Parents' satisfaction with the education of their child with autism

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PARENTS' SATISFACTION WITH THE EDUCATION
OF THEIR CHILD WITH AUTISM

by

Dalhee Songlee
Bachelor of Art
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
2000

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the

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ABSTRACT

Parents' Satisfaction with the Education of their Child with Autism

by

Dalhee Songlee

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Students with autism often have behaviors that are unusual and can be disturbing to teachers and students who do not understand this disorder. To help these students grow and develop, it is critical to communicate with the parents and to involve parents. The education of a child with autism can be a source of considerable concern to parents regarding school placement decisions, the levels of classroom support provided, and the attitudes and behaviors of teachers. This study examined parent’s satisfaction with the education of their child with autism. Thirty-two parents of children with autism completed a 64-item questionnaire designed to assess their attitude of their child’s education; right to involvement, identity, perceived capability of involvement, perceived involvement, self-efficacy, satisfaction, perceived climate and beliefs about inclusion. The results revealed that parents strongly agreed that they have rights to involvement of their child’s education.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Autism is a disability syndrome characterized principally by significant problems in the development of communication and social functioning. Autism is considered a disorder that affects 2 to 5 out of every 10,000 children and appears before the age of three. Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) encompasses a broad definition of autism that includes related disabilities such as Asperger Syndrome, Tett's Syndrome, and Pervasive Developmental Disorder. Autism and ASD are labels describing students with a great range of abilities and disabilities, including individuals with severe intellectual challenges as well as students who are intellectually gifted. In the past, nearly all students identified as autistic had noticeable behaviors and serious problems in social relationships and communication. Recently professional attention has turned to students with milder forms of autism, including Asperger syndrome. Children with Asperger syndrome sometimes seem like typical development, but sometimes have problems knowing whether to use a first-person, second-person, or third-person pronoun. They have limited facial expression, seem inept at interpreting others' nonverbal communication, and are awkward in social situations, as though they do not quite understand the unspoken rules for social interactions. They have problems in gross motor coordination but are highly intelligent, with intense interest in one or two
topics. At least some of the individuals with autism who do not have cognitive
disabilities are gifted or talented. Therefore, with appropriate teaching, all students with
autism can learn. Over the past 20 years, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
(IDEA) supported involvement of parents of children and youth with disabilities in all
facets of education. Under IDEA, most of the mandates under 94 -142 remained intact.
However, some of IDEA’s most important revisions and additions included autism in
special education. The research literature clearly indicates that children perform better,
both academically and socially, if parents are involved actively in their children’s
education. Even though parents may recognize the need for their children to be
successful in school, they do not always realize the critical role they play in their
children’s academic and social behavior achievements. Parents can play a number of
important roles in their relationship with their child’s school-organization members, care
providers, political advocates, and facilitators of professional decisions. Although even
relatively recently children with autism were thought to benefit little from education,
many children today, provided with appropriate teaching and support, are achieving
much more, and there is general acknowledgment that we probably do not know what
the limits of these achievements might be. The education of a child with autism can be a
source of considerable concern to parents. There may be anxiety in relation to school
placement decisions, and the sometimes confrontational process that can accompany
these, or in terms of relationships with school itself. Curriculum choices, the levels of
classroom support provided and the attitudes and behaviors of teachers, other staff and
peers are all potential sources of dissatisfaction to parents. This study is concerned with
parental attitudes to education and satisfaction with their child’s education.
Statement of Purpose

The education of a child with autism can be a source of considerable concern to parents. These concerns include school placement decisions, the levels of classroom support provided, and the attitudes and behaviors of teachers. Feelings of control and the ability to make choices can be undermined in situations where parents feel there are insufficient opportunities for active involvement in their child's education, or where they feel their opinions are ignored or undervalued by the professionals involved. When these situations threaten the identity of parents, they can lead to considerable dissatisfaction. This study examined parent's satisfaction with the education of their child with autism.

Research Questions

The questions addressed in this study are:

1. What are parents’ opinions about their rights to involvement in their child’s education?
2. How do parents identify their role in their child’s education?
3. How do parents perceive their capability of involvement in their child’s education?
4. How do parents perceive the level of and opportunity for involvement in their child’s education?
5. How do parents perceive their ability to affect their child’s educational progress?
6. How satisfied are parents with the educational provisions for their child?
7. What are parents’ perception of their child’s school climate?

8. What are parents’ beliefs about inclusion?
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE:

PARENTS’ INVOLVEMENT AND THEIR SATISFACTION

The review of literature is divided into 8 sections. The first four sections will examine the current policy and practice of parent involvement. The last four sections will address the parents’ satisfaction with schooling of their children.

Current Policy and Practice of Parents’ Involvement

It is important to set the study in the context of current policy and practice. Parents who are concerned about the education of children with disabilities have worked for years to pass federal and state legislation expanding educational opportunities for all children and specifically, those considered disabled. Over the past 20 years, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) supported involvement of parents of children and youth with disabilities in all facets of education. Under IDEA, most of the mandates under 94-142 remained intact. However, some of IDEA’s most important revisions and additions included autism in special education. Furthermore, parents are to be a part of the group that determines their child’s eligibility (Section 300.534.535(a)(1). IDEA’ 97 also stated that parents should have the opportunity to examine all records pertaining to their child, not just “relevant” records as stated in the law. The
intent of the legislation is to support partnerships between parents and teachers for the purpose of decision making for educational assessment, placement, and programming for children with disabilities (Edge, 1995). Parents are expected to participate in the development and implementation of individualized educational programs (IEPs) and individual family service Plans (IFSPs).

How Parents’ Involvement Affects Students, Teachers and Parents


The research literature clearly indicates that children perform better, both academically and socially, if parents are involved actively in their children’s education (Davies & Hoge, 1995; Hederson, 1987; Wills, 1992). Even though parents may recognize the need for their children to be successful in school, they do not always

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realize the critical role they play in their children's academic and social behavior achievements. Parents often assume the public school will take the place of the home in effecting their children's growth, but research does not support this assumption (Snodgrass, 1991). Research indicates that parent involvement is the strongest factor impacting the child's success in academic and social behavior performance. Research conducted by Davies (Davies, 1991; Davies, Burch, & Johnson, 1992), Henderson (1987, 1988), Epstein (Epstein, 1986, 1988; Epstein & Becker, 1982; Epstein & Dauber, 1991), Coleman (1991a, 1991b) and Hollifield (1995) indicated that the benefits of parent involvement in education are overwhelmingly positive for children. These benefits included higher grades and test scores, long-term academic achievements, positive attitudes and behavior toward school, better attendance and less tardiness, improved parent-teacher communication, and better schools.

Family involvement in the education process is considered important for students' success in school. A. J. Reynolds (1992) reports on the positive influence of parental involvement on children's academic achievement and school and the at-risk child's development of self-confidence, motivation, and sense of cohesiveness. Furthermore, families of students who did not drop out and who succeeded in school participated in their children's school decisions, demonstrated a motivation and non-punitive action concerning grades, and were involved to different degrees within the school environment (Rumberger, Ghatak, Polous, Ritter, & Dornbush, 1990).

Parents' Attitude toward Inclusion

Widespread support for parent involvement is reflected by its inclusion in nearly
every policy proposal aimed at improving the performance of our nation’s schools. Repeated calls for “Parent empowerment” identify the improvement of family-school relationships as a key weapon in the struggle to slow the downward slide in academic indicators (Marily & Bursuck, 2000). Goals 2000, the legislative mandate for expanded federal action to improve public education, locates objectives for increased parental involvement side by side with strategies focused on curriculum content and student achievement (Smarekar, 1996). The burden of meeting such goals, however, has in general been left to the schools. The voice of the parent can easily go unheard. Moreover, when the opinions of very population whose involvement is desired are ignored, a precedent may be set that may directly impact the nature of family-school interactions. A review of research explored low-income, minority parents’ ideas and attitudes about schooling. The researchers examined the source (e.g., culture, community, institutionalized factors) and nature of these ideas and their relation to partners of parent involvement in school. They found low instances of parent involvement did not reflect a parental lack of interest in their child’s development. Instead, although such factors as time, distance, and day care obligations were cited, it seemed clear that patterns of family-school interactions were controlled by highly defined, socially constructed scripts that institutionalize the relationships among parents, teachers, and school administrators. However, most of the parents blamed the school for strained relationships but directed the burden of resolution to families, teachers, and school administrators. Many suggested that if all parents would respond to exist on opportunities for family-school interaction, things would be all right. Other parents argued for more comprehensive changes.
aimed at reducing distrust and disillusionment (Smarekar & Cohen-Vogel, 2001).

Palmer and her colleagues (Palmer, Borthwick-Duffy, & Widaman, 1998) surveyed 460 parents of students with sever disabilities who attended separate schools. This group of parents and guardians was positive toward inclusion regarding social benefits, but apprehensive toward inclusion regarding educational services. Parents of children in a junior high program felt positive about the program’s impact on their children’s self-esteem and the amount of individual attention their children received in the general education classroom. And they attributed program success to teacher commitment (Gibb et al., 1997). What seems particularly clear about parents and families and the topic of inclusion is that parents should be actively involved in the decision-making process conceiving how their child will receive educational services (Grove & Fisher, 1999; Hunt & Goetz, 1997).

Review of research supported by the Department of Education’s Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) focuses on practical applications of research findings on family involvement in special education. The findings identify how family life can be utilized as a source of children’s learning opportunities, concluding with four suggested procedures: a schedule for reminding parents to involve their children in learning activities; a matrix for focusing on the child’s behaviors in different learning activities; parent responsiveness to desired child behavior as a teaching method; and family and community activities as learning opportunities on a child’s Individualized Family Service Plan or Individualized Education Program. The findings also indicate that cultural reciprocity can aid collaboration with families with a recommended four-step recursive cultural reciprocity process (Estein, 1991).
Most parents want and need information and guidance from their child's school and teachers. Parent involvement programs offer parents and school staff the opportunity to build strong mutually supportive partnerships for enhancing student learning at home and at school (Mercer, 1997). Estin (1988) notes that successful programs feature several types of parent involvement and include many roles for parents: audience, home tutor, program supporter, colearner, advocate, and decision maker. There are five major types of parent involvement, each of which occurs in different places, requires different materials and processes, and leads to different outcomes such as parenting, communicating with teachers and administrators, volunteering, learning at home, representing other parents (Brandt, 1989).

Parents' Involvement in the IEPs

A research examines the special roles of parents of children with disabilities in planning for the education of their children and discusses how educators can work effectively with parents to create meaningful individualized education programs (IEPs). Barriers to parental participation in the IEP process are identified, including communication problems and educational jargon, lack of understanding of the school system, lack of knowledge of how to help their child, feelings of inferiority, and logistical problems. Among suggestions for facilitating meaningful parental participation are finding out the parents' preferences and needs prior to scheduling the IEPs conference: (1) reviewing the evaluation and performance level (avoid jargon); (2) developing instructional goals and objectives (determine parents' expectations concerning the child's future); and (3) determining placement and related services.
Suggestions for handing disagreements during the IEPS process are also provided (Smith, Stephen W. Funding: Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED). Washington, DC. ED-99-co-0026/Report:EDO-EC-01-6)

Although the assumption that parent participation in their child’s educational program has inherent appeal and logic, the formal involvement of parents has not been easy or necessarily productive. Yoshida, Fenton, Kaufman, and Maxwell (1978) conducted a survey of 1,372 members of special education student-planning teams regarding their attitudes toward parental involvement in planning. Yoshida et al. asked members about their attitudes toward parental involvement in 24 activities. Only 2 activities were selected by more than 50 % as appropriate for parental participation: presenting information relevant to the case, and gathering information relevant case (Yoshda, et al, 1978).

A. P. Turnbull and Turnbull (1990) conclude that current findings indicate that parents are passive participants in IEPS conferences. Attending and participating in an IEPS meeting can be overwhelming for some parents who find themselves facing six or more educators and psychologists who are presenting test results that sometimes are disappointing. However, observations of IEPS meetings indicate that, in general, although parents ask few questions and comment or respond infrequently, they usually are satisfied with the meeting outcome and have few questions concerning the resulting decisions (Vaughn, Bos, Harrell, & Lasky, 1988).

Parents’ Involvement on School Placement

According to Advocates for Children (1992), school districts in New York State
have one of the lowest rates of general education placements of students with disabilities in the country. For example, in New York State, 7.0% of the students with disabilities between the ages of 6 and 21 years are served in general education classrooms in NYS, which is far below the national average of 32% (U.S. Department of Education, 1992). Thus, although efforts are being made to promote inclusive education in NYS, inclusive placements are not available readily to parents who desire this option for their children.

Many parents in NYS are not waiting passively for policy changes to access class placements in general education for their children; they actively are pursuing these placements. Whether or not these parents are immediately successful in securing inclusive education or facilitation long-term policy change, their experiences are critical to understanding the process of change. As a means of learning from parents’ experiences, this study describes perspectives of a small number of parents from one state who sought inclusive education for their children with disabilities. In addition to advocating strongly for children’s right to be included, parents acknowledged that they deserve the freedom to make decisions regarding the education of their children. Although parental rights, including participation in their children’s individual education plan, are protected by federal legislation, parents’ opinions and concerns may not be accepted readily by school districts (Salisbury, 1992; Soodak & Erwin, in press).

Because differences between parents and school personnel are not always easily resolved, parents sometimes are forced to go outside the school for assistance. However, affording families consistent opportunity for meaningful involvement in their child’s education will require the restructuring of school systems. Parents’ input is only meaningful in a school system that values parents as partners. This implies that parents
should have the freedom and power to make shared decisions with professionals regarding educational placements and practices (Erwin & Soodak, 1995).

Parents’ Role in Their Child’s Education

Research reviewed by Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) suggested involvement in the education of their typically developing children depend in part on how parents construct their role in the child’s life. Parents’ views on child rearing and ideas about what may be an appropriate role in the educational support of their child at home are important determinant of decisions to become involved with school education. Parents of children with Down syndrome provided learning support for their children and may have occupied a role as educator from infancy. Most children attend early development groups which encourage parents to undertake activities designed to support the children’s motor, language and cognitive development. Many parents are involved in teaching signing to their children, and some take on the task of teaching their young child to read, encouraged by reports that this may advance language development (Duffen, 1976; Buckley et al., 1996). Perhaps therefore, and more so than for parents of other children, the identity of parents of a child with Down’s syndrome is intimately bound up with the role of educator.

Parents can play a number of important roles in their relationship with their child’s school-organization members, care providers, political advocates, and facilitators of professional decisions. A research examines the special roles of parents of children with disabilities in planning for the education of their children and discusses how educators can work effectively with parents to create meaningful individualized education.
programs (IEPs). The involvement of parents in the IEPS process has many benefits:
increase the teacher’s understanding of the child’s environment; add to parents’
knowledge of the child’s educational settings; improve communication between parents
and the school; increase the school’s understanding of the child; increase the likelihood
that, with improved understanding between home and school, mutually agreed upon
educational goals will be attained (ERIC Clearinghouse on Disabilities and gifted
Education. Arlington, VA.; BBB36343).

When parents are not active in the IEPS process, educators may sometimes
misinterpret their lack of involvement. They may believe that parents are satisfied with
the decisions being made for their child and do not see the need for further participation,
are apathetic about their involvement in the IEPS process, or do not have enough
information about their child’s functioning and the nature of the decisions to be made to
allow them to participate. Yet numbers of barriers may preclude a parent’s active
participation in the IEPS process: communication problems, educational jargon, lack of
understanding of the school system, lack of knowledge of how to help their child, or
feelings of inferiority, logistical problems (lack of transportation or child-care, or
scheduling difficulties related to work or other responsibilities (ERIC Clearinghouse on
disabilities and gifted education Arlington, VA; BBB36343).

Determinants of success are likely to be complex and to involve characteristics of
the child, the curriculum, and the attitudes and behaviors of other pupils and staff, and
those of parents. Deciding what constitutes success is not straightforward; the policy
move towards mainstream has taken place with no real evidence that there would be
developmental or educational advantages for the children involved, although some
research suggests that reading and writing skills may be more advanced for children with Down syndrome in mainstream schools (Casey et al., 1977; Sloper et al., 1990), and there may be advantages for language and memory development (Laws et al., 2000). However, this research is not conclusive and other work either shows no clear difference of some advantages for children in special schools (e.g. Fewell and Oelwein, 1990).

The principal case for integrated education has been made in terms of social factors such as the benefit of attending the child's neighborhood school (Byrne, Cuningham and Sloper, 1989), and the availabilities of typically developing children as social role models (e.g. Guralnick, 1984).

Some factors, such as acceptance of the child, are likely to be important to successful education whatever type of school he or she attends. In particular, positive attitudes to the inclusion of a child with autism on the part of school personnel have been identified as crucial to the success of mainstreaming programs (e.g. Petty and Sadler, 1996). However, mainstream teachers may not always receive the training and classroom experiences that are likely to lead to a positive view of inclusion of children with autism. Petty (1994) found that head teachers involved in the integration of primary school children with Down syndrome felt isolated and ill-equipped for the demands made of them. Wishart and Manning (1996) surveyed the attitudes of 231 trainee teachers to inclusive education for children with Down's syndrome. The trainees had little accurate knowledge about the condition, and tended to overestimate the severity of the learning disability and to underestimate the potential of the children to learn. Only 13 per cent of the trainees were very positive about the prospect of teaching an integrated class. When trainees have poor knowledge and negative attitudes, and
mainstream teachers have little say in whether a child with Down's syndrome is placed in their class, it is hardly surprising if some children and parents experience less than welcoming climate at school (Wishart and Manning, 1996).

Teachers’ Attitude and Behaviors toward Parents

The quality of teachers’ interactions with the parents is important, but it is vital for students with disabilities (Sileo, Sileo, & Prater, 1996). Parents may be able to help teachers better understand the strengths and needs of their child in their classrooms. They also act as advocates of their children, so they can help teachers ensure that adequate supports are provided for the child’s needs. Parents often see their child’s experiences in the classroom in a way that teachers cannot; when they share this information, it helps both teachers and the students achieve more success. Furthermore, parents are teachers’ allies in education students; when teachers enlist parents’ assistance to practice skills at home, to reward a student for accomplishments at school, to communicate to the child messages consistent with teachers, the teachers and the parents are multiplying the student’s educational opportunities and providing consistency that is essential to maximize student learning. (Friend & Bursuck, 2002).

It is easy for educators to get carry away with a concept, especially one like parent involvement that has so much promise for positive outcome. But teachers and everyone else involved in providing special education services to children with disabilities should not take a one-sided view of parent involvement. Sometimes time and energy required for parents to participate in home treatment programs or parent education groups cause stress among family members or guilt if the parents cannot fulfill teachers’ expectations.
(Doernber, 1978; Winton & Turbull, 1981). Kroth (1981) and his colleagues have developed a model guide for parent involvement—the Mirror Model for Parental Involvement—that recognized that parents have a great deal to offer, as well as a need to receive services from special educators. The model assumes that not all parents need everything that professionals have to offer and that no parent should be expected to provide everything. The Mirror Model attempts to give parents an equal part in deciding what services they need and what services they might provide to professionals or other parents. The professionals have certain information, knowledge, and skills that should be shared with parents. Parents have information, knowledge, and skills that can help professionals be more effective in assisting children.

Many practitioners argue that effective education depends on constructive, two-way communication between home and school (e.g. Petley, 1994; Petty and Sadler, 1996; Clark et al., 1995; Dyson and Gians, 1993; Booth, 1996), and recent government reports recognize the need to support the role that parents play in a child’s education and to strengthen parent-teacher partnerships. However, parents do not always have frequent contact with school, nor is this highly valued by every parent and teacher (e.g. Vlachou, 1993; Petley, 1994; Beveridge, 1996; Cunnigham, 1996; OECD, 1995). In research to investigate parents’ perspectives on the provision of education for children with language problems, Docrell et al. (1999) noted that parents frequently felt uninvolved and uninformed about the support provided in mainstream schools, whereas the parents of children in special provision reported they were well-informed about their child’s education. Hoover-Dempsey et al. (1992) have linked teacher acceptance of parent involvement to teachers’ self-efficacy and confidence in their teaching skills.
Developing successful partnerships with parents in mainstream may be difficult where teachers lack confidence in their own knowledge and skills; for such teachers, acknowledging that parents may have valuable experience, and involving these parents in the education process, may undermine their own sense of professionalism. Of course, variation in the opportunities offered for parental involvement is not restricted to parents of children with special needs, and there are widespread differences in teacher attitudes to such involvement generally (Epstein, 1986). Those parents who are excluded by teacher attitudes from the level of involvement that they feel is appropriate are likely to feel dissatisfied with the school.

Working relationship with parents will depend on the student’s particular needs, the parents’ desire to be actively involved in their child’s education, and teachers’ efforts to make parents feel as though teachers’ partnership with them is important. In some cases, collaboration may be too ambitious a goal. For example, if teachers are going to interact with a parent only three or four times during the school year, the teachers may simply not have adequate opportunities to collaborate. Similarly, some parents may have so many other obligations and stressors that collaboration is not a realistic goal for them. Still, of others collaboration is not only appropriate, but recommended. Teachers’ first goal in working with parents, however, is to help them participate in meeting, conferences, and other interactions in a way that is meaningful and respectful (Friend & Cook, 2000).

It is important to set a guideline for intervention to family involvement. To the greatest extent possible, family members should be encouraged to participate in all aspects of assessment, curriculum planning, instruction, and monitoring. Parents and
other family members very often have the most useful information about an individual’s history and learning characteristics, so effective intervention and instruction should take advantage of this vital resource. Furthermore, because families are so essential in the lives of people with autism, family support that helps strengthen the family system is regarded as a vital element in providing effective intervention for people with autism (Dunlap & Bunton-Pierce, 1999).

Maupin Elementary School, in the Jefferson County Public Schools, Louisville, Kentucky, is attempting to implement these ideas and principles into a total parent/family involvement learning choice school. The parents and educators at Maupin have developed a matrix of activities that reflect home, school, and community environments across the areas of care and support, high expectations, and meaningful participation (Benard, 1993; Jan Deeb and Judy Elmer, personal communication, January, 1993).

Parents’ Satisfaction with the Schooling of Their Children

A research investigated parents’ satisfaction with the schooling of their children with Down syndrome and its relationship to parent identity. Participants were accessed through the Down Syndrome Educational Trust in Portsmouth which provides advice and support to teachers and parents of children with Down syndrome. The research explains parents are more satisfied with the education provided for their child with Down syndrome when they feel involved. Parents’ involvement in education requires commitment and consistent follow up. It requires collaborative planning and development across all agencies.

It may be fruitful to develop some understanding of this relationship between parent
involvement and satisfaction with school in terms of current social psychological models. According to Breakwell, Identify Process Theory offers an explanation of how parents’ dissatisfaction with school can be understood in terms of threats to parental identity. This theory is based on the premise that attitudes and behaviors are driven by the operation of four identity principles: continuity (striving for continuity of self between the past, present and future); distinctiveness (striving for uniqueness); self-esteem (striving for positive self-worth); and self-efficacy (striving for personal impact on outcomes) (Breakwell, 1986). He argues that the relationships, networks and memberships that an individual identities with in his or her social environment contribute to a system of beliefs and values which determine behavior.

Social environments are not static and the identity of individual is subject to the impact of social changes and to transformations in the meaning of the position he or she occupies. For parents of children with special educational needs, maintaining a positive identity in the face of changes can be difficult (e.g. Beresford, 1994; Falik, 1995; Cunningham, 1996). For example, families often experience trauma following the diagnosis of a learning disability; they may have to acquire new knowledge and skills to successfully parent their child; and they may need to reconstruct their ideas about themselves, and to reconsider their own values and aspirations (Cunningham, 1996).

Feelings of control and the ability to make choices can be undermined in situations where parents feel there are insufficient opportunities for active involvement in their child’s education, or where they feel their opinions are ignored or undervalued by the professionals involved. When these situations threaten the identity of parents, they can lead to considerable dissatisfaction. Threats can be understood in terms of the identity
processes described by Breakwell (1986). Parents’ self-efficacy is at risk from feelings of helplessness in relation to their child’s development and education (‘What I think does not make any difference’). Their self-esteem may suffer and they may develop a negative self-image with regard to their role (‘I am a bad parent’). Parents may also experience undermined distinctiveness (‘My circumstances are no different from any other parent’), and undermined continuity (‘I cannot continue to be the parent that I was to my child’). These threats to identity are predicted to have an impact on parents’ satisfaction with the education of their children (Laws, 2001). As discussed, there are many factors that impact the parents’ satisfaction with the education of their child with autism.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Participants

Thirty-two parents were recruited from Clark County School District, Families for Early Autism Treatment (FEAT) center in Las Vegas, and California. An accompanying letter explained that the research was about parents’ views of the education provided for their child with autism. The response rate was 17.11 per cent. Participants ranged in age from 27 to 56 years ($M = 41.07, SD = 6.75$). The majority of children were living in two-parent families: 24 (75%) respondents were married, 1 (3%) was separated, and 7 (21%) respondents were divorced. Two (3.77%) respondents finished school at age 16; 17 (32.07%) were educated to age 18 years; and 34 (64.15%) recorded that they had received further education, with similar levels of education recorded for spouses. The families had from one to four children, with two children, (46.87%) being most common, followed by three children, (18.78%), one child, (18.75%) and then four children (15.62%). Three families of children with autism (9.37%) had only one child in the family.

The children with autism ranged age from 4 to 17 years ($M = 7.93, SD = 3.33$). Twenty three were boys (71.18%) and 9 (28.12%) were girls. Table 1 describes the children and gives details of hearing status, medical problems, behavior problems and
speech development, which shows very similar levels of additional problems to that
estimated by other research. This is similar to findings from earlier research based on
parent report (Buckley & Sacks, 1987; Laws, 2001).

Three of children (9.37%) were currently attending a mainstreamed preschool.
Twenty children (62.5%) were attending a mainstreamed primary school;
15 (46.87%) of which were educated in a resource room and general education
classroom, and 5 (15.62%) of which were educated in a self-contained classroom. Nine
children (28.12%) attended a mainstreamed secondary school; 7 (21.87%) of which
were educated in a resource room and general education classroom, and 2 (6.25%) of
which were educated a self-contained classroom.

Nine of the children in the study (28%) received speech and occupational therapy.
Three of children (9.37%) received only speech therapy. Two of children (6.25 %)
received behavior counseling, three of children (9.37%) received other intervention and
fifteen of children (46.87%) did not received any intervention.

Survey

The 65 items questionnaire was adopted from Glynis Laws of Predicting Parents' satisfaction with the education of their child with Down Syndrome. Sixty-five questions
were divided into seven sections. The first section questioned the respondents’ family,
including marital status, age, occupation, level of education and the number of children
in the family.

The second section asked about the child with autism; sex, date of birth, hearing
difficulties, hearing loss, use of sign language, speech development, speech clarity,
medical problems and behavior problems were recorded.

The third section asked about respondents their beliefs regarding education for children with autism including parents’ right to influence the choice of placements for their children with autism. Twenty-five attitude statements were devised to address the respondents’ ‘identity’ as a parent of a child with autism. A five-point scale, ranging from ‘agree strongly’ to ‘disagree strongly’, was used to record responses.

The statements probed a number of different aspects of parental identity: Two items were designed to ask parents’ views on their rights to involvement in their child’s education; five items choice of placements for their children with autism; five items were on the parental role in education; four items asked parents how they perceived their capability for involvement; two items were on perceived involvement; and five items covered self-efficacy. In addition, seven items provided more general statements on beliefs about education.

The fourth section examined how satisfied respondents were with the way their child was being educated, with the amount of involvement they had with their child’s education and with the relationship between themselves and the school.

The fifth section addressed respondents’ perceptions of the school climate. For each of these items, a seven-point scale was provided and the respondent was asked to choose a point between two extreme adjectives describing the climate within the school, based on the semantic differential principle such as supportive/non-supportive and rejecting/accepting.

The sixth section of the questionnaire included items about the family’s involvement in early education, the child’s school placement history and current schooling.
Finally, the last section included questions about the contacts with the classroom teachers, support staffs, and pupils at the school. An additional space was provided at the end of the questionnaire for further comments.

Procedure

Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the institution where the study was conducted. Packets were compiled and contained an information sheet describing the purpose of the study and the procedure for returning the survey, a consent form, and survey itself. Packets containing the questionnaire were distributed to parents of children with autism (33, response rate 15.15%), teachers who have students with autism in his/her classroom at Clark County School District (65, response rate 10.76%), parents who are members of Family with Effective Autism Treatment (FEAT) in Las Vegas, Nevada (38, response rate 21.05%), and clinical psychologists in California (51, response rate 23.52%). Participants were asked to return the questionnaire in an enclosed stamped and addressed envelope to the researcher within two weeks. A total of 187 surveys were distributed, with a return of 32 surveys (17.11%). All surveys were coded with an identification number to protect confidentiality.

Analyses

SPSS (version 3) was utilized to conduct descriptive analyses on the demographic information of the participants and their children. Descriptive statistics (i.e. range, mean and standard deviation) were also utilized to describe parents' rights to involvement, and
school climate were calculated for each of 64 items on the questionnaire. Additionally, composite scores were calculated for each cluster of questions that corresponded to each attitude question.
CHAPTER 4

Results

Descriptive statistics (i.e. mean and standard deviation) were calculated for each of the 36 attitude statements on the questionnaire. Additionally, composite scores were calculated for each cluster of statements that corresponded to each question regarding parents' satisfaction with education of their child with autism. These clusters had been determined by Laws and Milward (2001) in their initial study examining parents' satisfaction with the education of their child with Down Syndrome. The means and standard deviations for each of the seven attitude questions are shown in Table 2 to Table 9.

What are parents' opinions about their rights to involvement?

The two items comprising the question regarding parents' opinion about their rights to involvement in their child's education were summed and averaged to produce a composite scale of right to involvement ($M = 1.14, SD = .29$). Items were rated on a five-point scale from 1 (agree strongly) to 5 (disagree strongly). A mean response of 1.06 ($SD = .24$) was made regarding parents' right to become actively involved in the education of their children with autism. A response to the statement ($M = 1.21, SD = .42$) was made in parents have a right to influence the choice of placement for their
children with autism. Overall, parents strongly agreed that they have rights to involvement of their child’s education. This data are shown in Table 2.

**How do parents identify their role in their child’s education?**

Five attitude statements comprising the question addressing how parents identify themselves were summed and averaged to produce a composite scale mean of 2.28 and a standard deviation of .35. Attitude statements were rated on a five-point scale from 1 (agree strongly) to 5 (strongly disagree). Overall, parents agree with statements regarding their identity.

A mean response of 1.31 ($SD = .47$) was made in response to the statement regarding parents’ responsibility for ensuring that their child receives an appropriate level of education and support. Therefore parents agreed to strongly agreed that it was their responsibility for ensuring that their child receives an appropriate level of education and support. A mean response of 3.43 ($SD = 1.16$) was made in response to the statement regarding parents’ role as a caretaker as opposed to an educator of their child. Parents’ responses to this statement fell between neither agreed nor disagreed and disagreed. Thus, they indicated that they did view themselves, to some degree, as an educator of their child. A mean response of 1.65 ($SD = .60$) was made in response to the statement regarding the importance of parents’ involvement in the educational process. Therefore parents agreed to strongly agreed that it was important for them to be involved in the educational process. A mean response of 1.40 ($SD = .55$) was made in response to the statement regarding parents’ responsibility the importance of a partnership between themselves and school staff regarding their child’s education.

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Therefore parents agreed to strongly agreed that it was important for them to be partners with school staff regarding their child’s education. A mean response of 3.65 ($SD = 1.26$) was made in response to the statement that the education of their child should be the responsibility of education authorities. Parents' responses to this statement fell between neither agreed nor disagreed and disagreed. Thus, they indicated that they did not, for the most part, agree that the education of their child should be the responsibility of education authorities. This data are shown in table 3.

How do parents perceive their capability of involvement in their child's education?

Four attitude statements comprising the question addressing how parents perceive their capability in the involvement of their child’s education were summed and averaged to produce a composite scale mean of 2.03 and a standard deviation of .30. Attitude statements were rated on a five-point scale from 1 (agree strongly) to 5 (strongly disagree). In general, parents agreed that they were capable of being involved in the education of their child. A mean response of 1.31 ($SD = .53$) was made in response to the statement that parents would like to be actively involved in the education of their child. Therefore parents agreed to strongly agreed that they would like to be actively involved in the education of their child. A mean response of 1.21 ($SD = .33$) was made in response to the statement that it was critical to the progress of children with autism that their parents be involved in the education progress. Therefore parents agreed to strongly agreed that it was critical to the progress of children with autism that they were involved in the education progress. A mean response of 1.46 ($SD = .71$) was made in response to the statement stating that parents have an important role in shaping the
education of their child. Therefore, parents agreed to strongly that have an important role in shaping the education of their child. A mean response of 4.21 (SD = .79) was made in response to the statement that parents could not contribute significantly to the education of their child. Thus, parents disagreed to strongly disagreed that could not contribute significantly to the education of their child. This data are shown in Table 4.

How do parents perceive the level of and opportunity for involvement in their child’s education?

Two attitude statements comprising the question addressing how parents perceive their level of and opportunity for involvement in their child’s education were summed and averaged to produce a composite scale means of 2.44 and a standard deviation of .60. Attitude were rated on a five-point scale from 1 (agree strongly) to 5 (strongly disagree). In general, parents agreed that had an opportunity for involvement in the their child’s education.

A mean response of 3.28 (SD = .99) was made in response to the statement that there were few opportunities for parents to become actively involved in the education of their child. Thus, parents indicated that neither agreed nor disagreed that were few opportunities for parent to become actively involved in the education of their child. A mean response of 1.68 (SD = .78) was made in response to the statement that parents were heavily involved in the education of their child. Therefore parents agreed to it was critical to the progress of children with autism that parents be involved in the education progress. Therefore parents agreed to strongly agreed that they were heavily involved in the education of their child. This data are shown in Table 5.
How do parents perceive their ability to affect their child’s educational progress?

Five attitude statements comprising the question addressing how parents perceived their ability to affect their child’s educational program were summed and averaged to produce a composite scale mean of 2.31 and a standard deviation of .45. Attitude statements were rated on a five-point scale from 1 (agree strongly) to 5 (strongly disagree). In general, parents agreed that they had the ability affect their child’s educational program.

A mean response of 2.25 ($SD = 1.24$) was made response to the statement regarding parents’ perception that have a substantial influence on the educational progress of their child. Therefore in general parents indicated that agreed that they have a substantial influence on the education progress of their child. A mean response of 2.28 ($SD = 1.02$) was made in response to the statement that parents were able to contribute significantly to the education of their child. Therefore, overall parents indicated that they agreed that they were able to contribute significantly to the education of their child. A mean response of 3.31 ($SD = 1.20$) was made in response to the statement that parents have a limited impact on the educational progress of their child. Thus, in general parents indicated that they neither agreed nor disagreed that they have a limited impact on the educational progress of their child. A mean response of 2.15 ($SD = 1.22$) was made in response to the statement that parents could shape the way their child was educated. Therefore overall parents agreed that they could shape the way their child was educated.

A mean response of 1.56 ($SD = .71$) was made in response to the statement that their involvement was valuable to their child’s educational success. Therefore parents agreed to strongly agreed that their involvement
was valuable to their child's educational success. This data are shown in Table 6.

*How satisfied are parents with the educational provisions for their child?*

Three attitude statements comprising the question addressing parent's satisfaction with the educational provisions for their child were summed and averaged to produce a composite scale mean of 2.31 and a standard deviation of .45. Attitude statements were rated on a five-point scale from 1 (agree strongly) to 5 (strongly disagree). In general, parents were not unsatisfied with the educational provisions for their child, with the level of contact with the school, and with the relationship they have with the school. Their responses on these attitude statements fell between agreement and neither agreement nor disagreement.

A mean response of 2.80 ($SD = 1.09$) was made in response to the statement that parents were happy with the way their child was being educated. Thus, parents indicated that they agreed to neither agreed nor disagreed they were happy with the way their child was being educated. A mean response of 2.84 ($SD = 1.27$) was made in response to the statement that parents were happy with the amount of involvement they have in their child's education. Thus, parents indicated that they agreed to neither agreed nor disagreed that they were happy with the amount of involvement they had in their child's education. A mean response of 2.34 ($SD = 1.28$) was made in response to the statement that parents were happy with their relationship with the school regarding their child's education. Thus, parents indicated that they agreed to neither agreed nor disagreed that they were happy with their relationship with the school regarding their child's education. This data are shown in Table 7.
What are parents' perception of their child's school climate?

Eight attitude statements comprising the question addressing parents' perceptions of their child's school climate were summed and averaged to produce a composite scale mean of 3.74 and a standard deviation of .63. Attitude statements were rated on a seven-point scale from 1 (supportive, collaborative, involving, caring, rejecting, hostile, respectful and lethargic) to 7 (non-supportive, non-collaborative, non-involving, non-caring, accepting, friendly, non-respectful and energetic). A mean responses of 2.81 (SD = 1.09) was made in response to the statement regarding supportive/non-supportive. A mean response of 3.09 (SD = 2.05) was made in response to the statement regarding collaborative/non-collaborative. A mean response of 3.09 (SD = 1.87) was made in response to the statement regarding involving/non-involving. A mean response of 2.40 (SD = 1.45) was made in response to the statement regarding caring/non-caring. A mean response of 5.09 (SD = 1.63) was made in response to the statement regarding parents' rejecting/accepting. A mean response of 5.81 (SD = 1.02) was made in response to the statement regarding hostile/friendly. A mean response of 2.71 (SD = 1.67) was made in response to the statement regarding respectful/non-respectable. A mean response of 5.03 (SD = 1.76) were made in response to the statement regarding lethargic/energetic. Therefore responses to the eight items describing parents' perception of the school climate showed that these were generally positive, and relatively few respondents experienced negative school climates. This data are shown in Table 8.
What are parents' beliefs about inclusion?

Seven attitude statements comprising the question addressing what parents' beliefs about inclusion were summed and averaged to produce a composite scale mean of 2.32 and a standard deviation of .50. Attitude statements were rated on a five-point scale from 1 (agree strongly) to 5 (disagree strongly). Overall, parents agreed with statements regarding their beliefs about inclusion.

A response of 1.56 (SD = .91) was made in response to the statement regarding how schools should provide for inclusion of children. Therefore parents agreed to strongly agreed that school should be provide an environment that caters for the education of all children in the local community. A mean response 1.90 (SD = 1.05) was made in response to the statement regarding education in a protected environment. Therefore parents agreed to strongly agreed that their child with autism would benefit from education in a protected environment. A mean response of 2.81 (SD = .99) was made in response to the statement regarding importance of academic subjects. Thus, parents indicated that they agreed that academic subjects like reading and maths are the most important aspects of school. A mean response of 2.00 (SD = .87) was made in response to the statement regarding social skills and promoting independence. Therefore parents agreed that social skills and promoting independence are the most important aspects of school. A mean response 2.75 (SD = 1.13) was made in response to the statement regarding the opportunity to mix with children with autism and other special needs while at school. Therefore parents agreed that it is important that my child has the opportunity to mix with children with autism and other special needs while at school. A mean response of 1.59 (SD = .75) was made in response to the statement regarding the
opportunity to mix with children who are developing normally while at school.

Therefore parents agreed to strongly agreed that it is important that my child has the
opportunity to mix with children who are developing normally while at school. A mean
response 3.15 ($SD = 1.52$) was made in response to the statement regarding how parents
should be made to feel about involvement. Parents' response to this statement fell
between neither agreed nor disagreed and disagreed. Thus, they indicated that they did
not, for the most part, agree that parents should not be made to feel that they have to
become involved in the education of their children with autism. This data are shown in
Table 9.
CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to examine parents' opinion about their rights to involvement in their child's education, how they identified their role in their child's education. Additionally, this study assessed parents' perceived capability of involvement, how parents perceive their ability to affect their children's educational progress, how they satisfied with the educational provisions for their child, how parents perceived the level of and opportunity for involvement, what parents' perception of their child's school climate is, and what parents' beliefs about inclusion are.

The results of this study demonstrated that parents strongly agreed that they have a rights to be involved in their child's education, and agreed that the education of their child with autism should be their responsibility. An important feature of this study was parents' ability to affect their children's educational progress was somewhere between agreement and neither agreement nor disagreement. The parents were satisfied with the educational provisions for their child, with the level of contact with the school and with the relationship they have with the school. These results comported with research conducted by Laws (2001). They found that parents were fairly satisfied with the educational provisions for their child, and with the level of contact with the school and the relationship they have with the school. Responses to the eight items describing
parents' perception of the school climate showed that these were generally positive, and relatively few respondents experienced negative school climates. Respondents strongly agreed that their child must have an opportunity to be interacted with children who are developing normally while at school.

Parents tended to have high levels of contact with the class teachers and support staffs, but only one parent spent time in the classroom. This finding is similar to a research predicting parents' satisfaction with the education of their child with Down's Syndrome; few parents spent time in the class generally (Laws, 2001).

Limitations of the Study

There are a number of possible limitations to this study, the first being the sample size. Out of 187 surveys distributed, only 32 parents responded by returning the questionnaire. The study's results may differ with a larger return of surveys. Additionally, with such an expanded sample, more surveys would be available to distinguish between students with autism of lower functioning and students with autism of higher functioning.

Another possible limitation to this study is that parents had high levels of contact with the class teacher and support staff. As many as 24 (75%) parents had daily contact with the class teacher, and 12 (37%) had daily contact with support staff. However only one parent spent time in the class. Although the responses revealed high levels of daily or weekly contact with the class teacher and with support staff, no information was gathered on the nature of these contacts. These could be have included anything from brief meetings at the classroom door to more lengthy discussions.
Another possible limitation to this is that most completed surveys came from public schools in Clark county and California. Parents of children who attend private school may have different perceptions and experiences from parents of children who attend public school.

Another possible limitation on the study is that this questionnaire was not translated to other languages such as Spanish, Chinese, and Korean version so that information from parents who could not understand English was not obtained.

Direction for Future Research

Future research should assess the relationship between parents' identity and satisfaction using Breakwell’s (1986) process theory as a theoretical framework for analysis. The research should utilize two regression analyses with satisfaction with the education of the child with autism as the dependent variable. In the first analysis, the ‘identity’ composite measures will enter as the independent variables, using a stepwise solution. These will include: self-efficacy; perceived involvement; perceived capability of involvement; parental partnership and parental responsibility; and rights to involvement and rights to influence choice. In the second analysis, with satisfaction as the dependent variable, perceived climate plus those demographic variables which are associated in some way with this variable, will be added to the list of independent variables. These will be hearing loss, speech clarity and contact with classroom teacher.
Future research that compares parents of children with autism in the US with parents of children with autism in Korea will examine how parents' perspective and satisfaction differ from each other.

As noted previously in the section concerning the limitations of this study, it would be helpful for future research to examine the differences between parents of students with autism of lower functioning and parents of students with autism of higher functioning.

Practical Implications

The parents have an important role to play in shaping the education of their children with autism. In this research, the parents strongly agreed that they have a right to involvement of their child's education. However, although they had high levels of daily or weekly contact with the class teachers and support staff, they failed to spend any time in the classroom or get involved in classroom activities. Teachers, therefore, should aggressively pursue working together with the parents to gain insight about students and their home environment. Schools which invite the involvement of the parents are likely to be those which foster good home-school relationships.

The quality of teachers' interactions with the parents is essential for students with disabilities. Parents may be able to help teachers better understand the strengths and needs of their child in their classrooms. They should also act as advocates of their children, so they can help teachers ensure that adequate supports are provided for the child's needs. Parents often see their child's experiences in the classroom in a way that teachers cannot; when they share this information, it helps both teachers and the students
achieve more success. Furthermore, the teachers and the parents should maximize student learning by multiplying the student’s educational opportunities and providing consistency. In other words, parents must be teachers’ allies in education of their children when teachers enlist parents’ assistance to practice skills at home to reward a student for accomplishments at school or to communicate to the child messages consistent with teachers.

Conclusion

This study represents an initial foray into an as yet unexplored subject matter that can provide unique insight into the perceptions of parents of children with autism. The results of this study demonstrated that parents strongly agreed that they have rights to be involved in their child’s education, and agreed with that the education of their child with autism should be their responsibility. An important feature of this study was parents’ ability to affect their children’s educational progress was somewhere between agreement and neither agreement nor disagreement. The parents were satisfied with the educational provision for their child, and with the level of contact with the school and relationship they had with the school. Responses to the eight items describing parents’ perception of the school climate showed that these were generally positive, and relatively few respondents experienced negative school climates. Respondents strongly agreed that their child must have opportunity to interact with children who are developing normally while at school.
INFORMED CONSENT

General Information:
I am Dalhee Songlee from the UNLV. Department of Special Education. I am the researcher on this project. You are invited to participate in a research study. The study is to analyze relationship between parents of children with autism’s identity and your satisfaction with your child’s education.

Procedure:
If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to do the following: Please answer the questionnaire and return the questionnaire in an enclosed stamped and addressed envelope to the researcher within two weeks.

Benefits of Participation:
By participating you will involve your child education. You will also receive an increased understanding of relationship between parents of children with autism’s identity and your satisfaction with your child’s education.

Risks of Participation in:
You might be uncomfortable answering some of the questions asked. You are encouraged to discuss this with me. I will explain the questions to you in more detail.

Contact Information:
If you have any questions about the study or if you experience harmful effects as a result of participation in this study, you may contact me at (702) 893-3932 or questions regarding the rights of research subjects, you may contact the UNLV Office for the Protection of Research Subjects at 895-2794.

Voluntary Participation:
Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate in this study or in any part of this study. You may withdraw at any time without prejudice to your relations with the university. You are encouraged to ask questions about this study at the beginning or any time during the research study.
Confidentiality:

All information gathered in this study will be kept completely confidential. No reference will be made in written or oral materials that could link you to this study. All records will be stored in a locked facility at UNLV for at least 3 years after completion of the study.
Note. The survey used in the current study was adapted from Laws, G., (2001).

Survey of Parents Experience & Beliefs regarding Education for Children with Autism

0. Please read the questions carefully and record your in ink in the spaces provided.
0. Where a list of categories is provided, you should mark your choice(s) by ticking the
disc that corresponds to that choice.

* Question about your family

1. Marital Status ○ Single ○ Married ○ Separated
   ○ Divorced ○ Living with Parent

2. Age (Yourself and your partner) (a) Yourself (b) Your partner

3. Occupation (Yourself) ____________________________

4. Occupation (Your partner) ____________________________

5. Level of education reached (Yourself) ○ To Age 16 ○ To Age 18 ○ Further Ed.

6. Level of education reached (Your Partner) ○ To Age 16 ○ To Age 18 ○ Further Ed.

7. Number of children ____________________________

* Question about your children with autism

8. Sex ○ Male ○ Female

9. Date of Birth

10. Has your child experienced hearing difficulties? ○ Yes ○ No

11. What is the extent of hearing loss? ○ None ○ Mild
    ○ Moderate ○ Severe

12. Does your child use sign language? ○ Yes ○ No

13. Which of the categories best describes the level of speech development your child has reached?
    ○ No speech
    ○ 1-2 word utterances
    ○ Short sentences
    ○ Fluent speech
14. How clear/easy to understand is your child’s speech? o Difficult to understand o Family can understand

15. Has your child had additional medical problems, such as heart, stomach, bowel, thyroid problems? o Yes o No

16. Has your child experienced behavior problems? o Yes o No

* Question about your beliefs regarding education for children with autism

o Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements by marking the number that corresponds with the level of agreement in the key below:

AGREE STRONGLY = 1, AGREE = 2, NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE = 3, DISAGREE = 4, DISAGREE STRONGLY = 5

17. Academic subjects like reading and maths are the most important aspect of school.
   1 2 3 4 5
   o o o o o

18. I would like to be actively involved in the education of my children with autism.
   1 2 3 4 5
   o o o o o

   1 2 3 4 5
   o o o o o

20. I am primarily a carer, not an educator of my children with autism.
   1 2 3 4 5
   o o o o o

21. I can shape the way my child is educated.
   1 2 3 4 5
   o o o o o

22. My child with autism would benefit from education in a protected environment.
   1 2 3 4 5
   o o o o o

23. Parents have a right to influence the choice of placements for their children with autism.
   1 2 3 4 5
   o o o o o

24. It is critical to the progress of a child with autism that parents are involved in the education process.
   1 2 3 4 5
   o o o o o
25. Social skills and promoting independence are the most important aspects of school.
   1  2  3  4  5
   o  o  o  o  o

26. Parents have a right to become actively involved in the education of their children with autism.
   1  2  3  4  5
   o  o  o  o  o

27. I am responsible for ensuring that my child receives an appropriate level of education and educational support.
   1  2  3  4  5
   o  o  o  o  o

28. Decisions regarding the education of my child with autism should be the responsibility of the education authorities.
   1  2  3  4  5
   o  o  o  o  o

29. School should provide an environment which caters for the education of all children in the local community.
   1  2  3  4  5
   o  o  o  o  o

30. I feel that I have a substantial influence on the educational progress of my child with autism.
   1  2  3  4  5
   o  o  o  o  o

31. There are few opportunities for me to become actively involved in the education of my child with autism.
   1  2  3  4  5
   o  o  o  o  o

32. Parents should not be made to feel that they have to become involved in the education of their children with autism.
   1  2  3  4  5
   o  o  o  o  o

33. As a parent of a child with autism, it is important that there is a partnership between myself and school staff regarding my child’s education.
   1  2  3  4  5
   o  o  o  o  o

34. Parents cannot contribute significantly to the education of their children with autism.
   1  2  3  4  5
   o  o  o  o  o

35. I am able to contribute significantly to the education of my child with autism.
   1  2  3  4  5
   o  o  o  o  o
36. It is important that my child has the opportunity to mix with children with autism and their special needs while at school.

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37. As a parent of a child with autism, it is important that I am actively involved in the educational process.

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38. It is important that my child has the opportunity to mix with children who are developing “typically” while at school.

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39. My involvement is valuable to my child’s educational success.

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40. I have a limited impact on the educational progress of my child with autism.

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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

41. Parents have an important role to play in shaping the education of their children with autism.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

42. I am happy with the way that my child is being educated.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

43. I am happy with the amount of involvement I have with my child’s education.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

44. I am happy with the relationship between myself, and the school regarding my child’s education.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

45. Supportive

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Non-supportive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

46. Collaborative

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Non-collaborative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

47. Involving

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Non-involving</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48.</td>
<td>Caring</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>Non-caring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49.</td>
<td>Rejecting</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>Accepting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50.</td>
<td>Hostile</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>Friendly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51.</td>
<td>Respectful</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>Non-respectful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52.</td>
<td>Lethargic</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>Energetic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

53. Did you receive Portage teaching for your child?  o Yes  o No

54. Did your child receive any other early intervention?  o Yes  o No

55. If yes, Please briefly describe this.

56. Did your child attend nursery school/playgroup?  o Yes  o No

57. If yes, what type of pre-school was this?  o Mainstream
  o Special school

58. What type of classroom does or did your child attend?
  o Mainstream  o Self-contained
  o Resource room  o Combination
  & general education

59. If taught in mainstream, which category best describes the extent of integration?
  o Ordinary classes with special assistance
  o Ordinary classes with periodic withdrawal
  o Ordinary classes and special classes
  o Special classes only in mainstream school

60. What type of secondary school does or did your child attend?
  o Mainstream  o Self-contained
  o Resource room  o Combination
  & general education

61. If taught in mainstream, which category best describes the extent of integration.
  o Ordinary classes with special assistance
  o Ordinary classes with periodic withdrawal
  o Ordinary classes and special classes
  o Special classes only in mainstream school

* Questions about parental contact with education & support staff

62. Which category best describes the contact you have with classroom teacher?  o Daily
  o Monthly  o Weekly
  o Rarely

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63. Which category best describes the contact you have with the support staff?  
- Daily  
- Monthly  
- Weekly  
- Rarely

64. Approximately how many hours per week do you spend in the classroom with pupils?  
- None  
- 2-5 hours  
- More than 5 hours

65. If you have any other remarks that you think are relevant or would be useful, please comment in the box below.

ATTITUDE STATEMENTS INCLUDED IN QUESTIONNAIRE

Rights to involvement

(26) Parents have a right to become actively involved in the education of their children with autism.
(23) Parents have a right to influence the choice of placements for their children with autism.

Identity

(27) I am responsible for ensuring that my child with autism receives an appropriate level of education and educational support.
(20) I am primarily a carer, not an educator, of my child with autism.
(37) As a parent of a child with autism, it is important that I am actively involved in the educational process.
(33) As a parent of a child with autism, it is important there is a partnership between myself and school staff regarding my child’s education.
(28) Decisions regarding the education of my child with autism should be the responsibility of the education authorities.

Perceived capability of involvement

(18) I would like to be actively involved in the education of my child with autism.
(24) It is critical to the progress of children with autism that parents be involved in the education process.
(41) Parents have an important role to play in shaping the education of their children with autism.
(34) Parents cannot contribute significantly to the education of their children with autism.
Perceived involvement

(31) There are few opportunities for me to become actively involved in the education of my child with autism.
(19) I am heavily involved in the education of my child with autism.

Self-efficacy

(30) I feel that I have a substantial influence on the educational progress of my child with autism.
(35) I am able to contribute significantly to the education of my child with autism.
(40) I have a limited impact on the educational progress of my child with autism.
(21) I can shape the way my child is educated.
(39) My involvement is valuable to my child’s educational success.

Satisfaction

(42) I am happy with the way that my child is being educated.
(43) I am happy with the amount of involvement I have with my child’s education.
(44) I am happy with the relationship between myself and the school regarding my child’s education.

Perceived climate

(45) Supportive/non-supportive.
(46) Collaborative/non-collaborative.
(47) Involving/non-involving.
(48) Caring/non-caring
(49) Rejecting/accepting.
(50) Hostile/friendly.
(51) Respectful/non-respectable.
(52) Lethargic/energetic.

Beliefs about inclusion

(29) Schools should provide an environment that caters for the education of all children in the local community.
(22) My child with autism would benefit from education in a protected environment.
(17) Academic subjects like reading and maths are the most important aspects of school.
(25) Social skills and promoting independence are the most important aspects of school.
(36) It is important that my child has the opportunity to mix with children with autism and other special needs while at school.
(38) It is important that my child has the opportunity to mix with children who are developing normally while at school.
(32) Parents should not be made to feel that they have to become involved in the education of their children with autism.
APPENDIX II

TABLES OF SURVEY ITEMS

52
Table I

*Description of Problems for the Children with Autism (N = 32)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hearing problems</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hearing loss</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>87.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mild</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Severe</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speech development</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No speech</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2 word utterance</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short sentences</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>53.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fluent speech</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>40.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speech clarity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficult to understand</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family/friends understand</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>43.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easy to understand</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>46.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical problems</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>43.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavior problems</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attitude Statement</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parents have a right to become actively involved in the education of their children with autism.</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents have a right to influence the choice of placements for their children with autism.</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>.42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3

*How do parents identify their role in their child’s education?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attitude Statement</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am responsible for ensuring that my child with autism receives an appropriate level of education and educational support.</td>
<td>1.31</td>
<td>.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am primarily a carer, not an educator, of my child with autism.</td>
<td>3.43</td>
<td>1.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As a parent of a child with autism, it is important that I am actively involved in the educational process.</td>
<td>1.65</td>
<td>.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As a parent of a child with autism, it is important that there is a partnership between myself and school staff regarding my child’s education.</td>
<td>1.40</td>
<td>.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decisions regarding the education of my child with autism should be the responsibility of the education authorities.</td>
<td>3.65</td>
<td>1.26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Table 4

*How do parents perceived their capability of involvement in their child’s education?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attitude Statement</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I would like to be actively involved in the education of my child with autism.</td>
<td>1.31</td>
<td>.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is critical to the progress of children with autism that parents be involved in the education process.</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td>.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents have an important role to play in shaping the education of their children with autism.</td>
<td>1.46</td>
<td>.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents cannot contribute significantly to the education of their children with autism.</td>
<td>4.21</td>
<td>.79</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Table 5

How do parents perceive the level of and opportunity for involvement in their child’s education?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attitude Statement</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>There are few opportunities for me to become actively involved in the education of my child with autism.</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am heavily involved in the education of my child with autism.</td>
<td>1.68</td>
<td>.78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6

*How do parents perceive their ability to affect their child's educational progress?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attitude Statement</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I feel that I have a substantial influence on the educational progress of my child with autism.</td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>1.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am able to contribute significantly to the education of my child with autism.</td>
<td>2.28</td>
<td>1.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have a limited impact on the educational progress of my child with autism.</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>1.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can shape the way my child is educated.</td>
<td>2.15</td>
<td>1.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My involvement is valuable to my child's educational success</td>
<td>1.56</td>
<td>.71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 7

*How satisfied are parents with the educational provisions for their child?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attitude Statement</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am happy with the way that my child is being educated.</td>
<td>2.81</td>
<td>1.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am happy with the amount of involvement I have with my child’s education.</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>1.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am happy with the relationship between myself and the school regarding my child’s education.</td>
<td>2.34</td>
<td>1.28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 8

*What are parents' perceptions of their child's school climate?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attitude Statement</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supportive/non-supportive</td>
<td>2.81</td>
<td>2.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative/non-collaborative</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>1.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involving/non-involving</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>1.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caring/non-caring</td>
<td>2.40</td>
<td>1.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rejecting/accepting</td>
<td>5.09</td>
<td>1.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hostile/friendly</td>
<td>5.81</td>
<td>1.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respectful/non-respectable</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>1.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lethargic/energetic</td>
<td>5.03</td>
<td>1.76</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Table 9

What are parents' beliefs about inclusion?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attitude Statement</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Schools should provide an environment that cater for the education of all children</td>
<td>1.56</td>
<td>.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in the local community.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My child with autism would be benefit from education in a protected environment.</td>
<td>3.43</td>
<td>1.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic subjects like reading and maths are the most important aspects of school.</td>
<td>2.81</td>
<td>.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social skills and promoting independence are the most important aspects of school.</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is important that my child has the opportunity to mix with children with autism</td>
<td>2.75</td>
<td>1.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and other special needs while at school.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is important that my child has the opportunity to mix with children who are</td>
<td>1.59</td>
<td>.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>developing normally while at school.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents should not be made to feel that they have to become involved in the</td>
<td>3.15</td>
<td>1.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>education of their children with autism.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Thesis Title: Parents’ Satisfaction with the Education of Their Child with Autism

Thesis Examination Committee:
Chairperson, Dr. Rebecca Nathanson, Ph. D.
Committee Member, Dr. Associate Professor, Sherri Strawser, Ph. D.
Committee Member, Dr. Associate Professor, Joe Crank Ph. D.
Graduate Faculty Representative, Dr. Professor, Paul Jones Ed. D.