least one ethnicity (other than New Zealand European/Pakeha) within New Zealand, and a large majority of these children will be in the public school system. It has been previously suggested that teachers are trained to work with student groups that are ethnically diverse to cater for the children of New Zealand as the student population becomes more diversified (Howard, 2010).

Maori parents are aware that relationships between them and their child are essential to success at school but believe that the school must also accommodate for the differences that exist within the Maori culture, compared to the predominately European/Pakeha population, including the way that their child will experience the education system (Bishop, Berryman, Tiakiwai, & Richardson, 2003). Specific differences between cultures were not discussed, but it was widely felt by students and parents that the school and teachers did not acknowledge the differences in cultures. As Howard's (2010) research suggests, the student population continues to diversify in terms of ethnicity yet teacher populations have not.

Hirschfeld and Brown (2009) discovered that students' conception of assessment can be measured by their model irrespective of year level, sex, and ethnicity, except for Maori students. The experience of Maori students in the New Zealand education system was coined as "special" (Hirschfeld & Brown, 2009, p. 36) in this piece of research which again highlights the different perception and meanings of education for indigenous cultures. As there is agreement from Maori parents and students that their experience of the school system differs from others, it may be practical to assume that these differences also include the concept of parental involvement.

Differences in cultures are reflected in all countries across the world, particularly when it comes to education. An American study investigated ethnic differences by considering both parental involvement and the child's academic success (Seyfried & Chung, 2002). This study used a sample of fifth grade European American and African American students in a longitudinal study that included measures such as the student's GPA, and the parents' involvement and expectations of their child. Parental involvement was positively and significantly correlated GPA, suggesting that the more parents were involved, the higher the student's GPA. However, despite European American parents having higher expectations of their child than African American parents, there were no statistical differences between each

group for parental involvement (Seyfried & Chung, 2002). However, this study utilised a brief parental involvement measure which may have led to a narrow definition of parental involvement.

Huntsinger and Jose (2009) explore the idea that different cultures have a different perception of children's education as whole, including the way in which they are involved as parents. In this study, the Chinese American and European American communities were invited to share the ways in which they involve themselves in their child's elementary school education. Chinese American parents were less likely to attend school activities, but favoured a more "cognitive-intellectual type" (Huntsinger & Jose, 2009, p. 407) and were more likely to spend a large amount of time at home teaching or tutoring their children in a structured way. Engaging in their child's education may also carry different purposes for different ethnicities (Hill, Catellino, Lansford Nowlin, Dodge, Bates, & Pettit, 2004), therefore changing the way in which they perceive their involvement. In light of this research, it seems imperative that these differences are investigated to ensure that there is clear understanding of the needs of different cultures, within education.

So it is no surprise that, while it has been previously discussed that there are clear benefits of parental involvement at all ages, there is some suggestion that parent involvement may differ for males and females, and in respect to different ethnic groups. It is imperative that these potential differences in education are considered for the adolescent age group, as this important time of their education also coincides with many other factors, such as puberty, increased social pressures, and the drive for independence. By considering these developmental aspects parents and teachers may be able to understand the best way to support students to achieve their maximum potential.

The Present Study

Literature concerned with parental involvement at the secondary school level of education, in New Zealand, has been somewhat limited. A large New Zealand longitudinal study focused on 300 children and measured their ability and competency and their family and home experiences but only followed the children through to age 12 years (Wylie, Thompson, Hodgen, Ferral, Lythe & Fijn, 2004). While this study provides a wealth of information concerning children's experiences of learning, it is more focused on the composition and structure of the family and the child's home life rather than the parent's direct and indirect involvement in education (Wylie et al, 2004).

Other educational studies that have investigated the New Zealand student population include the understanding of teaching and learning for the 9 to 11 year age group (Alton-Lee & Nuthall, 1991), and reviews of existing research of gender differences in education (Alton-Lee & Praat, 2000). Much of the research has also been commissioned and/or funded by the Ministry of Education, and includes studies such as an up-close and personal study of a class of sixth form (Year 12) students' experiences (Nash & Major, 1997), and literature reviews focusing on subjects such as the impact that aspects of family and community have on student outcomes (Nechyba, McEwan, Older-Aguilar, 1999), as well as the influence of peers on students' learning outcomes (Auckland Uniservices, 2000).

After considering the existing literature on this topic, from various countries and specifically from New Zealand, it is evident that there is a gap in our understanding when it comes to parental involvement for adolescents who are currently undergoing secondary education in New Zealand. For any individual undertaking research, investigating every single one of the many factors that have been shown to influence parental involvement and participation would be an incredible task, so for the purpose of this study we will consider

whether age, gender, and ethnicity play a part in the types and frequency of parental

involvement present, specifically at the secondary school level.

Although Hill and Taylor (2004) acknowledge a specific challenge when researching

parental involvement in secondary education, this study will undertake the task in order to

better understand the concept of parental involvement in New Zealand high schools. In light

of the previously discussed research and the evident gap in the New Zealand literature, the

specific aims of this study were:

1. To describe the levels of parental involvement in their children's secondary education
   across a number of different factors, including parent communication with the school,
   participation at events, parent facilitation of the student's study environment at home,
   parent assistance with school work, parent perception of school communication and
   facilitation of parental involvement, frequency of website use, modes of
   communication found most helpful, and the perception of adequate information
   received.

2. To investigate whether parents are more involved with their sons or daughters, and if
   so what types of involvement are the parents more involved in. Differences in the type
   and level of parental involvement, depending on the ethnic group of the child, will
   also be analysed.

3. To examine associations between parental involvement and children's ages. On the
   one hand, it could be possible that as children grow and mature from Year 9 through
   Year 13, that parents decrease their level of involvement due to the natural increasing
   autonomy that older adolescents typically assume. On the other hand, due to the high-
   stakes nature of NCEA exams from Year 11 onwards, it could be possible that parents
   become more involved in their children's education as the implications of these exams
   for future education and career plans becomes a reality. A third possibility is that

parental involvement could have a curvilinear association with children's ages, with higher levels of involvement in the first year, decreased involvement in the second year and third years, and increasing involvement again in the final two years.

4. To examine parents' perceptions of the school's facilitation of or hindrance of their involvement with their child's education, including open questions regarding the aspects of the school's facilitation that parents found most helpful and the aspects that needed improvement, as well as parental perception of the website's helpfulness, and the satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the amount of information received about the content of their child's curriculum and assessments.

METHOD

Participants

Participants were the parents of students, in Year 9 – 13 (age 12 – 18 years), who attended a suburban coeducational secondary school in Christchurch, New Zealand. Participants were recruited via a mass email, sent by the school's IT staff, which explained the study and provided a link to the online questionnaire. An advertisement (Appendix A) in the school newsletter was also used to recruit participants. This advertisement allowed parents who did not have access to a computer and/or the internet to request a paper copy of the questionnaire in order to participate. The advertisement also included the link to the online questionnaire, in the event that some parents did not receive the email.

All parents were given the opportunity to participate, and 202 consented to do so. Some participants failed to provide their gender, of the 151 who did so, 83% (126) were female and 17% (25) were male. Of the 202 participants, 148 reported their child's ethnicity. The majority (83.1%) of participants' children were of Pakeha/New Zealand European ethnicity, 6.1% identified with one of several Asian ethnicities, 3.4% were identified with a Pacific Island ethnicity, and only 2% belonged to Maori ethnicity. An additional 5.4% identified with several other minority groups. Parents mean age was 46.5 years (standard deviation = 6.3), and their children's mean age was 15.4 years (standard deviation = 1.5). The majority of the sample of parents were female (83.4%), however the child's gender was more evenly split with 50.7% of male students, and 49.3% of female students.

The participants were asked to complete only one questionnaire per family and in the event of more than one child being currently enrolled at the selected high school, the participants were asked to consider the eldest child when completing the questionnaire.

Note: The term 'parent' is used broadly and may include step-parents, caregivers, and other legal guardians that may be caring for the child.

Participant Selection

Based on an analysis of patterns of missing data, it was decided that data would be excluded from participants who had not completed a large portion (approx. 80%) of both Part One and Part Two of the Parent Involvement in Secondary Education Questionnaire (PISEQ). This resulted in the retention for 163 participants (81%) with complete or nearly completed questionnaires.

Measures

The measures in this study utilised parental self-report responses to both structured Likert scale items and free response questions to discover parental perceptions of the school's facilitation of parental involvement and estimates of parental involvement in secondary education in four domains: communication with the school, event and extra-curricular participation, their involvement and further suggestions for improvement in this area.

The Parent Involvement in Secondary Education Questionnaire (PISEQ) was created using adapted items from the Family Involvement Questionnaire (Fantuzzo, Tighe & Childs, 2000), the Appalachia Educational Laboratory's (AEL) Level of Parent Involvement Questionnaire (Howley & Coe, 1989), and discussions with the high school principal. The PISEQ included four sections. Section one included 27 items asked participants about the frequency and typology of their involvement, as well as their communication with the school. In this first section Likert scale items were scored from 1 to 5 with options including "Never", "Rarely", "Sometimes", "Often", and "Always".

Section two comprised 22 items that asked participants about their own facilitation, as well as the school's facilitation, of parental involvement and responses were scored from 1 to 6 with options including "Completely Disagree", "Disagree", "Don't Know/Neutral", "Somewhat Agree", "Completely Agree", and "Not Applicable". Part three included 11 items which asked participants about the specific aspects of the school's facilitation of parental involvement, including three free response items. Finally, part four asked parents about their expectations and perceptions of their child at school.

Dependent variables. There were four dependent variables in this study that together comprised parental involvement. First, seven items made up the Parent Communication scale with all items found to measure the same construct and with good internal consistency ($\alpha = .91$). This scale consisted of items that addressed parental communication with the school and various others regarding their child's education. The scale included items such as "I talk with my child's teachers/dean on the phone." and "I talk to my child's teachers/dean about his/her difficulties at school". Second, the Parental Facilitation of Study Environment scale consisted of seven items that measure the provision of study space, materials, and rules and routines. An example of an item is "I bring home learning materials for my child" and "I make sure that my child has a quiet study space". This scale was found to be internally consistent to an acceptable level ($\alpha = .72$). The third parental involvement variable comprised six items that assessed Parent Event Participation. Reliability for this scale was somewhat lower than the other scales ($\alpha = .67$) and sample items include "I actively participate in sports trips/drama/kapa haka/camp" and "I participate in fundraising activities in my child's school". Finally, the Parental Involvement with School Work scale also comprised of six items. The reliability of this scale was acceptable ($\alpha = .79$), and sample items included "I spend time working with my

child on Mathematics", and "I review my child's schoolwork". The four parental involvement scales were summed together to create an overall composite measure of parental involvement. This composite was found to have questionable internal consistency ($\alpha = .67$), therefore, data analysis was performed in each dependant variable separately.

Independent variables. The key independent variables linked to the first two aims of this study (examination of gender and ethnicity differences, and associations between parental involvement and children's year level of high school) were measured alongside several other demographic variables (described below). Ethnicity was measured by parental report and coded with 1 = Pakeha/New Zealand European, 2 = Maori, 3 = Pacific Island, 4 = Asian, and 5 = Other in order to analyse any differences that may exist between the ethnicity of the child and the parent's involvement, however due to the low percentage of the different ethnicities within the sample, ethnicity was then recoded into a dichotomous measure (1 = Pakeha/New Zealand European, and 0 = Minority). Child gender was also measured by parental report and coded as 1 for male and 2 for female. Finally, the school year level of the child was recorded as a whole number between 9 and 13.

There were several additional independent variables in this study, all of which were hypothesized to be associated with parental involvement. The first two independent variables assessed the school's facilitation of parental involvement (communication and organization/administration). The first composite variable was constructed using seven items that concerned School Communication with Parents. These items included questions such as "Staff are open and honest with parents", "The school/teachers communicate to parents about assessments", and had good internal reliability ($\alpha = .81$). The School Facilitation of Parental Involvement scale consisted of 8 items and also had good internal

reliability (α = .87). Two sample items from this scale were "There is an active parent/teacher association", and "It is easy to make appointments to meet teachers/deans."

Child Communication, which was created using two items that asked parents about their perception of their child's ability to communicate reliably about school in addition to communication about their peers and extracurricular activities. This variable was considered to have acceptable internal consistency (α = .74).

The parental education variable was created by combining the number of years that Parent A (respondent) and Parent B spent within post-secondary education. This sum was then coded into a 5-point scale (0 = none, 1 = 1 to 2 years, 2 = 3-4 years, 3 = 5-7 years, and 4 = 8 years or more). Parental occupational status was also used as a variable. This was created by ranking the occupation of each parent according to the New Zealand Socio-Economic Index ranking (Galbraith, Jenkin, Davis and Coope, 1996). Occupations are ranked on a 10-point scale (original scale was ranked 1 = highest income, to 9 = lowest income) with 10 indicating occupations with high income and prestige such as senior government administrators and corporate managers and 2 indicating elementary occupations including refuse collectors and building caretakers. A rank of 1 was added to accommodate for occupations such as "stay at home mother", and voluntary jobs that received no income. This ranking was then recoded into a 3-point scale (1 = rank of 0-3, 2 = rank of 4-7, and 3 = a rank of 8-10). A measure of family SES was created by combining the Parent Education and Parental Occupational Status variables for both Parent A and B.

Other variables that were also used include the rank of the items of communication that were most helpful and informative according to parent's perceptions. These items could be ranked from 1, which indicated the item that was the most helpful/informative, to 9, which indicated the item that was the least helpful and informative. The parents' perceptions of whether adequate information about course content and course assessments

was received from the school, was also used as a variable. Responses in these two questions included 1 = "Not At All", 2 = "Limited Information", 3 = "Adequate Information", and 4 = "Excellent Information". Parents whose responses included "Adequate Information" and "Excellent Information" were considered to be satisfied and parents who responded with either "Not At All" or "Limited Information" were considered to be dissatisfied with the amount of information in for both course content and course assessment. These two groups were dichotomised and entered separately for further analyses.

Frequency of use of the website was also included as an independent variable, with options (1 = "Never Used it", 2 = "Used it Once or Twice", 3 = "Use it Occasionally", and 4 = "Use it Frequently") in this question asking parents to indicate their perceived usage of the school website. From the parents who had indicated use (parents who responded with "Never Used It" were excluded), they were then asked to point out whether they found the information on the website useful or not, and to what degree they found it useful. Responses included 1 = "Not At All Helpful", 2 = "A Little Helpful", 3 = "Moderately Helpful", and 4 = "Very Helpful".

Procedure

All parents who had a child currently attending the selected suburban co-ed Christchurch high school and were a part of the email system within the school, were sent an email that outlined the study and gave individuals the opportunity to participate. A link to the PISEQ was provided in the email. The link took the participant to the Qualtrics Survey website which contained the information sheet (Appendix B) and instructions pertaining to the PISEQ. Once consent had been given, the participant then continued on to complete the questionnaire. A second email was sent at the conclusion of the fourth term

to all parents in the event that some had not received the email and therefore been unable to choose to participate. This email stipulated that the website would be closed to participants on the 20th of December, 2011.

An advertisement (Appendix A) was placed in the final school newsletter of the academic year alerting parents to the availability of a paper copy of the PISEQ, and the opportunity to participate in this alternative way, should they wish to do so. It was not placed in an earlier newsletter as they occur once a term and data collection occurred during term four. A contact phone number was included in the advertisement for participants to call and leave a message that included their name and address, on the secure message system at the University of Canterbury. A copy of the questionnaire would then be sent out to them. A self-addressed prepaid envelope was to be included to ensure a better return rate of the paper copy of the PISEQ. Any identifying information would be kept confidential and in a secure location.

Scoring and Data Analysis

The electronic data collected from each questionnaire completed online was automatically placed in a file compatible with the statistical programme Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). No paper copies of the PISEQ were requested therefore no data was manually scored. All quantitative data were analysed using SPSS.

The presentation of the results is organized in the following manner: First, the descriptive statistics for each of the quantitative study variables is described. Second, bivariate correlations are presented to examine associations across different groups of variables, including: (a) parental involvement, school facilitation of parental involvement, school communication concerning curriculum and assessment, and frequency of school website access; (b) parental involvement, child year level, family SES, and additional

demographic variables. Third, analysis of variance (ANOVA) is employed to examine

possible curvilinear associations between parental involvement and child year level and

possible mean differences in parental involvement across gender and ethnic groups.

Fourth, follow-up analyses from the descriptive statistics on parental satisfaction with

curriculum and assessment information are presented using analysis of covariance

(ANCOVA).

The qualitative data provided by participants was analysed using an inductive

method loosely based on Grounded Theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, as cited in Creswell,

2012). The qualitative data was transferred from the SPSS programme to Microsoft Excel

spread sheet as it was a more suitable format for qualitative data analysis. Each answer

was read thoroughly and a major and minor theme was chosen that best represented the

themes participants expressed in their responses. These major and minor themes were then

organized into categories that reflected collective dimensions of parent's perceptions.

Question one, which required parents to provide aspects of the high school that they found

most helpful for their involvement, produced a total of 22 different categories. Question

two asked parents to provide suggestions of the aspects of the school's facilitation of

parental involvement that needed to be changed or improved, and these responses yielded

a total of 37 different categories. Due to time constraints, an inter-rater reliability test was

unable to be carried out.

Results

The descriptive statistics analysis of the four parental involvement scales and the two scales assessing parental perception of school facilitation (as shown in Table 1) illustrates that on average parents perceive themselves as rarely communicating with the school ($M = 2.2$), and indicate that they occasionally attend school and extracurricular events ($M = 3.04$). The parental involvement at home and parental involvement with school work scales mean scores are higher, $M = 3.84$ and $M = 3.38$ respectively, which indicates that this type of involvement occurred more frequently than the others.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics of the Composite Variables

Composite Variables	Mean	Std. Dev.
Parent Communication	2.2	.81
Parent Event Participation	3.04	.72
Parent Facilitation of Study Environment	3.84	.56
Parent Involvement with School Work	3.38	.67
School Facilitation of Parental Involvement	3.54	.80
School Communication with Parents	3.94	.73

Parents' overall perceptions of the school's ability to effectively facilitate their involvement fell between "Don't Know/Neutral" and "Somewhat Agree" ($M = 3.54$). However, the average opinion of the school's ability to effectively communicate was more

positive ($M = 3.94$), and to some extent, the parents in this study felt that the school communicates well.

Table 2

Mean and Standard Deviations of Helpful and Informative Items ranked 1 = most helpful, to 9 = least helpful

Helpful/Informative Items	Mean	Std. Dev.
Parent-Teacher Meetings	3.08	2.19
Individual Course Descriptions Regarding Assessments	3.61	2.00
Course Reports Each Term	4.13	1.76
Emails	4.30	2.64
Results Available From The School's Website	4.75	2.07
School Newsletters	4.78	1.96
Notices Sent Home	5.23	2.11
Text Messages	6.33	2.10
Other	8.80	1.08

When parents were asked to rank the various ways the school communicates with them (Table 2) from most helpful (1) to least helpful (9), the three items that were believed to be most helpful and/or informative by the participants were the Parent-Teacher Meetings ($M = 3.08$), individual course descriptions regarding the nature and timing of assessments ($M = 3.61$) and receiving reports each term that outlined their child's progress for each course/subject ($M = 4.13$). It is possible that while the Parent-Teacher meetings

and term reports provide similar information to parents, the meetings offer parents face–to–face contact with their child's subject teachers, and the opportunity to have discussions and ask questions.

Text Messages ($M = 6.33$) were deemed to be less helpful and informative than the traditional meetings and newsletters according to parents in this study, but other forms of electronic communication proved to be more favourable with participants as shown by the mean ranking of helpfulness for the items email ($M = 4.30$), and results available from the school website ($M = 4.75$).

Table 3

Frequency and Percentage Regarding Adequate Information Received From the High School

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Adequate Information Received Regarding Course Content/Curriculum		
Not At All	7	4.5
Limited Information	49	31.6
Adequate Information	71	45.8
Excellent Information	28	18.1
Adequate Information Received Regarding Course Assessment		
Not At All	20	13.1
Limited Information	62	40.5
Adequate Information	53	34.6
Excellent Information	18	11.8

Parents' perceptions of the school's provision of information regarding course content/curriculum and course assessment revealed that a large minority (34.5%) of

parents felt there was limited or non-existent information provided on course content/curriculum and a majority of participants (53.6%) felt there was limited or non-existent information provided on course assessment. Given the substantial division between satisfied and unsatisfied parents regarding the level of information provided on curriculum and assessment, follow-up analyses reported below examined if this difference between satisfied and unsatisfied parents was associated with differences in parental involvement, child communication, and demographic factors.

Table 4

Frequency and Percentage of Website Use

Description of Use	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Never Used It	37	24.2
Used it Once or Twice	58	37.9
Use It Occasionally	43	28.1
Use it Frequently	15	9.8
Total	153	100

The school website has been greatly expanded and enhanced over the last few years to provide parents with another way of receiving information and keeping up-to-date with the happenings at their child's high school. Of the 153 participants that completed this particular question, 116 (75.8%) indicated that they had used the school website at least once. This indicates a high level of usage within this sample and shows that parents are willing to use technology in order to stay informed and involved in their child's education.

However, while this data suggests that the majority of parents are logging on to the website at least once or twice, only 9.8% (N=15) indicate that they are using the website frequently, and almost a quarter of the sample (24.2%) had never used it. As a minimal number of parents are using the website frequently, this may indicate that there are some barriers existing that are hindering repeated use.

Table 5

Frequency and Percentage of Website Helpfulness Based on Participants Who Indicated Use

Description of Helpfulness	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Not At All Helpful	5	3.9
A Little Helpful	28	21.7
Moderately Helpful	56	43.4
Very Helpful	40	31
Total	129	100

Of those parents who reported using the website at least once or more, a small percentage (3.9%) reported that it was not helpful, yet a large majority of the sample (74.4%) found it moderately to very helpful. Within this subsample of parents, the website is proving to be a valuable tool for most, and a place where parents may go to gather information they may otherwise not receive from their children.

To examine if website usage was linked to any other types of parental involvement, this variable was also correlated with the four parental involvement scales, the two scales of parental perception of the school's ability to communication and facilitate involvement, and parents' perceptions of adequate curriculum and assessment information. Table 6 (below) shows that website usage was significantly correlated with parents' perceptions that the school communicates effectively ($r = .18$, $p < .05$), the level of the parent's communication with the school ($r = .19$, $p < .05$), parent event participation ($r = .18$, $p < .05$), and perceptions of adequate information regarding course content ($r = .16$, $p < .05$). These significant but small correlations suggest that the school website is quite a limited forum for facilitating school communication and parental involvement.

School communication with parents was also significantly correlated with their own communication with the school ($r = .16$, $p < .05$), parent event participation ($r = .34$, $p < .01$), and parent facilitation of the study environment at home ($r = .30$, $p < .01$). These correlations indicate that the parents, who see themselves as communicating, and being actively involved at home and with extracurricular events are more inclined to perceive the school as also communicating at a higher level. Parents who are communicating with the school and staff are also more likely to participate in other ways such as attending events, providing rules, study space and study materials at home, and assistance with homework as shown by the significant correlations between parent communication and said variables, $r = .37$, $p < .01$, $r = .21$, $p < .01$, and $r = .25$, $p < .01$ respectively.

A large positive correlation between parental facilitation of the study environment at home and parental involvement with school work ($r = .64$, $p < .01$) indicated a strong relationship, and suggests that parents who provide their child with routines, rules, study resources and space to do school work at home, are also more likely to assist their school work and assignments. Parents who are involved with their children's school work and at

home are also more likely to be attending their school and extracurricular events (r = .37, *p* < .01; r = .32, *p* < .01).

Child communication with their parents was significantly correlated with many of the variables included in the correlation matrix (Table 6). Parents who believed that their children communicated effectively with them were more likely to indicate that the school was communicating to parents successfully (r = .43, *p* < .01), more likely to rate the school's parental involvement facilitation as effective (r = .33, *p* < .01), and feel that they received adequate information regarding their child's course content (r = .36, *p* < .01) and course assessment (r = .33, *p* < .01) from the school.

Significant positive correlations were also found between the child communication variable and parent event participation (r = .21, *p* < .01), parent facilitation of the child's study environment (r = .22, *p* < .01), and the parent's assistance with homework and school assignments (r = .21, *p* < .01). Parents were more inclined to help the child with homework, provide them with suitable rules, and study materials and space, and attend their school events, if the child was perceived to be communicating well with their parents.

The school's facilitation of parental involvement was significantly correlated with parent's event participation (r = .377, *p* < .01), which suggests that parents who rate the school as having effectively facilitated parental involvement over that current school year, were more likely to be involved in, and attend their child's extracurricular activities and events. The school's facilitation was also significantly correlated with parental facilitation of the child's study environment (r = .194, *p* < .05) and the year level of the child (r = .188, *p* < .05). While the significant correlations are small, their existence suggests that the school facilitation of parental involvement is perceived to be more effective when the child is more likely to be in a higher year level at the school.

Table 6

Correlation Matrix Depicting the Degree of the Relationship between All Major Dependent and Independent Variables

	Parent Communication with School	Parent Event Participation	Parent Facilitation of Study Environment	Parent Involvement with School Work	School Facilitation of Parental Involvement	School Communication with Parents	Adequate Info Regarding Course Content	Adequate Info Regarding Course Assessment	Website Usage Frequency	Child Communication
Parent Event Participation	.365**									
Parent Facilitation of Study Environment	.209**	.369**								
Parent Involvement with School Work	.245**	.321**	.635**							
School Facilitation of Parental Involvement	.144	.377**	.194*	.096						
School Communication with Parents	.157*	.342**	.301**	.148	.757**					
Adequate Info Regarding Course Content	.153	.104	.218**	.073	.583**	.586**				
Adequate Info Regarding Course Assessment	.221**	.073	.227**	.104	.582**	.553**	.747**			
Website Usage Frequency	.189*	.179*	.158	.122	.121	.178*	.163*	.055		
Child Communication	-.155	.207**	.218**	.213**	.325**	.428**	.360**	.328**	-0.15	
Child Year Level	.148	-.010	-.194*	-.226**	.188*	.117	.181*	.146	.185*	.005

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

The year level of the child was significantly negatively correlated with two types of parental involvement; parental facilitation of the child's study environment at home (r = -.194, $p < .05$) and parental involvement with school work (r = -.226, $p < .05$). While the correlations are relatively small, the negative trend suggests that as children get older, and progress through high school, the facilitation of the study environment at home and the help with homework slightly decreases. To investigate the possibility of nonlinear associations which could be possible in light of the small negative trends between year level of the child and parental involvement, these associations were put into the four figures below. These four figures assessed the mean level of parental involvement at each year level of the students. Figure 1 shows that parental communication with the school tended to increase from Year 9 to Year 10, stabilised between Year 10 and Year 12, and increased again to Year 13. Post-hoc analyses (LSD) revealed significant differences between Year 9 students and the other four year levels ($p < .05$). Figure 2 showed a rather interesting pattern of parental event participation which was higher in Year 9, 11, and 13. However, the quadratic effect was not significant and neither were any of the post-hoc analyses. The negative correlation between parental involvement at home and child year level was evident in Figure 3 and Figure 4. In Figure 3, the quadratic trend evident in the graph was not significant, however post-hoc analyses (LSD) suggested that parental facilitation of study environment was significantly higher at Year 9 and 11 compared to Year 10 and 12 ($p = .03$ and $p = .02$), respectively. Lastly, Figure 4 shows a slight trend for increased parental involvement with school work in Year 13. However, only the linear association was significant and the post-hoc analysis comparing parents of Year 12 and 13 students was non-significant.
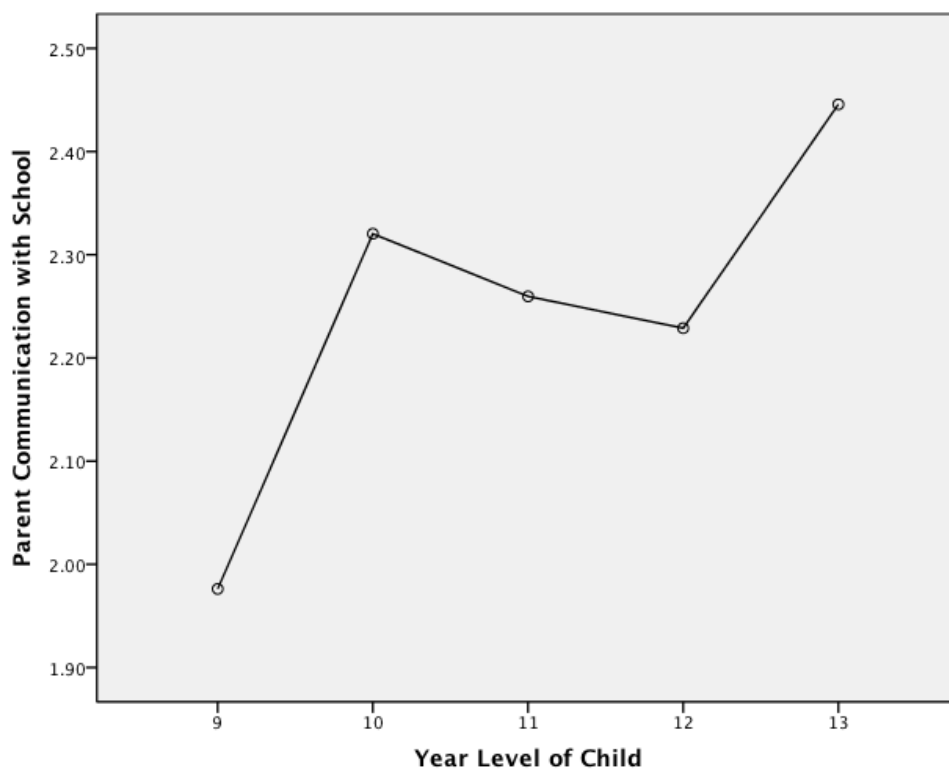
Figure 1. The mean level of parental communication with the school, for each student year level.
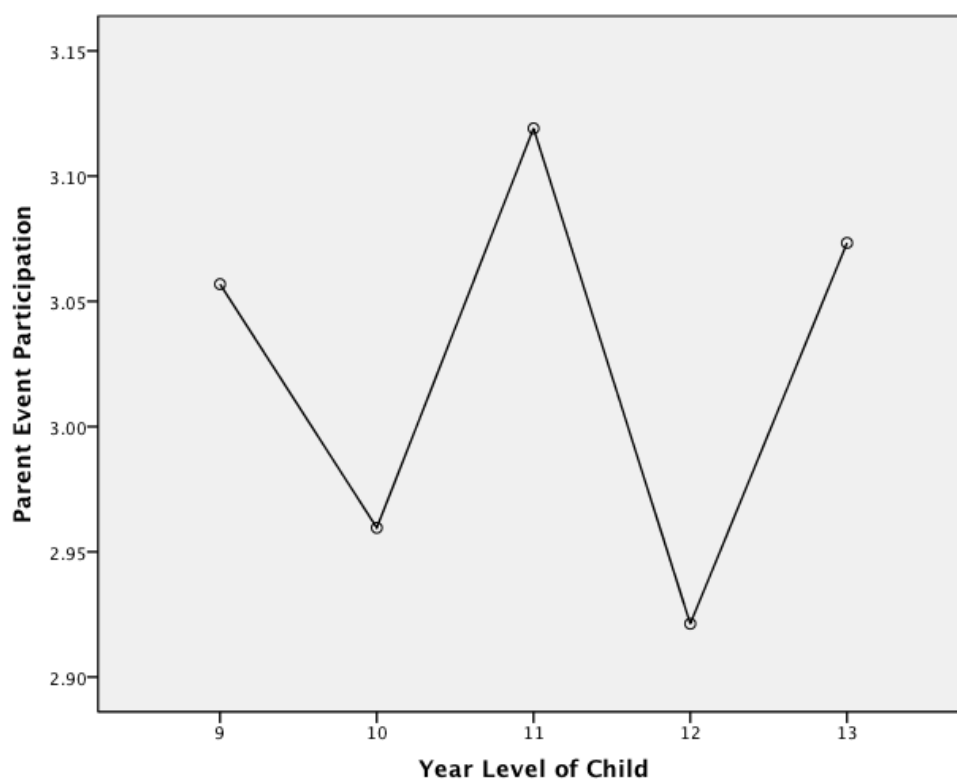

Figure 2. The mean level of parents attending and participating in school events, for each student year level.
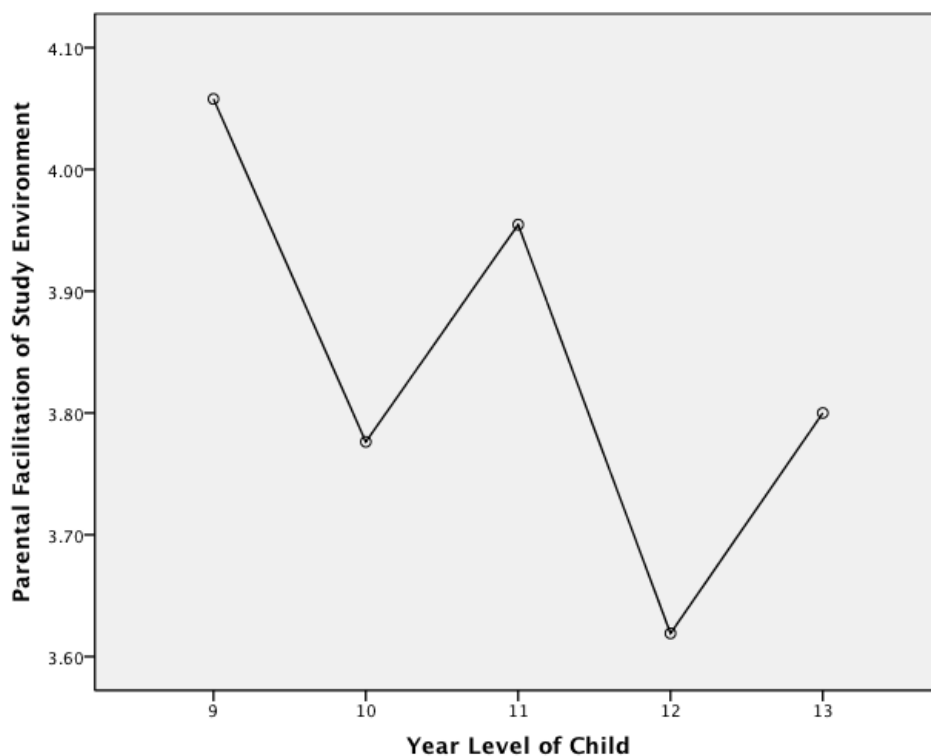
Figure 3. The mean level of parental facilitation of the child's study environment at home, for each student year level.
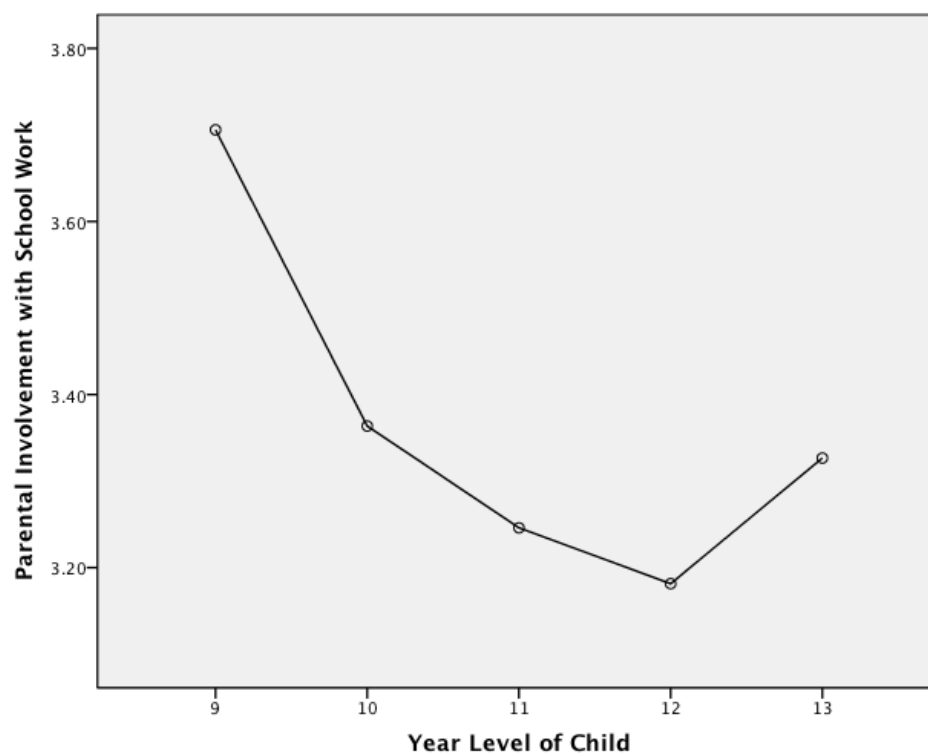

Figure 4. The mean level of parental assistance and involvement with school work, for each student year level.

Table 7

Comparison of Means of Gender Differences and Parental Involvement Scales

Variable	Male		Female		F	p
	M	SD	M	SD		
Parent Communication	2.33	.82	2.13	.76	1.679	.197
Parent Event Participation	3.01	.73	3.04	.71	.068	.795
Parent Facilitation of Study Environment	3.88	.54	3.78	.55	1.098	.297
Parental Involvement with School Work	3.35	.70	3.41	.61	.319	.573
Total Sum of Parental Involvement Composites	12.56	1.96	12.39	1.90	.291	.591

A One-Way ANOVA was used to analyse the data regarding gender and ethnicity and whether there were any significant links between gender and the different types of parental involvement. No significant differences were found between males and females (Table 7) and the type of involvement they receive from their parents in their education, as previously discussed in the literature review. Parents in this sample are likely to be involved in their child's education in similar ways regardless of whether they are male or female.

When considering possible ethnic differences in the amount of parental involvement, analyses showed no significant differences between the minority and

Pakeha/European groups, except for one: parental involvement with school work ($p =$ .046). This analysis (shown in Table 8) suggests that parents from minority groups were more likely to be involved with the child's school and homework assignments. However, when considering this difference, it must be noted that the analysis was completed using a dichotomous ethnicity group. The percentage of other ethnicities in this sample was not large enough for the groups to be used in the analysis on their own, hence the use of the dichotomous grouping.

Table 8

Comparison of Means of Ethnicity and Parental Involvement Scales

Variable	Minority		Pakeha/European		F	*P*
	M	SD	M	SD		
Parent Communication	2.24	.76	2.2	.77	.078	.780
Parent Event Participation	2.84	.69	3.08	.71	3.303	.071
Parental Facilitation of Study Environment	3.98	.53	3.78	.56	3.414	.067
Parental Involvement with School Work	3.56	.78	3.31	.60	4.052	.046
Total Sum of Parental Involvement Composites	12.63	2.03	12.38	1.91	.424	.516

To further investigate whether there were significant associations with other demographic variables, additional analyses examined parental education and occupational

status. These analyses showed no significant associations between parental involvement and parental education. However, higher parental occupational status was significantly associated with parents attending events ($r = .271$, $p < .01$), and parental involvement with the child's school work ($r = .178$, $p < .05$). This analysis suggests that there is a small yet significant trend for parents who have a higher occupational status to be more involved in their child's education by greater attendance at extracurricular school events, and helping with school assignments and homework.

Multivariate Analysis

The pattern of results of parents' perceptions of information provided by the school concerning curriculum and assessment (Table 3) point to the possibility of two groups of parents; those that are satisfied with information concerning curriculum and assessment and those that are unsatisfied. In addition, the pattern of correlations in Table 7 and Table 8 show several significant associations between these variables and parental involvement. In order to determine if there were significant differences in parental involvement between the parents who were satisfied with curriculum and assessment information and those who were not, a series of analyses of variance were employed. In these analyses, parental satisfaction with curriculum and assessment were dichotomised and entered separately as an independent variable, while the four parental involvement variables were entered as the dependent variables.

The analyses showed that parents who were satisfied with curriculum information from the school were also more involved in facilitating a home study environment (mean difference = 0.22; $F = 6.28$, $p = .01$), but there were no significant differences across the other three parental involvement variables. In similar manner, parents who reported being satisfied with the assessment information from the school were also more involved in

facilitating a home study environment (mean difference = 0.26; $F = 3.86$, $p = .05$), and they also reported more frequent communication with the school (mean difference = 0.20; $F = 4.61$, $p = .03$). No significant differences were found for parental event participation and involvement with schoolwork. It was also found that parents who were satisfied with the curriculum and assessment information from the school reported that their children communicated more than dissatisfied parents (mean difference curriculum satisfaction = 0.50; $F = 17.61$, $p = .001$; mean difference assessment satisfaction = 0.50; $F = 11.42$, $p = .001$).

To test if parents who were satisfied with the curriculum and assessment information from the school were more involved at home because their children were also better at communicating, child communication was used as a covariate in a final set of analyses. With child communication as a covariate, the previous significant difference between satisfied and unsatisfied parents in their involvement in facilitating a study environment was substantially reduced for both analyses (satisfaction/dissatisfaction assessment bivariate analysis $F = 4.61$, $p = 0.03$; covariate analysis $F = 2.63$; $p = .11$; satisfaction/dissatisfaction curriculum bivariate analysis $F = 6.27$, $p = .01$; covariate analysis $F = 3.67$, $p = .06$). This suggests that parents who are unsatisfied with the amount of information from the school on curriculum and assessment would be more involved at home if their children were also better at communicating. On the other hand, the analysis with parental communication with the school, showed that the significant differences between parents who were either satisfied or unsatisfied with assessment actually became stronger when child communication was included as a covariate (bivariate analysis $F = 3.86$, $p = .05$; covariate analysis $F = 6.27$, $p = .01$). This indicates that unsatisfied parents might actually communicate with the school even less if there children were better at communicating with them. In other words, the difference in communicating with the

school between satisfied and unsatisfied parents might actually grow if child communication was held constant. This somewhat surprising result will be further addressed in the discussion.

Qualitative Data

Participants were asked to complete two questions that required them to provide an opinion about the school's facilitation of parental involvement as a whole. The first question asked participants to elaborate about the aspects of the school's facilitation of parental involvement that they thought was most helpful to them as parents.

Table 9

Percentage of Categories Relating to Aspects Perceived as Helpful Provided by ≥ 5% of Parents

Categories	Percentage (%)
Communication	38
Parent Meetings	24
Teachers	15
Dean	13
Information Evenings	7
Welcoming	7
Staff	6
Website	5

In total, 119 participants completed the question and offered 22 categories of aspects that they find helpful. The table reports the eight categories which were suggested by at least 5% or more of the parents. The 14 other categories were represented by less than 5% of the respondents and signify the more idiosyncratic issues compared to the categories that larger groups of parents have provided. The most popular category that was put forward was the school's communication, which was deemed to be most helpful by 38% of parents, as either a major or minor theme. Specifically, one parent said that the school communication is helpful at "keeping me informed with what is going on. Because of my jobs it is tricky getting along to everything. I find [that the high school] has helped me with keeping my daughter on track."

The second most popular category was attending parent meetings with the teachers (24%) and one parent succinctly says why: "Parent teacher interviews as they give me the opportunity to find out how my child is going and what I can do to help." Thirdly, teachers themselves are also deemed to be helpful for parents. Fifteen percent of parents feel teachers are the most helpful aspect. This is a quote from one parent to explain why they feel teachers are most helpful: "The teachers tend to be straight with us, [clearly] defining what is expected, and what's working/what's not, and how they plan to deal with it. Parent input is welcomed, and respected." Deans were also considered to be one aspect parents considered to be valuable, with 13% of parents suggesting them as either a major or minor theme. One parent explained why they felt the dean was so helpful, "the Dean stays with the year group right throughout their secondary schooling so you always know who to contact with issues and can form a relationship if required."

Information evenings were said to be the most helpful by 7% of parents, as was the welcoming attitude of the school and staff. One parents said "[The high school] provides information evenings that give the relevant information for the year level [e.g.] Year 10

gets the talk introducing NCEA, what students and parents need to know going into Yr11, Year 12 get the talk about University entrance and what students and parents need to know about Yr 13 and planning for future education. Very relevant and well targeted." The welcoming atmosphere from the school was also well received and one parent felt that the school was "[v]ery welcoming - it is made clear that parents are expected to be part of their child's education."

Table 10

Percentage of Categories Relating to Aspects Suggested for Improvement provided by ≥5% of Parents

Categories	Percentage (%)
Subject and Assessment Information	30
More Communication	26
More Electronic Communication	19
Extracurricular Activity Organisation	6
More Frequent Academic Reports	6
More Special Education Support	5
More Notice in Advance of Events	5

When it came to the second open question which asked participants to suggest any improvements and changes to aid parental involvement, parents were more divided in their opinions. In total 84 parents provided their opinions, and gave 36 different categories as a major or minor theme. The category that occurred most often was the need for more information regarding subject and assessment information (29%). One parent explained why they felt this way: "The students may know about the timing and nature of course

assessments but parents don't always know until (if and when) the student tells them. It would be helpful for the parents to know when assessments are coming up so they can be more supportive to [their] child student."

Parents were also concerned about the amount of communication that was being received and 26% feel there needs to be more communication overall, and 19% would like to see more electronic communication, for example one parent says: "Loved the emails we were [getting] re snow, earthquake etc. More of this kind of information would be helpful. School notices do not always make it out of the bag and into my hands!!"

For the rest of the categories, parents were more divided in their opinions of what they perceived as needing improvement and change. The next most popular categories suggested as potential areas of improvement were more frequent academic reports (6%) and better organisation of extracurricular activities (6%). One parent stated that they would prefer "subject reports at the end of each term or at least a general feedback so any problems can be addressed earlier (e.g. terms 1 and 3)." In regards to opinions about extracurricular activities, suggestions included wanting more notice given for sports practices and event dates, more information about the events, and more fundraising. One parent expressed their opinion about this category: "I believe that a better fundraising system needs to be put into place for the sports tournaments. With both girls' active and high achievers in a lot of sports, we have found the financial burden difficult at times. I suggest that the sports co-ordinator's role be expanded to allow more time for this." Other categories that were represented by 5% or more of the parents who responded are shown in Table 10. Although there were 36 different categories stated as issues for change or improvement within the facilitation of parental involvement in this high school, only seven were considered to be a general concern across several parents (5% or more) and the other

ideas were more individualistic issues that were only validated by one, two, or three parents.

The qualitative data clearly depicts the parent's opinions in their own words and will be discussed, alongside the qualitative findings, in regards to how these opinions can be used to pinpoint what it may be that parents find most accommodating about the school's assistance of their involvement, what they currently get involved with, and how we may improve the quality and quantity of parental involvement by acknowledging the aspects that parents themselves think need change or improvement.

Discussion

Past research has shown that parents become involved in their child's education in many different ways (Epstein & Dauber, 1991; Walker et al, 2005). However, earlier conceptualisations of parental involvement were mostly created to encompass the involvement of parents of primary and intermediate school aged children. At these ages, parental involvement mainly focused on involvement in school activities, decision making with the school (e.g. PTA), learning at home, familial obligations, and communication between the school and families (Epstein & Dauber, 1991). The current research endeavoured to delve into the complicated nature of parental involvement in secondary education in New Zealand, in order to try to construct a clear picture of what this parental involvement may look like and how we may improve it, hoping that in turn it will improve our young people's education.

In summary, the results of the current study show that parents were more often involved in home based aspects of their child's education, with less active participation, and were not likely to be involved differently depending on their child's gender. Parents in this sample were also more likely to help with their child's school work if the child belonged to the ethnic minority group, and were likely to participate less in home based aspects of involvement if their child was in a higher year level. Parental opinions also suggest that communication is a key aspect that contributes to the utility of the school's facilitation of the involvement, yet more specified types of communication are required to further improve this facilitation.

The first aim of the current study was to illustrate the levels of parental involvement in their child's secondary education and how other factors impacted this involvement. In the current sample, parents reported that they more often took part in their child's education by way of facilitating an appropriate study area at home and assisting

with their child's school work. The difference between parental involvement in secondary schools and primary schools has been well documented. The results from this study concur with the research that has previously suggested that at high school, the need for home-based support increases (Crozier, 1999), including the expectation that parents will ensure homework is completed (Crozier, 1999b). Fantuzzo and colleagues (2000) also note the importance of ensuring that the child has materials and space for studying which the current study was found to also agree with, as the parents reported more involvement with facilitating the study environment at home. Parents in the current study also perceived themselves as rarely communicating with the school and only occasionally attending school events. This decline in active participation from parents was expected as previous research has suggested that this is likely to happen as the children grow older and advance further into the education system (Snodgrass, 1991).

While parents themselves admit to communicating with the school on an irregular basis, they report that they perceive the school as being effective in the ability to communicate with them. In this study, parents felt that the face-to-face communication of parent-teacher interviews were the most helpful type of communication. Information regarding their child's course assessments and receiving regular academic progress reports was also perceived to be very helpful for parents. The overall opinion that the school's communication met most parents' expectations was also reflected within the qualitative data.

To aid communication, the school has developed its website to provide parents with another avenue to gather information about their child's school and education. Within the sample of parents in this study the website proved to be a popular tool with most having accessed the website at least once, and those who have used it reported it to be an effective tool to use to gather information to support their involvement in their child's

education. However, only a small group of parents are using this tool frequently. Some parents expressed their frustration with the log-in procedure of the parent portal aspect of the website, which indicates that there may be barriers existing in the use of website, making easy access for busy parents difficult.

The use of the website was also linked with parental perception of effective communication of the school. Parents who used the website were also more likely to communicate more with the school, perhaps due to contact details being available on the website. Parents who used the website were also more likely to attend events, and be satisfied with information regarding course content. The available information on the website appeared to improve overall communication with the school, as the parents are able to access this resource at their own convenience and are not hindered by relying on the school or the child to communicate this information individually.

The parents who perceive the school as communicating effectively were also more likely to communicate themselves, also reflecting the mutual interest in being involved in their children's education, as suggested before when discussing the perception of the amount of information received about courses and assessments. Effective communication received from the school may have also provided parents with more information on the school events, and expectations of the school regarding homework and the needs of students at home, as those parents were also more likely to attend school events in addition to providing an effective study environment at home. These correlations suggest that the more the school is involved, the more confidence it instils in the parents to also become involved, and provides parents with the "social capital" (information and skills; Hill & Taylor, 2004, p. 162) that enables them to be better prepared and equipped to support their child at this time.

Parents providing appropriate study materials and a space to study are also more likely to provide children with assistance with their assignments and school work. While parents may be less confident helping with homework at this level of academic difficulty (Eccles & Harold, 1996), parents are likely to help more if they are actively engaged in ensuring that their child has the appropriate home environment to study effectively. While this study did not incorporate the students' academic grades as a variable, previous research has indicated that academic success is likely to be the outcome of this type of parental involvement (e.g. Keith et al, 1986; Halawah, 2006; Abd-El-Fattah, 2006; Bojuwoye & Narain, 2008; Sukkyung & Nguyen, 2011).

While adolescents are striving for more independence at this level of their education and prefer parents to be in a supportive role (Catsambis 2001), parents may not be able to rely on communication from their children and instead have to have a good communication relationship with the school. However, results of the current study show that children's reliable communication was significantly correlated with many aspects of parental involvement and the perception of the school's involvement. Through the child's effective communication, parents were likely to perceive the school as communicating and facilitating parental involvement well. Parents, who reported students to be communicating reliably with them, were more likely to perceive the school communication and provision of information to be effective and adequate. From the qualitative data it is suggested by parents that their children are given responsibility for communicating a large amount of information to their parents, such as via newsletters and on sports events. The data shows that the more information relayed back to parents, the more satisfied parents are with communication and information overall.

Children at this level of education may also be expected to communicate their needs in relation to academic requirements as well as their extracurricular activities.

Results suggested that, when there is reliable communication from the child to their parents regarding these needs, the more likely it is that parents will be more involved in providing them with these necessities and attending their school events. The occurrence of this communication may also reflect the nature of the parent-child relationship. The communication of needs to the parent may possibly act as an invitation to become involved with the child's schooling that the parent may otherwise not take, as this is the time in which adolescents are seeking independence and autonomy.

To further investigate the role of communication in this study a series of analyses of variance were conducted. From the preliminary results it was evident that there were two types of parents in this study: those who were satisfied with the curriculum and assessment information and those who were not. In regards to information received about the student's curriculum and assessment, most parents were unsatisfied with the amount they had received. Specifically, a majority of the parents in this study indicated that they were unsatisfied with the amount of information provided regarding course assessment. When parents were given the opportunity to express their opinions in their own words, many stated that they would like to see more curriculum and assessment information provided to them so they may be fully informed of the content and timing of their child's assessment. Parents felt that this type of information was extremely helpful, and reported that they were not receiving enough of it in order to support their children to the fullest extent when it came to assessment and exams.

The parents who did report satisfaction with the amount of curriculum and assessment information received were more involved in providing the study environment and structure in the home, possibly because they felt the information was enough to enable them to provide the help and support, at home, that their child needed to succeed. The satisfied parents who received adequate information relating specifically to their child's

assessments, also communicated more frequently with the school, reflecting a reciprocal capability of communication between these parents and the school, and a mutual desire to be involved in the child's education.

It is possible that the instances where parents, who were satisfied with the amount of information received, and therefore more involved at home with providing appropriate study materials and study environment, could be related to the child's ability to communicate to them. The difference between the satisfied parents who were more likely to facilitate a study environment at home, and the unsatisfied parents who weren't as likely to do so was significantly reduced when the child's ability to communicate was considered. When children are able to communicate effectively to their parents, their parents are more likely to provide them with an enriched learning environment and the necessary means to effectively study at home, regardless of the satisfaction or dissatisfaction of the amount of information received from the school. This again highlights the importance of the role of children in parental involvement. Children who consistently communicate their needs to their parents consequently have those needs met, therefore participating in a beneficial and reciprocal parent-child relationship.

However, including child communication as a covariate had the opposite effect on the difference between satisfied and unsatisfied parents when also considering communication with the school. The parents who were unsatisfied with the school's efforts in providing them with information regarding their child's assessments were likely to communicate less with the school when their children were better at communicating with them. One explanation may point to possible different beliefs about the utility of the curriculum content and assessment information. Dissatisfied parents may represent a small group that may perceive the information received as less useful, and therefore may be less likely to follow up with the school requesting more information regardless of whether their

child is capable of relaying this information back to their parents. While this finding was deemed to be statistically significant, it is important to note that the absolute difference between these groups is quite small, and the strength of this relationship is minimal.

The second aim of this study was to investigate the possible existence of differences when considering the effect that the child's gender and ethnicity may have on parental involvement. Alton-Lee & Praat (2000) suggest that gender has a significant and deep influence on our lives, especially in education. However, previous studies have been somewhat equivocal in this area of research (Bogenschneider, 1997; Muller, 1998). The current study found that, within this sample of parents of secondary school students, no significant differences were found. Parents were likely to be equally involved with their child's education no matter what the gender. Boys and girls were likely to receive the same amount and type of their parent's involvement and effort regarding their education, and therefore were likely to benefit in the same way. This result suggests equality of gender within parental involvement and is similar to that of Bogenschneider's (1997) and Halawah's (2006) research which also produced no significant gender differences. Halawah (2006) used a measure of parental influence similar to aspects of parental involvement, and highlighted the idea that student's themselves also perceived no difference in the way their parent participated in their education.

Yet, in other research, results have suggested otherwise (Muller, 1998; Carter & Wojtkiewicz, 2000). Carter and Wojtkiewicz (2000) discussed their results, which found gender differences in parental involvement do exist in relation to the way society has changed in regards to gender socialisation. This research, conducted 12 years ago, suggests that traditional social practices favouring males has changed, and therefore more expectations for greater academic achievement are attributed to females. It is likely that, over the past decade, the gap between genders (although it still exists in some ways) is

lessening in respect to academic opportunities for females, and parents are likely to be involved in their child's schooling regardless of gender. The current research suggests that this is at least a probable assumption for this particular student population in New Zealand.

When considering ethnicity and parental involvement, the results suggest that there is only one difference between minority and Pakeha/New Zealand European groups of parents. Parents from both groups are likely to be involved in their children's education in similar ways, such as communicating with the school, attending school events and providing an adequate study environment. The difference between these groups exists in regards to helping their child with school work at home. Parents in the minority group (which includes Maori, Pacific Island, Asian and other ethnicities), are more likely to help their child with their homework and assignments out of school time than the Pakeha/New Zealand European parents are. This result may not be reflective of all the different ethnicities included in the minority group, however previous research has found similar differences between European American parents and Chinese American parents (Huntsinger & Jose, 2009). Chinese parents were more likely to spend time at home helping their child with their school work, or tutoring them, than other European descendent parents (Huntsinger & Jose, 2009). Ethnicity of the child was reported for this sample and the second largest proportion of students was Asian. The fact that there were more children reported to be Asian than any other ethnic group may suggest why the results showed this particular difference of parental assistance with homework. The meaning of children's education as a whole is said to change depending on culture (Huntsinger & Jose, 2009), thus providing a suggestion as to what the data has reported in the current study.

The ethnic group that had the smallest percentage of students in the current population was New Zealand's own indigenous Maori culture. Bishop and colleagues

(2003) found that parents and students felt that the differences of their culture, particularly their beliefs and the way they perceive education, was not being taken into account by the schools they attended. However, with such a small percentage of Maori families participating in the current study, it was not possible to investigate any differences unique to this cultural group.

Thirdly, this study aimed to investigate if any differences existed in parental involvement of this population of parents related to the year level of the children at the school. Previous research has suggested that differences may not only exist between primary and secondary student needs, but also between the individual year levels of students at high schools (Hill & Taylor, 2004). The present results suggest that as the child advances through the year levels at secondary school, help with homework and facilitation of the study environment at home by parents, decreases. This suggests that the child as he/she grows older, also grows in knowledge and independence, and therefore prefers the role of moral support rather than active participation by the parental figures. It may also suggest a more practical difficulty: that parents may be less able to help their child with assignments as they become too challenging for the parents themselves (Eccles & Harold, 1996). Finding a balance between being actively involved and being available for moral support may be difficult for some parents as they navigate this developmental period. On the other hand, when considering non-linear relationships between student's year level and parents' involvement, there is a trend that suggests that parents who have a child in Year 9, 11, and 13 were more often involved in setting up an effective study environment at home. The post-hoc analyses (LSD) showed that only the increased involvement at Year 9 and 11 was significant. This pattern could be attributed to the introduction of a new school and curriculum (Year 9), and the introduction of National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA; New Zealand secondary school qualification system) examinations

at Year 11. The importance of these critical times in a student's education may prompt more pro-active parental involvement to ensure that the student has settled into school, and is subsequently achieving at the national standard level (NCEA). Although non-significant, a trend (as shown in Figure 4) exists which indicates that parents of a child in Year 9 or 13 are more often involved in assisting with homework and assignments. This again could be explained by the timing of the new school, and the final academic year of high school where the student will be required to work towards an NCEA University Entrance (UE) qualification. Students looking to achieve this qualification may require more assistance or reassurance from their parents regarding their academic work, therefore increasing the parent's participation in this aspect of parental involvement. The introduction of harder academic work and the NCEA requirements may also prompt more parent communication, which was shown by the significant increase in communication with the school for parents whose child was in Year 10 or above.

Higher year levels also prompted more favourable perception of the school's ability to facilitate a parent's involvement. Reasons for this could include the school's more comprehensive knowledge about the child at this stage of their schooling, depending on how long the child had attended this particular school, and therefore a better understanding of how to make being involved a lot easier for the parents. The child's maturity and level of independence may also play a part in parents' perceptions of how well the school is assisting their involvement. At year 12 and 13 students may be more capable of taking responsibility for their own education and assisting the school in facilitating their parents' involvement, therefore producing a more favourable perception of the school's effort than in earlier years.

In other findings, parents who had children within the higher year levels of high school were more likely to have a higher estimated family socio-economic status (SES).

The ability to spend more time at work, simply because the child is older and more independent, may contribute to this trend shown by the data. More disposable income may also result in being better able to provide the adolescent with learning opportunities, better learning materials, and the ability to afford to participate in extra-curricular activities. The ability to be more involved in the child's education has been shown to be affected by the SES status of the families concerned, with poorer families being unable to be as involved and supportive due to monetary concerns (Hill & Taylor, 2004). However, the relatively high decile (i.e. SES) status of the school included in the study may not necessarily reflect the diverse SES structure of the general New Zealand population.

The differences within year levels, as discussed by Hill and Taylor (2004), may be due to the nature of the academic requirements of the child's particular year level but may also exist in relation to the development of the child's maturity, family financial circumstances, and the quality of parent-child relationships. Hill and Taylor (2004) discuss the so-called decline of parental involvement for this age group as mentioned in previous research (e.g. Hornby, 2011; Leon, 2003), and suggest that it is due to the measures not being able to effectively reflect the changing nature of parental involvement where adolescents are concerned. Perhaps in order to encompass the multi-faceted and ever changing nature of parental involvement at this stage of the education system, the measures may have to be inclusive of the developmental nature of both the adolescent and the parent-child relationship.

Lastly, the final aim of the current study was to discuss the ways in which parental involvement was effective and aspects that may be improved using the trends found in the results and the parents' opinions provided in the qualitative data. A large amount of the findings discussed have included the issue of communication between the school and the parent, as well as the child's communication ability. As communication has presented as a

recurrent theme so far, it is important to acknowledge that this is a vital ingredient in the successful facilitation and implementation of parental involvement.

When analysing the qualitative data, parents' opinions clearly showed that they saw overall communication to be the best aspect of the school's facilitation of parental involvement. Communication is clearly a vital part of any relationship, and has been highlighted as a part of all types of parental involvement (Hill & Tyson, 2009). However, despite the positive perception of the school's general communication, parents also indicated that specific forms of communication were lacking. Parents indicated that the dates and times for events, such as fundraising, sports games/tournaments, camps, musical concerts, and practice times were not provided enough in advance for them to be able to either contribute to, attend, organise the child for, and take time off work if necessary. Providing this type of information may be crucial in increasing the amount of parental active participation. The qualitative data supports the idea that parents really appreciated the types of communication they had received, for example via parent-teacher interviews and liaising with teachers and deans. However, a large group of parents felt that there is still room for more communication around specific topics. Some parents suggested that the amount of electronic communication (website, email, and text message) could be improved as it is easily accessible for most parents, and it is more likely to reach the parents than the newsletter at the bottom of the student's school bag. The website and parent and student portals initiative seems to be a mode that works for some parents who have access to this type of communication. As the internet has become more accessible for most families in New Zealand, it may be useful for secondary schools to provide a student and parent portal that contains subject information, class schedules, assessment and examination timetables, and contact details for staff. Yet, for families in lower SES areas, this may not be a reality and alternative modalities for this type of communication need to be explored. Again,

effectiveness of the adolescent's communication also comes into play with this issue, as the data clearly shows that their effective communication may improve aspects of parental involvement, such as attending school and sporting events, and providing the appropriate learning materials and environment in the family home.

As previously discussed, parents have indicated that they are not satisfied with the amount of curriculum and assessment information being communicated to them. Information regarding the child's subjects and accompanying assessments seems to come through as a really important matter for parents. Parents preferred to be informed because it allowed them to support the child through times of stress and difficulty that they experienced with assignments and examinations. Providing parents with this information, directly from the school rather than via the student, may increase the positive perception of the school's facilitation, and the parents' ability to provide efficacious support, but may also aid the child's performance due to parents being better able to provide the child with what they need in order to study effectively. This type of home-based support has been previously linked with positive academic outcomes for students (Rogers et al, 2009).

Increasing the communication of all parties, parent, child and school, as well as making information pertaining to the child's learning and assessment needs as accessible as possible, seems to be the over-arching theme that appears from the findings of the current study. While there are practical things that can be done to increase the communication between the school and parents, the communication between parents and their children may be different due to the developmental period which children are experiencing at this stage of their education. During adolescence it is clear that the child's relationship with the parent changes, as independence is sought and more time is spent socialising with peers. Although it may seem complicated at times, it is important for

parents to stay involved in their child's education at this time as high school becomes the child's predominant social environment (Leon, 2003).

Although this study only found minor ethnic and year level differences, and no gender differences that pertain to the way parents are involved in their child's secondary education, it did reveal the ways in which parents were and were not satisfied with the way they were involved or the way the school was assisting with this involvement. This data and the direct opinions of the parents were invaluable for considering the ways in which parental involvement can be improved within New Zealand high schools. The communication triangle between parents, students, and the school seemed to be the overarching theme within the quantitative and qualitative data. As previously noted, the communication between parents and the school can be remedied by implementing practical strategies within the school, which could increase parental involvement on many levels, therefore possibly improving student academic outcomes. Improving the quality and quantity of communication between the students and parents, however, may be a different matter altogether when considering the changes within the parent-child relationship due to the physical, emotional, and social developmental period adolescents face whilst at high school. This concern will be important to include in further research and will help to further educate professionals and families alike.

Limitations of the Study

Although this study helped to shed some light on the ways parents are involved with their adolescent's education, there are some limitations that exist within the study. Rectifying these issues, and building on this research may provide additional valuable insight into this topic. Firstly, the population sample that was recruited to participate in this study limited the ability to generalise the findings of this study. The percentages of the

different ethnic groups, within the current sample, were not large enough to analyse on their own, hence use of dichotomous grouping. A very small percentage of the participants (2%) identified themselves as Maori, which does not reflect the general composition of Maori students that attend New Zealand secondary schools. The participants of this study were also parents of children who attended a Decile 7 school (schools are graded from Decile 1-10 depending on the SES of the surrounding residential area), which reflects a mostly middle-class residential area. This indicates that most families' income would fall within a higher SES bracket. The use of a Decile 7 school is not representative of families within different SES brackets. Single parents and lower SES families may be less represented in this sample. The fact that the sample was mainly Pakeha/New Zealand European families with children attending a Decile 7 school means that these findings may be representative of the average middle-class family living in Christchurch, but not representative of the general population of New Zealand, including the indigenous Maori culture.

Another limitation lies within the measures used to determine the amount and types of involvement that existed within the participant sample. The Parent Event Participation scale had questionable reliability but was retained because it was initially thought that measuring this type of involvement was crucial. However, due to the fact that this particular scale was devised as a research tool for younger children, it may need to be revised to include the active participation that is more suited to the relationship that the parent, school, and adolescent have at the secondary stage of education.

The results of the multivariate analysis to analyse the variance between the two groups of satisfied and unsatisfied parents was found to be statistically significant, however it also had a small effect size which indicates that the significant difference between these groups was very small. Therefore, this finding must be interpreted with

caution as the absolute difference between the unsatisfied and satisfied parents was minimal and only applies to a small group of parents.

Despite the existing limitations this study was able to present the ways in which parents, whose children attend a middle-class, Decile 7 secondary school in New Zealand, were involved and what their perceptions of the school's facilitation of their involvement encompassed. However, it is important to include a representative sample for research of this nature so it may be applied to the general population of New Zealand schools, and consequently help to improve parental involvement and facilitation of parental involvement, since it has been well established that it can improve students' academic success.

Implications for Future Research

There are many implications for future research that stem from the current study and findings. The concept of parental involvement has been well thought out over the many years that it has been researched. However, there is much more to be investigated with this particular topic when considering the developmental needs of the adolescent and, consequently, the changing role of the parent in all aspects of the adolescent's life. In order to fully capture the way that parents are involved in education at the secondary level, a measure that incorporates the parent-child relationship and its impact on involvement may need to be included. As the needs of the student change, and the role of the parent changes also, it is important to capture the perspective of both parties when considering this topic. Conducting research that uses a sample of both parents and their children who attend secondary school may help to pinpoint the differences and similarities that exist within the child's needs for involvement, and how the parent is actually involved. Additionally, to capture the true picture of how parental involvement evolves with the child's progression

through secondary school, a longitudinal study that follows a sample of parents and their children throughout the entire experience of secondary school will provide a more accurate and comprehensive picture of how involvement changes with the child's age and increasing academic demand and pressure.

Including a comparison of different schools from different SES areas will also expand the research on parental involvement. Incorporating this comparison into a research project will help to produce an overall picture of parental involvement, the differences between families of different brackets of income, and may shed light on the ways that schools in different communities with different SES levels may need to incorporate in order to improve the relationship between families and schools, and in turn hopefully increase parental involvement. However, to improve the relationship between all families and schools, there also needs to be a sample of Maori, Pacific Island, Asian and other cultures that attend our secondary schools, that is representative of the composition of the New Zealand population overall. It has previously been discussed that education takes on different meanings within different cultures, and research must capture those differences in order to provide schools with information on how best to accommodate these cultural groups, and to ensure there is equal facilitation of involvement for all parents within the secondary school education system.

Conclusion

In conclusion, according to the results of the current study, the child's gender has no significant effect on how often the parent is involved in their education, nor does it have any effect on the different types of parental involvement. A small significant difference was found between Pakeha/New Zealand European and minority ethnic groups when participation in home-based involvement was considered. Furthermore, participation in

events and the home-based aspect of involvement was more likely to decline for parents with children in higher year levels, but non-linear trends suggest that further investigation could provide evidence that parents are either more or less likely to be involved in the home-based learning and study environment facilitation depending on the timing of NCEA examinations and increasing academic pressure.

The qualitative evidence from parents combined with the quantitative data suggests that for this sample, communication is the paramount aspect of parental involvement, and improving this communication may in turn improve the parent's participation in all types of involvement, as well as the school's facilitation of these types of involvement. The factor of child communication may also be improved, yet further research is required to consider the perspective of adolescents concerning the way in which they communicate with their parents and the school.

The usefulness of the current study is in its contribution to the ongoing task of understanding the role of parents within a child's education and the importance of communication, not only between children and their parents, but also with school personnel who are charged with the responsibility of educating the young people of New Zealand.

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Appendix A

Recruitment Letter

Dear Parents and Caregivers,

[The high school] has joined forces with researchers from the University of Canterbury to conduct a study on parental involvement in secondary school education. The purpose of this research project is to explore how parents get involved in their children's education at the high school level, and how parents feel about the school's role in facilitating parental involvement. This is your chance to have a look back at the school year and provide some feedback to the school and participate in a valuable study.

The researchers from the University of Canterbury include Professor Garry Hornby, Dr. Myron Friesen and Masters student Katie Roberts, all from the College of Education. In addition, the principal and [the high school] board of Trustees have endorsed this study.

Participating in this research project involves completing a short questionnaire (approximately 20-30 minutes). As a gratuity for your valuable time, all parents who participate are entered into a draw for one of 5 $100 grocery vouchers. You can participate by completing the questionnaire online at the web address at the bottom of this paragraph. Or, you can request a paper copy of our questionnaire by ringing **03-364-2987 extension 8914**. If you ring and have to leave a message, simply state that you would like to receive a paper copy of the "High School Parent Questionnaire", and include your home address. A copy of the questionnaire will be sent out to you with a postage paid return envelope. The study web address is:
http://canterbury.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_eyg2Q0d9hA14W7q

At the conclusion of this study we will provide the school with a summary of the results, including any suggestions that you as a parent or caregiver provide us with. All information provided by you will be kept strictly confidential. Your individual data is identified only with a study code number. Please see the information sheet on the questionnaire for all information and instructions.

Thank you for your consideration. We look forward to your participation in this project.

Yours sincerely,

Katie Roberts
Child and Family Psychology MA Student
University of Canterbury, Christchurch
kar102@uclive.ac.nz

Professor Garry Hornby
School of Sciences and Physical Education,
University of Canterbury, Christchurch.
Tel: (03) 364-2987 ext. 4906

Dr Myron Friesen
School of Educational Studies and Human Development,
University of Canterbury, Christchurch.
Tel: (03) 364-2987 ext. 8914

Appendix B

College of Education

School of Educational Studies and Human Development
Tel: +64 3 364 2987, Fax: +64 3 364 2418, Email: admin@eshd.canterbury.ac.nz
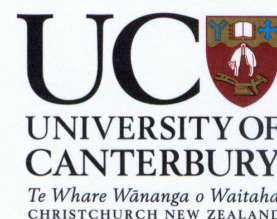
Investigating Parental Involvement in Secondary School Student's Education

<u>Participant Information Sheet</u>

Persons in Charge: Katie Roberts, 5th Year Child and Family Psychology
Student, University of Canterbury, Christchurch.
Email: kar102@uclive.ac.nz

Professor Garry Hornby, School of Sciences and Physical
Education, University of Canterbury, Christchurch.
Tel: (03) 364-2987 ext. 4906

Dr Myron Friesen, School of Educational Studies and
Human Development, University of Canterbury, Private Bag
4800, Christchurch. Tel: (03) 364-2987 ext. 8914

July 2011

Background
You are invited to take part in a research project which will investigate the type and level
of involvement of parents of students at [the high school]. This research project has three
main aims: (1) to provide useful information and suggestions from parents for improving
parental involvement in secondary schools in New Zealand, with a specific focus on[the
high school]; (2) to investigate whether gender has a significant effect on the amount of
time parents spend being involved in their child's education; and (3) to examine the
differences or similarities of parental involvement between the parents of Year 9 students
and the parents of Year 13 students.

 This study is being conducted by Child and Family Psychology Masters' student Katie
Roberts, Professor Garry Hornby and Dr. Myron Friesen. If you have any questions or
concerns about this project, you are free to contact Katie, Garry or Myron via the details
listed above.

Who can participate in this study?
We are seeking one parent of students enrolled at [the high school] to participate in this
study. If you have more than one child at [the high school], we ask that you complete the
questionnaire concerning your eldest child. If your child divides his/her time between 2
households, we request that the parent who is most involved with the child's education to
complete the questionnaire.

Most importantly, your participation in this study is entirely voluntary (your choice). You do not have to take part in this study. You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time. Participation will in no way affect your relationship with the school, or your child's relationship with the school. If you chose to withdraw from the study after completing the questionnaire, we will use our best endeavours to remove any of the information relating to you from the project, including any final publication, provided that this remains practically achievable.

What does the study involve?

If you agree to take part in the study, it will involve completing either an online, or pencil/paper copy, of a questionnaire in your own time. The questionnaire takes approximately 20 minutes to complete. If you wish to participate, but do not wish to participate online, we can arrange for a paper version of the study material to be mailed to your home along with a self-addressed and postage paid envelope. Simply contact the researchers and request a hard copy. To request a paper copy of the questionnaire, ring the phone number, (03) 364-2987 ext. 8914, and leave a message stating your name and an address. Only the researchers will have access to this password protected message service. The questionnaire asks a number of items concerning the type of activities that you as a parent participate in regarding your child's education, the amount of time you spend being involved in these various activities, the types of communication between teachers, parents and school administration, and aspects of [the high school] that could possibly be improved, changed or added in order to provide better opportunities for your parental involvement.

Confidentiality, Anonymity, and Data Storage

Any identifying information will be kept separately from questionnaire data. Any identifying information will only be used for the purpose of sending a pencil/paper copy of the questionnaire or for the purpose of the draw for the supermarket vouchers. The only people who will have any access to your raw data are the principal investigators. All raw data is kept in secure data files with your information identified only by a unique number for the purposes of this project. Following completion of the study, the raw data will be kept for a minimum period of 5 years and then destroyed.

Are there any risks or benefits to participating?

There are no foreseeable physical or psychological risks involved in participating in this study. The items in the questionnaire do not probe highly personal or sensitive information and the tasks are not overly demanding. In addition, this study has received ethical approval from the University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee. If you have questions or concerns about the content of the questionnaire or the procedures used in this study, please feel free to contact the researchers via the details listed above or you may contact the ethics committee directly. Please address complaints to, The Chair, University of Human Ethics Committee, University of Canterbury, Private Bag 4800, Christchurch; email: human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz. As a gratuity for your time you will have the choice to enter into the draw for 5 $100 grocery vouchers.

Feedback and Results

After we have collected and analysed the data, the results of this study may be published. Please be assured that your individual information will be kept confidential and

anonymous. If at any stage you would like an update on our research findings, or have any questions about the study, please contact us on the above phone numbers or email addresses. A summary of the results will be provided to the school and will be available to participants via a link on the high school website. Finally, we would like to thank you for your time and participation in this study. Your assistance is greatly appreciated.

Information Sheet and Consent

Parental Involvement in Secondary School Student's Education

As a gratuity for your time you will have the choice to enter into a draw for one of ten $50 grocery vouchers to be drawn at the conclusion of the study.

Participant Information Sheet

Persons in Charge:
Katie Roberts, 5th Year Child and Family Psychology Student, University of Canterbury, Christchurch. Email: kar102@uclive.ac.nz

Professor Garry Hornby, School of Sciences and Physical Education, University of Canterbury, Christchurch. Email: garry.hornby@canterbury.ac.nz

Dr Myron Friesen, School of Educational Studies and Human Development, University of Canterbury, Private Bag 4800, Christchurch. Email: myron.friesen@canterbury.ac.nz

Background
You are invited to take part in a research project which will investigate the type and level of involvement of parents of students at Riccarton High School. This research project has three main aims: (1) to provide useful data and suggestions from parents for improving parental involvement in secondary schools in New Zealand, with a specific focus on Riccarton High School; (2) to examine the differences or similarities of parental involvement between the parents of Year 9 students and the parents of Year 13 students; and (3) to investigate whether gender has a significant effect on the amount of time parents spend being involved in their child's education.

This study is being conducted by Child and Family Psychology Masters' student Katie Roberts, Professor Garry Hornby and Dr. Myron Friesen. If you have any questions or concerns about this project, you are free to contact Katie, Garry or Myron via the details listed above.

Who can participate in this study?
All parents who have a student currently enrolled at Riccarton High School are able to participate by filling out the questionnaire. Most importantly, your participation in this study is entirely voluntary (your choice). You do not have to take part in this study. As a participant you have the right to decide not to participate or to withdraw at any time and this will not affect you or your child's relationship with the school. If you chose to withdraw, we will use our best endeavours to remove any of the information relating to you from the project, including any final publication, provided that this remains practically achievable.

What does the study involve?
If you agree to take part in the study, it will involve completing either an online, or pencil/paper copy, of a questionnaire in your own time. The questionnaire takes approximately 20 minutes to complete. If you wish to participate, but do not wish to participate online, we can arrange for a paper version of the study material to be mailed to your home along with a self-addressed and postage paid envelope. Simply contact the researchers and request a hard copy. To request a paper copy of the questionnaire, ring the phone number, (03) 364-2987 ext. 8914, and leave a message stating your name and an address. Only the researchers will have access to this password protected message service.

The questionnaire asks a number of items concerning the type of activities that you as a parent participate in regarding your child's education, the amount of time spent being involved in these various activities, the types of communication between teachers, parents and school administration, and aspects of Riccarton High school that could possibly be improved, changed or added, in order to provide better opportunities for your parental involvement.

Confidentiality, Anonymity, and Data Storage
Any identifying information will be kept separately from questionnaire data. Any identifying information will only be used for the purpose of sending a pencil/paper copy of the questionnaire or for the purpose of the draw for the supermarket vouchers. The only people who will have any access to your raw data are the principal investigators. All raw data is kept in secure data files with your information identified only by a unique number for the purposes of this project. Following completion of the study, the raw data will be kept for a minimum period of 5 years and then destroyed.

Are there any risks or benefits to participating?
There are no foreseeable physical or psychological risks involved in participating in this study. The items in the questionnaire do not probe highly personal or sensitive information and the tasks are not overly demanding. In addition, this study has received ethical approval from the University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee. If you have questions or concerns about the content of the questionnaire or the procedures used in this study, please feel free to contact the researchers via the details listed above or you may contact the ethics committee directly. Please address complaints to, The Chair, Human Ethics Committee, University of Canterbury, Private Bag 4800, Christchurch; email: human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz.

Feedback and Results
After we have collected and analysed the data, the results of this study may be published. Please be assured that your individual

information will be kept confidential and anonymous. If at any stage you would like an update on our research findings, or have any questions about the study, please contact us on the above phone numbers. A summary of the results will be provided to the school and will be available via a link on the Riccarton High school website. Finally, we would like to thank you for your time and participation in this study. Your assistance is greatly appreciated.

NOTE: This questionnaire is designed to be used with a range of primary and secondary schools, therefore some questions may be broad and not specifically applicable to the secondary school system. However, please answer all questions with your child in mind.

In order to participate in this study please click on the tick-boxes below after reading the following information.

I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet, which explains this research project and my role as a participant. In particular, I understand that:

- I will be asked to complete the following online questionnaire about my involvement in my child's education as a parent.
- Participating in this research project is voluntary (my choice). Whether or not I participate in this study will not affect my relationship or my child's relationship with the researchers or with the school .
- I have the right to stop participating at any time or request that my information be withdrawn from the study.
- I understand that my individual data for this research will be stored securely and confidentialy (i.e., no one other than the principal researchers will have access to my individual data), and my personal information will be kept confidential in any reports resulting from this research project.

	I agree	I do NOT agree
I agree to complete the online survey, and I give permission for the information I provide to be used in the publication of the results of this study, provided that my personal information is kept confidential and anonymous.	○	○

Parental Involvement

INSTRUCTIONS:
All the questions in this survey concern your involvement with your child at Riccarton High School <u>this</u> school year.
In the case where a participant may have more than one child, we ask that <u>one</u> parent from each family complete the questionnaire for the <u>eldest child</u>. It is limited to one questionnaire per family.
If the child should have separated or divorced parents and therefore multiple families, we ask that the parent who the child lives with for the majority of their time, to please participate and complete the questionnaire. If the child is perceived to spend an equal amount of time with both parents, then we ask that <u>one</u> parent then fill out the questionnaire.

Part 1 – Frequency and Level of Parent Involvement:
Use the scale below to answer the following questions.

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
I actively participate in planning and management of school sports-trips/drama/kapa haka/camp etc in a voluntary manner alongside school staff.	○	○	○	○	○
I talk with other parents about school meetings and events.	○	○	○	○	○
I participate in fundraising activities in my child's school.	○	○	○	○	○
I attend my child's extracurricular activities e.g. drama/choir performances, sporting events, kapa haka, etc.	○	○	○	○	○
I spend time working with my child on Mathematics					

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
I spend time working with my child on Mathematics schoolwork.	○	○	○	○	○
I spend time working with my child on English schoolwork.	○	○	○	○	○
I spend time working with my child on schoolwork in other subjects.	○	○	○	○	○
	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
I bring home learning materials for my child (books/DVDs etc).	○	○	○	○	○
I share experiences of when I went to high school.	○	○	○	○	○
I make sure that my child has a space for books and school materials.	○	○	○	○	○
I make sure that my child has a quiet study space for homework.	○	○	○	○	○
I maintain clear rules at my home that my child should obey.	○	○	○	○	○
I talk about my child's learning efforts in front of friends and/or relatives.	○	○	○	○	○
I review my child's school work.	○	○	○	○	○
	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
I keep a regular morning and bedtime schedule for my child.	○	○	○	○	○
I limit extracurricular/social activities in order to make school work a priority for my child.	○	○	○	○	○
I praise my child for good effort on assignments.	○	○	○	○	○
I talk to teachers/dean about how my child gets along with his/her classmates at school.	○	○	○	○	○
I talk with my child's teachers/dean about classroom/school rules.	○	○	○	○	○
I talk to my child's teachers/dean about his/her difficulties at school.	○	○	○	○	○
I talk to my child's teachers/dean about homework assignments.	○	○	○	○	○
	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
I talk to my child's teachers/dean about my child's accomplishments	○	○	○	○	○
I attend conferences with the teachers/dean to talk about my child's learning or behaviour.	○	○	○	○	○
I schedule meetings with my child's dean to talk about problems or to gain information.	○	○	○	○	○
I talk with my child's teachers/dean on the phone.	○	○	○	○	○
I talk with my child's teachers/dean about personal or family matters.	○	○	○	○	○
If I had concerns about my child's experiences at school, I would know who to contact.	○	○	○	○	○
	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always

Parental Involvement

Part 2: Opinion of Self and School Facilitation in Parental Involvement
Please use the scale below to indicate the extent to which you disagree/agree with the following items.

	Completely		Don't	Somewhat Completely		Not

	Completely Disagree	Disagree	Don't Know/Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Completely Agree	Not applicable
Teachers in this school use various means (eg. phone calls, emails, parent portal website, text messages, newsletters, regular notes, and/or parent-teacher conferences) in addition to reports to communicate my child's progress to me.	○	○	○	○	○	○
Parents learn from the teachers/dean specific ways to help their children with their homework.	○	○	○	○	○	○
The school's teachers, deans and principals are open to parents' suggestions and involvement.	○	○	○	○	○	○
Someone from my family has volunteered time to the school during the last twelve months.	○	○	○	○	○	○
Teachers/deans contact parents regularly to discuss student progress.	○	○	○	○	○	○
I feel welcome when I visit my child's school.	○	○	○	○	○	○

	Completely Disagree	Disagree	Don't Know/Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Completely Agree	Not applicable
I have visited my child's school at least twice in the past year.	○	○	○	○	○	○
There is an active parent/teacher association.	○	○	○	○	○	○
I am actively involved with the PTA.	○	○	○	○	○	○
Teachers seek ideas and suggestions from parents.	○	○	○	○	○	○
Theschool informs parents about what students need in order to study effectively at home.	○	○	○	○	○	○
I feel that my child's teacher/s care about student welfare.	○	○	○	○	○	○

	Completely Disagree	Disagree	Don't Know/Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Completely Agree	Not applicable
In general, staff are honest and open with parents and students.	○	○	○	○	○	○
It is difficult for parents to contribute to decisions made at this school.	○	○	○	○	○	○
It is easy to make appointments to meet with teachers/deans.	○	○	○	○	○	○
Parents are aware that teachers are willing to help their children with specific needs or concerns.	○	○	○	○	○	○
If my child got into trouble at school, I am confident that the school would deal with the problem effectively.	○	○	○	○	○	○
The school effectively communicates any changes within the curriculum and examination systems.	○	○	○	○	○	○

	Completely Disagree	Disagree	Don't Know/Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Completely Agree	Not applicable
I expect my child to earn grades of Achieved or better, and I make sure my child knows that is what I expect.	○	○	○	○	○	○
The school/teachers provide clear communication to parents about the nature and timing of assessments for my child.	○	○	○	○	○	○
The school/teachers send home regular reports about my child's grades and the nature of their behaviour in class.	○	○	○	○	○	○
The principal communicates the overall mission/vision/ethos of the school to parents.	○	○	○	○	○	○

	Completely Disagree	Disagree	Don't Know/Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Completely Agree	Not applicable

Part 3: Schools can facilitate parent involvement in their children's education in a number of different ways. Assuming that all of the following items were provided to you by Riccarton High School, how would those help you stay informed and involved in your child's education?

would these help you stay informed and involved in your child's education?

Please rank the following items based on how helpful they would be for keeping you informed and involved in your child's education. Click and drag the most helpful items toward the top of the list and the least helpful items toward the bottom.

Parent-teacher meetings

Individual course descriptions with information regarding nature and timing of assessments

School newsletters

Notices sent home with students

Course reports at the end of each term

The results from tests/essays/projects made available from the school's website

Text Messages

Emails

Other? [   ]

Do you feel you have received adequate information from the school regarding course content and curriculum?

Not at all	Limited Information	Adequate Information	Excellent information
○	○	○	○

Do you feel you have received adequate information from the school regarding the timing and nature of course assessments?

Not at all	Limited Information	Adequate Information	Excellent information
○	○	○	○

What aspect/s of Riccarton High School do you find most helpful for your involvement in your child's education?

[   ]
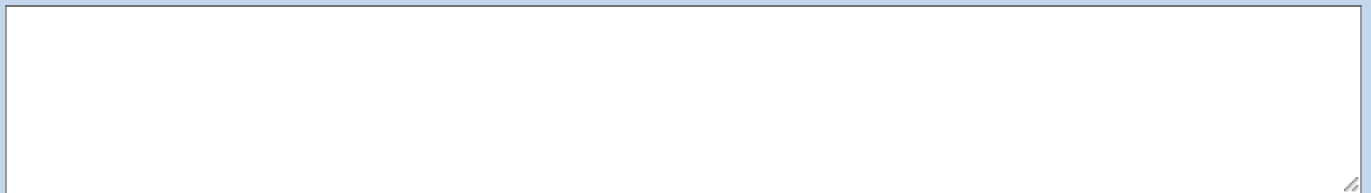
What aspect/s of Riccarton High School do you think need to be improved, and/or changed, in order to help your involvement in your child's education? Please, include any suggestions for change that you may have.

child's education. Please, include any suggestions for change that you may have.

Are there any activities/types of communication/events, which the school could organise, that you believe would help you become more involved in your child's education?

Have any of the major disruptions (such as the earthquakes or the snowfall) affected the level or type of your parental involvement, in your child's education, in any way? Please describe how.

Riccarton High School has recently developed the school intranet website for parents and students. The following 4 questions concern your experience with this resource.

How frequently have you used the school's intranet website (parent portal or student portal)?

Never used it.	Used it once or twice.	Use it occasionally.	Use it frequently.
○	○	○	○

When you've used the school's intranet website (parent portal or student portal), what information were you seeking? You may select more than one option below.

☐ School notices.

☐ Timetable information for my child.

☐ Course assessment information or school reports.

☐ Staff contact details

☐ Other

How accessible was the information you were seeking from the school's intranet website (parent portal or student portal)?

○ It was very easy to find the information i was looking for.

○ It took a few minutes, but I was able to find the information I was looking for.

○ Very difficult to find what I was looking for.

○ I couldn't find what I was looking for.

Do you feel the school's intranet website (parent portal or student portal) is helpful for keeping you informed/involved in your child's education?

Not at all helpful.	A little helpful.	Moderately helpful.	Very helpful.
○	○	○	○

Parental Expectations

Part 4: The following questions ask about the expectations you as a parent have for your child and his/her educational participation, achievements, and future educational qualifications.

What are your expectations regarding your child's course marks/grades?

○ I expect my child to try to do their best. Marks/grades don't matter.

○ I expect my child to achieve marks/grades that are on par with the average for their age group.

○ I expect my child to achieve marks/grades that are above average compared to their age group.

○ I expect my child to obtain marks/grades that are well above average (excellence) compared to their age group.

What are your expectations regarding your child's involvement in extra curricular activities, such as sports, arts, drama, kapa haka, school leadership.

○ I don't have any expectations. My child can get involved in whatever they are interested in.

○ I expect my child to participate in at least one extra curricular activity or school leadership.

○ I expect my child to participate in more than one extra curricular activity and/or school leadership.

○ I expect my child to be widely involved in extra curricular activities and school leadership.

What are your expectations regarding school attendance?

○ I allow my child to decide how frequently they want to attend school.

○ I feel that regular school attendance is not that important and allow my child to frequently miss school.

○ The occasional absence from school is fine as long as it doesn't interfere with their course work.

○ I expect my child to regularly attend school. Absences should be rare.

In relation to your own educational achievements at secondary school, what are your expectations for your child's achievements at secondary school?

○ I do not have any expectations for my child's educational achievements in comparison to my own.

○ I expect my child to achieve about the same level of qualifications as I did.

○ I expect my child to have higher educational achievements than I did.

○ I do NOT think my child will have the same educational achievements as I did.

What are your expectations for your child's educational achievements beyond secondary school?

○ I just want my child to finish secondary school.

○ I want my child to gain some type of diploma or certificate (e.g. CPIT) after secondary school.

○ I want my child to graduate from university.

○ I want my child to obtain postgraduate qualifications (e.g. Masters or Doctoral degrees) from university.

Do you feel that your child reliably communicates with you about what is happening in their courses, course work, assessment, and results?

Not at all.	Somewhat reliable.	Generally reliable.	Very reliable.
○	○	○	○

Do you feel that your child reliably communicates with you about what is happening at school in their peer groups and extracurricular activities?

Not at all.	Somewhat reliable.	Generally reliable.	Very reliable.
○	○	○	○

Demographics

The following information will help us track the demographic characteristics of the participants in this study. Your individual information will be kept strictly confidential.

What is your gender?

Male	Female
○	○

What is your child's gender?

Male ○   Female ○

Please complete the following items by typing in the text boxes.

What is your age?	
What is your child's age?	
What is your ethnicity?	
What is your child's ethnicity?	
What year is your child at Riccarton High School (9, 10, 11, 12, or 13)?	
What is your relationship to the child you referred to in this survey?	
Did you complete secondary school (high school)?	
How many years of post-secondary schooling of any kind have you completed?	
What is your occupation?	
Are you a single-parent family? If "yes" please disregard next 3 questions.	
Did your partner complete secondary school (high school)?	
How many years of post-secondary schooling of any kind has your partner completed?	
What is your partner's occupation?	

Thank you!

Thank you for participating in this study!

To show our appreciation, you can enter a draw for one of ten $50 grocery vouchers. If you would like enter this drawing, please provide a valid email address or a postal address in the space below.

Email address	
Postal address	

If we receive funding for a follow-up study for this project, would you be interested in participating again?

YES	NO
○	○

If you answered "YES" above, may we contact you for the follow-up study via the email address you provided? (PLEASE NOTE: your email address will NOT be given to anyone outside of this study and will NOT be used for any other purposes.)

YES	NO
○	○