

How Immigrant Mothers Contribute to Their Children's Learning  
Inside and Outside of School

Mejra Sejmenovic El Werfalli

Department of Graduate and Undergraduate  
Studies in Education

Submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Education

Faculty of Education, Brock University  
St. Catharines, Ontario

© Mejra Sejmenovic El Werfalli 2015

## **Abstract**

The main focus of this qualitative research was to explore how parents from different national backgrounds see their role in their children's education inside and outside of school. Although greater recruitment was described and sought after, this qualitative research gathered data from two immigrant female parents from a community parents' group located in Ontario, Canada. Data were collected through face-to-face interviews with each participant using open-ended questions asking about the different ways these mothers, along with their spouses, were involved in their children's education. Moreover, questions were designed to find out what alternatives parents use to support their children's learning. The main question driving this research was "How are immigrant families currently involved with their children's education inside and outside of school?" NVivo, 10 was used to code the transcripts giving rise to themes which could then be utilized to explain and explore the research question. The findings of this research are congruent with past research and demonstrate that immigrant mothers are more involved than the fathers are in their children's education (Grolnick & Slowiaczek 1994; Peters, Seeds, Goldstein, & Coleman, 2008). A specifically important finding in this research is that schools are perceived by the immigrant mothers in this study as not doing enough to actively engage immigrant parents in their children's education. On the other hand, findings also show that parents are eager to find different avenues to get involved and help their children succeed.

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the following people:

My advisor, Dr. Mary-Louise Vanderlee, who was my inspiration to enrol in the Master's Program and switch from course-based to research-based stream. There are no words to describe the support I received from Dr. Mary-Louise Vanderlee during this process.

My two participants whose participation is greatly appreciated and who helped me to better understand what their experiences are when it comes to parental involvement in children's education.

Research officer, Dr. Snezana Ratkovic, who was generous in sharing with me how to use the NVivo, 10, computer software for my data analysis.

Thank you to my family, who was patient with me and allowed me to take some of our family quality time to finish this project.

Thank you to all; your support is highly appreciated.

## Table of Contents

	Page
Abstract.....	ii
Acknowledgements.....	iii
List of Tables.....	vi
List of Figures.....	vii
CHAPTER ONE: THE PROBLEM.....	1
Background of the Problem.....	2
Purpose of the Study.....	3
Questions to be Answered.....	4
Rationale.....	4
Scope and Limitations.....	5
Outline of the Remaining Chapters.....	6
CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE.....	7
Previous Research About Parental Involvement.....	7
Benefits of Parents' Involvement in Children's Education.....	10
Mothers' Involvement in Children's Education.....	12
Fathers' Involvement in Children's Education.....	14
Challenges for Effective Involvement.....	17
Summary of the Chapter.....	20
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY.....	21
Methodology and Research Design.....	21
Selection of Participants and Research Site.....	22
Data Collection and Analysis.....	23
Researcher's Positionality.....	26
Ethical Considerations.....	27
Summary of the Chapter.....	29
CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION.....	30
Purpose of the Study.....	30
The Interviewees.....	30
Factors Influencing Parental Involvement.....	33
Mothers' vs. Fathers' Involvement.....	44
Parental Involvement Experience.....	47
Summary of the Chapter.....	52

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMENDATIONS.....	54
Conclusions.....	54
Implications.....	57
Recommendations for Future Research.....	58
References.....	61
Appendix: Interview Protocol.....	66

## List of Tables

Table		Page
1	Sociodemographic Characteristics of the Participants.....	24
2	Categories and Subcategories Developed During Data Analysis.....	32

## List of Figures

	Page
1 Graph representing Teresa's involvement in her children's education.....	33
2 Graph representing Sue's involvement in her children's education.....	34

## CHAPTER ONE: THE PROBLEM

*“I am only one, but I am one. I cannot do everything, but I can do something. And I will not let what I cannot do interfere with what I can do.” Edward Everett Hale (n.d.)*

When it comes to immigration, it seems that Canada is a well-known destination. According to Frideres (2002), “immigration has accounted for approximately half of Canada’s population growth” (p. 1). More precisely, from 1986 to 2010, immigrants from all over the world count more than 5.5 million of the total population (Areepattamannil & Lee, 2014). They all came with a variety of educational backgrounds, skills, perceptions, and experiences.

Educating a child is not an easy task for any parent and it requires an enormous amount of work. All parents, immigrant or otherwise, wish the best for their child, including quality education. From the proliferation of literature in the field of parent involvement, or parent engagement in education, it is well-known that in order for children to learn and succeed, they need support from all partners or stakeholders including teachers, peers, parents, and society in general (Cheung & Pomerantz, 2012; El Nokali, Bachman, & Votruba-Drzal, 2010; Epstein, 2010; Henderson & Berla, 1994). What is little known in the literature is how immigrant parents contribute to children’s learning. Hence, this case study explores how two immigrant mothers from different national backgrounds contribute to their children’s learning inside and outside of school.

It is acceptable to assume that English speaking parents might be more involved in their children’s education, but for parents who are immigrants and English is their second, third, or fourth language, it could be a problem. Although the English language may be the first of the challenges they face, different cultural beliefs about the process of

education in their new country is also a large concern, especially when it comes to understanding who is responsible for their children's education. This is one of the main reasons why the main focus of this qualitative research was to explore how these two mothers from different national backgrounds see their role in their children's education.

### **Background of the Problem**

Schools are places where children learn and teachers are paid to help children succeed. This is the sentiment with which many parents will agree, especially when it comes to their tax money being directed toward their children's quality education.

Although the Ontario Ministry of Education (2005) documents clearly outline the role of parents as an integral contributor to a child's educational success, many parents I have spoken with find it hard to believe that they are equally as responsible as the teachers for their children's learning and success.

Cheung and Pomerantz (2012) argue that any type of parental involvement in children's learning is a prominent factor that contributes to the children's higher achievement in school. Oftentimes, it is difficult to demonstrate whether mothers or fathers are more involved in their children's learning because this can differ from culture to culture.

However, Peters et al. (2008) found that married couples are commonly both involved in their children's education but women are still leading in that supportive role. Their study was done with participants from different cultural backgrounds but the majority were identified as being Caucasian participants.

This research is grounded in literature reviewed by Cheung and Pomerantz (2012); Epstein (2010), El Nokali et al. (2010); and Henderson and Berla (1994). The

literature presents a summary of what is known to this point about parental involvement in children's education, the benefits of parent involvement, the barriers that might prevent parents from being actively involved, and, most importantly, the difference between the mothers' and fathers' involvement in their child's education.

This review has been undertaken to situate what is known and the source of that knowledge in relation to parental involvement. Furthermore, it helps to solidify how this research builds on a sparse area of understanding. The case study approach has been able to provide some new or congruent insight regarding the perceptions and experiences of the immigrant families.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study is to find out what views parents from different ethnic backgrounds have on the importance of their involvement in their children's education. As a parent myself, I assume that parents need to reside in Canada at least 3 or more years to have some experience with the Canadian educational system. I set up this as one of the conditions in selecting the participants. Another condition was that participants are able to communicate in English. Parents who participated had the chance to voice their opinions, share their experiences, and tell their stories about their involvement in their child [ren]'s education inside and outside of school.

From the analysis of their responses and by writing them up in this research paper, I hope that anyone reviewing the documents may gain insight that may inform future outreach efforts at the classroom, school, and potentially school board level.

### **Questions to be Answered**

By using a qualitative case study approach, I attempted to answer the main research question “How are immigrant families currently involved with their children’s education inside and outside of school?”

Specifically, the following questions will be explored to answer the major research subquestion:

1. In which ways are the parents involved in their children’s education inside or outside of school settings and what supports their involvement?
2. Are there any challenges that the parents might face that prevent them from being actively involved in their children’s learning?
3. Is there a difference between the mother’s and the father’s involvement and, if yes, how so? What are the differences and why do those differences exist?

### **Rationale**

Many schools often struggle to establish the necessary relationships with parents, especially parents who immigrated to Canada with a different point of view on education. I have chosen to research this topic because I am an immigrant parent who faced many barriers to active involvement in my children’s education. What I found as my most challenging barrier was the language and the lack of familiarity with the parental involvement policy in Canadian schools. Therefore, it will be useful to find out how other immigrant parents are involved in their children’s learning not only at school but outside of school as well. Obtaining such information allows schools to consider all possibilities when making their plans to establish stronger relationships with immigrant parents and enhance their involvement with their children’s education.

It is very important to retain those parents involved in their children's education from the onset of their schooling during the very early years. The Early Learning for Every Child Today (ELECT) document stressed this understanding by stating that "every experience in a child's early life has an impact on his/her development now and in the future. Parents and families are the first and most powerful influence on children's early learning and development" (Ontario Ministry of Children and Youth Services, 2007, p. 5). Regardless of how much researchers are trying to find out about effective parental involvement in children's education, there will always be some limitations to get the right answer. The limitations regarding this study are explored in the following section.

### **Scope and Limitations**

Each study has its own scope and limitations and they all depend on the type of research, participants, environment, and methodologies used in each research endeavour. Mauch and Park (2003) state that "limitation is a factor that may or will affect the study, but is not under control of the researcher" (p.114). Although more information could have been obtained if more parents were interviewed, with time constraints and specific participant selection, only two parents responded and were subsequently interviewed.

Even though the participants of this study were women, I was able to intensively analyze the data to reveal some information about the female's perception of the male's involvement in the children's education and whether it is different from the women's involvement or not. Due to time constraints, I was not able to extend the study to include men and see if there was any contradiction regarding the information between the two parenting dyad, but this may be an area to pursue in further studies.

Since only two women were interviewed in this study, it means that they cannot represent the general population of their community. As an immigrant myself, I might have some insights on what parents might say during the interview. Furthermore, as a sample was chosen from one specific parents' group and the restriction was that those parents must have children that are in grade 1 through grade 6, this may also be viewed as a limitation to the study. The reason for choosing specific grades is because some research shows that enrolment in secondary or postsecondary education largely depends on parental involvement in children's elementary grades (Henderson & Berla, 1994). Additionally, only parents who were able to communicate effectively in English were chosen for this study.

### **Outline of the Remaining Chapters**

While the first chapter presents the scope and the context of the research, the second chapter presents the review of the literature in order to gain a sense of the field of understanding regarding parents' involvement in their children's education. In Chapter Three, the methodology research design and rationale for selecting the design to answer the research question is elaborated. Chapter Four presents the research findings followed by Chapter Five which provides a summary of the research, discussion, implications, and conclusion.

## **CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE**

When conducting any research, researchers examine previous literatures that talk about the same topic. A literature review can be explained as

a written summary of journal articles, books and other documents that describes the past and current state of information on the topic of your research study. It also organizes the literature into subtopics and documents the need for a proposed study. (Creswell, 2012, p. 80)

Hence, the sections of this chapter provide a discussion about parental involvement, immigrant parents' involvement in their children's education, the implied differences between the mothers' and the fathers' involvement, and the challenges immigrant parents might experience when invited to be actively involved in their children's education.

### **Previous Research about Parental Involvement**

What is counted as parental involvement in a child's education can be defined in many ways. There is no one specific definition of this term because parental involvement includes a variety of activities in a wide variety of contexts; hence, it can appear something quite different for each person. Very often, as mentioned in Ontario Parent Involvement Policy (OPIP), parental involvement in education is seen or described as volunteering in the classroom, attending school assemblies, parent-teacher conferences, helping child with homework, being a member of school councils and committees, and attending graduation (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2005).

Parents might perceive their involvement as sending or bringing a child to school, making sure the child has proper clothing and resources, and other similar actions and responsibilities. All these factors are important and no single one should be overlooked.

Baker and Soden (1997) support this by saying that all types of parental involvement are not only important but necessary for a child's success in school. Even though parental involvement is crucial for a child's success, as it will be seen in the following sections, it is very often undervalued and that has to be changed as addressed in the OPIP (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2005). This is specifically evident with immigrant parents and their involvement in schools (Chung, 2013).

Grolnick and Slowiaczek (1994) argue that both the school and home are equally responsible for the child's education and success. They define parental involvement as "the dedication of resources by the parent to the child's within a given domain" (p. 238). In their definition, Grolnick and Slowiaczek demonstrate that parents should be given credit not only for their involvement in school but their involvement in other aspects of the child's life. Some examples are involvement in the child's social life, activities not related to school, and providing the child with basic life necessities. All these types of involvement can affect a child's school performance, whether it is in a positive or negative way.

Extending on previous work, Poza, Brooks, and Valdés (2014) found in their study that very often parents are involved in their children's education "through organizations and social networks outside of school" (p. 120), and those types of involvement are often not recognized by the teachers or school administrators. In fact, it seems from the literature that only activities developed and administered by the child's teachers, schools, or school boards are considered to be of importance.

In their definition, Grolnick and Slowiaczek (1994) talk about resources that parents can make available for their child and that those resources contribute to a child's

progress at school. Three important resources that they mentioned are the parents' behaviour towards school, parents' personal involvement, and the parents' cognitive involvement. Through their behaviour, such as attending schools' open houses, parents show the child that school is important. Through their personal involvement, parents show the child that they value education and enjoy being involved in their child's learning. The third type of parental involvement, as Grolnick and Slowiaczek explain, is cognitive involvement. Parents provide to their child cognitively stimulating materials and activities at home, which will eventually contribute to the child's success at school.

Similar to Grolnick and Slowiaczek's (1994) types of parental involvement in schools, Epstein (1995) came up with his six types of parental involvement which include: parenting as the first important aspect, communicating, volunteering, helping with the homework, decision making, and communicating or collaborating with the community. Epstein (1995) argues that all these types of involvement can have different challenges but in order for the child to be successful, those challenges have to be dealt with. As outlined in A Parent Engagement Policy for Ontario Schools, how much and in what ways parents will be involved depends on many different factors such as "language, parent educational level, the challenges of single parenthood, attitudes of school staff, cultural influences, socio-economic status (SES), and [geographical area]" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010, p. 9). Conversely, Henderson and Berla (1994) cite that it is important what parents do at home with their children and what type of learning environment they provide that counts rather than their cultural background or SES. Within research, it is evident that parental involvement is crucial for a child's success and

any type of involvement is better than none, but some types of involvement seem to be given more currency than others.

### **Benefits of Parents' Involvement in Children's Education**

From critical analysis of the literature reviewed, there is increasing evidence that a large volume of research demonstrates that effective and consistent parental involvement in a child's education is the key for a child's success at school (Cheung & Pomerantz, 2012; El Nokali et al., 2010; Epstein, 2010; Fan, Williams, & Wolters, 2012; Henderson & Berla, 1994; Schaller, Rocha, & Barshinger, 2007). Whether parents are involved directly or indirectly, the benefits of that involvement are visible in their child's progress. Going one step further, Henderson and Berla found that children do not only benefit academically from parental involvement in education, they benefit in all other aspects of their lives.

An additional important point that Henderson and Berla (1994) demonstrate is that not only children benefit from parental involvement in education, but schools and the parents also benefit. Students certainly will have higher grades and most likely enrol in postsecondary education. Regarding parents, Henderson and Berla state that parents build stronger confidence in school and very often their involvement will trigger their interest to continue their own education. If parents are involved, the children will have a better opportunity to have higher grades and that will improve the teachers' and schools' reputation in the community.

Constantino (2003) argues that parental involvement is not a new phenomenon; it has been in the research field for about 35 years. Furthermore, he pointed that not only do children have advantages if their parents are involved in their education, but parents are

“the first and best educator[s] of [their] child” (p. 7). Parents’ involvement in education was not perceived like that in the early 1960s and before. At that time, “home and school were often perceived as [two] separate entities” (Hamilton, 2013, p. 298).

The importance of parental involvement in a child’s education is also addressed in the OPIP (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2005). Similar to Constantino’s (2003) argument, this policy supports the statement that parents are the most important individuals for the child’s success at school as well as for the child’s development. Furthermore, the policy states that if parents are actively involved in their child’s education, all sides including “[child], parents and families, teachers, schools, and communities benefits, and our schools become increasingly rich and positive places to teach, learn, and grow” (p. 5). Hence, schools really do have the capacity to build community with the families of the children with whom they are charged.

In addition to this, Fan et al. (2012) cite that “students whose parents are involved in their education demonstrate superior achievement specifically in mathematics and reading” (p. 21). Not only do children perform better in these two subjects, parental involvement has also positive impact on their social skills and behaviour. Moreover, Fan et al. point out that parents from different ethnic backgrounds can have different types of involvement in their child’s education, but at the end they all have a positive effect on the child’s success. This again goes with the idea that all types of parental involvement are not only important but necessary for a child’s school success (Baker & Soden, 1997).

There will always be contradiction as to whether the mother or the father is more involved in their child’s education and who contributes more to their child’s success at school. What is important to know is that mothers and fathers equally feel confident

when involved in their child's education regardless of the amount of time each parent dedicates. Rimm-Kaufman and Zhang (2005) argue that children are most likely to like school and succeed if their fathers are involved in the children's education. Furthermore, the majority of fathers and mothers feel that they are not involved enough in their child's education and there is a need for more involvement (Peters et al., 2008). The following two sections will look at the previous literature regarding the mother's and father's involvement in a child's education.

### **Mother's Involvement in Child's Education**

Research by Peters et al. (2008) reveals that if a mother and father are married, they are most likely both involved in the child's education. However, similar to Grolnick and Slowiaczek (1994), Peters et al. argue that mothers seem to be much more involved than the fathers, especially unemployed mothers. One area specifically shows that mothers' involvement seems to prevail above fathers' involvement and that is reading to a child at home (Vera et al., 2012). Thirumurthy (2014), whose research was done in India, agrees with this statement by saying that most of the time fathers are the bread winners in many countries and mothers, who stay at home, have more time to spend with their children. Because of that, the expectations are that mothers might be seen as more responsible for their child's education than the fathers.

Sometimes there can be biases that less educated mothers are less involved or less interested to be involved in their child's education. Perhaps, that is not the case for many mothers coming from undeveloped countries. Schaller et al. (2007) state that Mexican mothers, for example, value education but did not have the opportunity to be educated in their home country due to different barriers, poverty being the main one. They are willing

to support their child's learning because "[they believe] that education will open new doors of opportunity that [they] never had" (p. 351). The statements of these mothers show that their involvement in their child's learning does not only depend on their interest, but it depends on the support and guidance they receive from the school or the community.

Conversely to Mexican mothers living in the Western world, Korean immigrant mothers are more likely to be better educated but still lack the knowledge on how to get involved in their child's education. Different from Mexican mothers, Korean mothers often relate their personal experiences as students to their child's school experiences (Chung, 2013). What both Korean and Mexican mothers have in common is the same barrier for their involvement in their child's education and that is the English language. Neither Chung nor Schaller et al. (2007) talk about the fathers' involvement in education. This explains why mothers, regardless of their ethnical background, are seen as better involvers in their child's education. Furthermore, another common belief these two groups share is that by bringing their children to Western countries, they are already providing children with better chances for academic success.

Schaller et al. (2007) does not explain why fathers are not mentioned in his study, but Chung (2013) mentioned that the majority of Korean fathers were getting higher education in Western universities. This may rationalize why mothers had more time to spend with their children and be more involved in their children's education. For Mexican fathers, it can be assumed that the reason for their absence from the child's education could be working multiple jobs to provide basic necessities for their families. Thirumurthy (2014) found that if both parents are working, they are equally involved in

their child's school work. The only difference is that each parent might have knowledge for only one specific subject. For example, the mother might be able to help the child with science while the father is more capable of helping the child with math.

In conclusion, Mexican and Korean mothers value education equally but the involvement might be different because of the demographic areas they come from, SES, and the level of education those mothers have.

### **Father's Involvement in Child's Education**

An analysis of the literature revealed that most of the time research is focusing on the mothers' involvement in the child's education and little is known about the fathers' involvement (Rimm-Kaufman & Zhang, 2005; Tam, 2009; Terriquez, 2013). This explains the assumptions that fathers spend less time with their child regarding school work or are less involved with the school in general. These assumptions can be viewed as biases towards fathers and their parenting skills. Terriquez cites that father's involvement in the child's education is specifically important for "academic and social development" and should not be looked at differently from the mothers' involvement (p. 662). In the United Kingdom (UK), for example, chances are that fathers who are immigrants might be more involved and know better about their child's education than the mothers. This is because most of the time fathers arrive in the UK before the rest of the family, get a job, and "progress ahead of their spouses in terms of English language proficiency" (Hamilton, 2013, p. 310). This explains why fathers can be the ones attending the school conferences, helping the child with the homework, and other activities related to the child's education. The interesting point that Rimm-Kaufman and Zhang bring up is that fathers who are married to the child's mother or have a close relationship are likely to be

better involved in the child's education. Even though this is a case, there is still a shortage of literature about the benefits of the fathers' involvement, especially those from visible minorities.

Hamilton (2013) and Terriques (2013) agree with this by saying that there might be some research about the fathers' involvement in their child's education, but most of the time those fathers represent the majority of the Caucasian population. There is very little known about non-Caucasian fathers and their involvement in their child's learning. Tam (2009) pointed out that fathers in general are represented as strict individuals with less affection than mothers and are more affectionate towards boys than girls. Furthermore, he explains that this is especially visible in Chinese culture where mothers seem more nurturing than fathers. However, both Chinese fathers and mothers are more involved in their sons' education while at the same time they are "[discouraging their] daughters from putting effort in schoolwork" (Tam, 2009, p.154). While this is common and culturally accepted in China, it will be interesting to find out how Chinese fathers are involved in their child's education in Western countries such as Canada and the United States.

Terriques (2013) argues that by their involvement in their child's education outside home, fathers also build a stronger personal relationship with their child along with increasing the child's motivation towards school. Moreover, Terriques cites that fathers' involvement can contribute towards a child's academic success independently from mothers' involvement. Studying Latino fathers' involvement in a child's teaching, Terriques finds that they are for some reason less involved in their child's education than Caucasian fathers. Abel (2012) finds that the same issue is with African American fathers

in their children's education. They seem to be less involved in the child's education than Caucasian American fathers. Although African American fathers might not be well involved in school, but equally to the Caucasian fathers, they are actively involved in the child's learning at home such as helping with homework. The interesting point that Abel finds is that African American fathers with higher education seem to be more involved in their child's education than those fathers with lower education.

Rimm-Kaufman and Zhang (2005) argue that the fathers' involvement in a child's education may be less than the mothers' involvement. One of the main reasons for that could be that over the past few decades, family structure has change drastically and, according to Beard (2011), "nationally, over 24 million children, or one out of every three, are living in a home without their biological father" (p. 52). Furthermore, Beard states that a father's absence in a child's life has the highest effect on the child's social life because that child is most likely to live in poverty which leads to other types of negativity such as crime, drugs, and suicide. Beard argues that in the early 1950s, there was a small difference between African American and Caucasian fathers' involvement in children's education. However, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Bread explains that these differences become very visible and "censuses figures show that nearly 70% of all African American children are being born to single mothers, more than twice the national average and almost triple the rate of Whites" (p. 53). However, despite these statistics and ethnical differences, the reality is that research is more focusing on the mothers' involvement in a child's education while lacking in finding out more about the fathers' involvement (Rimm-Kaufman & Zhang, 2005).

Rimm-Kaufman and Zhang (2005) find that in two-parent families, the father and mother are similarly or equally involved in their child's education. Another interesting point that Rimm-Kaufman and Zhang find is that fathers' involvement in a child's education largely depends on the level of the mothers' involvement. For example, if mothers are actively involved, chances are that the fathers will be more eager to get involved as well. Whether immigrants or nonimmigrants, parents will very often run into different challenges and sometimes find it hard to get involved in their child's education.

### **Challenges for Effective Involvement**

To succeed in any type of work, there are always challenges on the path towards any success. This also applies to parent involvement in their child's education and it differs from culture to culture. Regardless of the cultural background, all parents love their children unconditionally and equally wish the best for their child. Education has always been a top priority in many societies, especially where poverty is prevailing. For example, in India, "to mitigate poverty ... [parents] are taking education seriously, yet not all parents are well equipped to help their children succeed in school" (Thirumurthy, 2014, p. 84).

SES and parents' educational background equally affect the amount of parental involvement in child's education. For instance, in India, children are learning English as one of the subjects in their school and the majority of parents cannot help the child with their homework because they are not familiar with the English language (Thirumurthy, 2014). This might be one subject that the parents in India have a challenge with, but with other subjects that are in their native language they are fine. However, for parents who immigrate to an English speaking country, the challenge is that all subjects in schools are

in the English language and that could prevent their active involvement in their children's education. Peters et al. (2008) and Hamilton, Marshall, Rummens, Fenta, and Simich (2011) argue that there is a lack of parental involvement especially in ethnic minorities and there has to be some way to help those parents get more involved in their child's education. As Vera et al. (2012) cite, another important aspect for an immigrant parent is that they might come from a society where the teacher was a highly respected figure and parental involvement in the school was perceived as interference.

Unfortunately, parental involvement is not declining in only ethnic minorities; decline is also seen when students get older and enter secondary schools. Parents might believe that their involvement is not as necessary as it was in elementary school (Constantino, 2003). For immigrant families, challenges for affective involvement can be "unfamiliar [ity] with school procedures and expectations and/or intimidate[ion] by school administrators" (Marschall, Shah, & Donato, 2012, p. 137). Very often parents avoid getting involved because their minority differences are not well-represented in the schools. Marschall et al. argue that it is because of the lack of recognition of those cultural differences that makes those parents believe that their input or involvement is not of use in their child's school. However, Schaller et al. (2007) argue that parents from an ethnic minority will get involved in their child's education but they need some guidance and assistance from the school and the community.

While immigrant parents can be challenged to get involved due to his/her lack of English proficiency, English speaking parents can have that challenge because of working multiple jobs, lack of childcare access, and not viewing involvement as an important aspect of the child's education. Beard (2011) argues that because young

fathers, for example, are more likely to be less educated and have a less secure job, they are most likely to feel guilty and be less involved in their child's education or child's life in general. Teachers need more professional training on how to involve all parents including those from ethnic minorities and make them a part of the school community (Vera et al., 2012). Besides all the challenges, many immigrant and nonimmigrant parents are already supporting their child's learning without direct contact with the school. According to Vera et al., providing the child with the basic needs, making sure the child gets enough sleep, and talking to the child about school are all viewed as parent involvement.

It is important to recognize that parents from ethnical minorities equally value the importance of their child's education as the dominant culture does. Moreover, as cited in Schaller et al. (2007), studies very often show that immigrant children in many occasions excel academically over the children from a dominant culture because of their parents' involvement. There will always be challenges to involve immigrant as well as dominant parents in their child's education but if they are provided with parenting programs that promote the importance of parental involvement in school, those challenges can be easily resolved.

Schaller et al. (2007) argue that all parents wish and are willing to help their children succeed at school but most of the time they do not know the ways on how to help them or how to engage in their learning. Another important point is that parental involvement can depend largely on the fathers' presence at home. Rimm-Kaufman and Zhang (2005) cite that in the case where the father is absent from the home, the family

comes from a low SES, and the mother has a low educational background, the parental involvement in a child's education will be declining.

### **Summary of the Chapter**

The key features explored in this chapter were the previous research findings about parental involvement in children's education, immigrant parents' involvement in their children's education, the difference between the mothers' and the fathers' involvement and the challenges immigrant parents might experience when invited to be actively involved in their children's education. Each section provides the reader with the understanding that (a) immigrant parents' involvement in their children's education is equally important as nonimmigrant parents' involvement, (b) mothers seem to be more involved than fathers, and (c) challenges for active involvement are greater for immigrant parents than nonimmigrants. These key findings were central to this research and because of their importance, I believe that there is a need to do more research on these topics and find out how, despite all challenges, immigrant parents are involved in their children's education inside and outside of school.

## **CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY**

The methodology and procedures used in gathering the information from the two immigrant mothers, about their involvement in their children's education, barriers that might prevent them from being actively involved, and finally about their spouses' contribution to their children's education will be explained in this chapter. Furthermore, the data analysis techniques used in this study will be explained as well. The final section of the chapter is the explanation of the ethical considerations and procedures followed to protect the participants' privacy and confidentiality.

### **Methodology and Research Design**

The purpose of this qualitative research study is to explore how immigrant parents are involved in their children's education inside and outside of school, like at home, community centers, and other similar environments. Qualitative research design is employed in this research because it involves one or more of the following: case study, personal experience, life story, and interview. Contrary to quantitative design, "qualitative research does not involve counting and dealing with numbers but is based more on information expressed in words – descriptions, accounts, opinions, feelings, etc." (Walliman, 2006, p. 129).

For the inductive analysis of this research, the case study research design was applied in this research. The case study research design is defined as "research that is an in-depth examination of an extensive amount of information about very few units or cases for one period or across multiple periods of time" (Neuman, 2010, p. 42). This applies to my research because I will be looking at a specific parents' group and what

information the parents from that group are offering when it comes to their involvement in their children's education.

Moreover, the reason a qualitative approach was adopted is because this study explores the aspects of social life, which cannot be administered if using a quantitative approach. A qualitative approach gives emphasis to the social context because "the meaning of a social action, event, or statement greatly depends on the context in which appears" (Neuman, 2010, p. 175).

### **Selection of Participants and Research Site**

To best explain the topic being studied, the qualitative method and purposeful sampling were used in this case study. According to Neuman (2010), purposeful sampling is "also known as judgmental sampling [and it is] valuable sampling type for special situation" (p. 267). The participants for this research had to be immigrant parents, living in Canada for more than 3 years, and able to communicate in English effectively. All this aligns to purposeful sampling because in purposeful sampling, as Neuman (2010) states, the researcher is looking for the cases that would best fit certain criteria. Creswell (2012) calls this type of sampling a "homogeneous sampling" where the researcher chooses certain participants that might share similar traits or characteristics. For this study, participants were chosen from a specific parents' group and characteristics they share in common are being immigrants and English being their second language.

Two middle-aged immigrant mothers from a community parent group in Southern Ontario that fit the criteria above were selected and contacted through email for the interview. One of the mothers was from Southeast Europe and another one from East Asia. For the easy understanding and the layout of the paper, I assigned a pseudonym for

both parents. The participant from southeast Europe will be addressed as Teresa and for the participant from East Asia, the name Sue will be used as a pseudonym.

Table 1 provides the demographic area of both the participants and includes the pseudonym, gender, number of children, which grade the children are in, and their ethnical background.

The interview took place in the private area of the community center where the parents' group meets weekly with their children. Since the parents already participate in various activities at the community center, that was the most convenient place to do the research. The following section explains the way the data were collected for this research.

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

In order to answer the research questions, two immigrant mothers were interviewed about their involvement in their child [ren]'s education inside and outside of school. The interviews contained open-ended questions to receive the best narrative response for this qualitative study. According to Turner (2010), the advantage of using an interview in a qualitative study is that "interviews provide in-depth information pertaining to participants' experiences and viewpoints of a particular topic" (p. 754). Furthermore, Turner explains that using open-ended questions "allows the participants to contribute as much detailed information as they desire and it also allows the researcher to ask probing questions as a means of follow-up" (p. 756).

To confirm the findings of this study and establish credibility, after transcribing each interview, an email was sent to the participants for member checking. Both participants were given a week to review the interview transcript and make any changes they wanted. I also obtained the approval to use the participants' direct quotes in this

Table 1

*Sociodemographic Characteristics of the Participants*

Pseudonym	Gender	# of children	EB	CSG	ME
Teresa	Female	2	Southeast Europe	Grade 2	University
Sue	Female	3	East Asia	1 to 5	College

Note. #-Number, EB- Ethnic Background, CSG- Child School Grade, ME- Mothers' Education

study. Following the response to the member check, I provided a thank you letter to the participants and informed them that they will receive a summary of the overall findings of the research once it is accepted by my research advisor. After getting the feedback of the participants' narrative and themes and their permission to use direct quotes, necessary changes were made.

The instrumentation used in this research was the individual interview with 15 open-ended questions (see Appendix). The interview questions were developed by analysing different themes found in reviewed literature. All interview questions were created prior to the interview and both participants received the same questions. However, when more clarification was needed, different follow-up questions were administered for each participant. The questions were created in a way that would provide the information on how immigrant parents are involved in their child [ren]'s education inside and outside of school. Furthermore, the questions were developed to find out how immigrant fathers are involved in their child [ren]'s education and what challenges, if any, could prevent immigrant parents from being actively involved in their child [ren]'s education.

Each participant was interviewed individually on a different day and each interview was audiotaped. After both interviews were administered and audio recorded, both of those interviews were transcribed on my password protected computer. Both recordings were also transferred to a password protected computer and erased from the recording device.

The final step of the interview is "interpreting the data that was gathered during the interview process" (Turner, 2010, p. 759). Furthermore, Turner suggests that

occasionally researchers ask someone else to review codes and themes so that there are no researchers' biases or overanalysing of the data. The codes and themes in this research were reviewed by the research officer. When analysing data, researchers use different analysis tools. In this research, both transcripts were written in a Word format and transferred into Nvivo, 10, computer software used for qualitative data analysis. The instructions on how to use the software were introduced by the research officer. Once the transcripts were transferred into Nvivo software, I came up with different codes and themes. According to Sotiriadou, Brouwers, and Le (2014), "NVivo helps a researcher manage and organize data and facilitates the analysis of data, identification of themes, gleaning insight and developing conclusions" (p. 220).

Regarding coding, Neuman (2010) states that "qualitative coding is an integral part of data analysis" (p. 510). By using NVivo software, the main themes that developed and which will be discussed in the results section were factors influencing parental involvement, mothers' versus fathers' involvement, parental involvement experience, and barriers for parents active involvement in their children's education. Each theme contains different numbers of codes which will be explained later on in text form, graph, and table form in Chapter Four.

### **Researcher's Positionality**

After analysing each interview, being an immigrant myself, I was familiar with some experiences that these parents had when it comes to the involvement in their children's education. The analysis of these interviews helped me to reflect on my personal experiences regarding involvement in my children's education. I came from a cultural background where belief was or still is that education only happens at school and

teachers are mostly responsible for the children's learning. Fortunately, learning the language helped me to be more involved in my children's education and I realized how much my involvement is important for their school success.

Prior to learning the language, I avoided and missed many important events and meetings with my children's teachers which had a negative impact not only on my children but me as well. Now when I know the importance and benefits of parental involvement in a child's education, I know that I missed a lot in the first few years of my children's education. I believe that my personal experience is a bonus to this study because Moayeri (2010) points out that "it is impossible to approach a study without bringing personal experience, preconceived notions, and background knowledge to it" (p. 28). From personal experience, I believe that first it is the responsibility of either immigrant or nonimmigrant parents to look for all alternatives and ways to get involved in their children's education even though many may come to Canada not believing it is an important role that they play. Therefore, they must be able to gain insights from the school community to assist them in understanding the importance of participation and what that entails in our province in our Canadian culture.

### **Ethical Considerations**

When conducting any studies, researchers have to keep in mind that "ethics are the rules of conduct in research" (Walliman, 2006, p. 148). This is especially important when conducting research with any living things, especially humans. Walliman addresses that it is very important to make sure that no harm is done to any participants in the research.

As this research involved humans, approval was granted by Brock University's Research Ethics Board (file# 13-278 - VANDERLEE). Once clearance was received, an email with the letter of information, letter of consent, and contact information was sent to the community parent group in Southern Ontario requesting that the organizer distribute the invitation to the parent community.

After the parents made contact, I offered to clarify their questions and set up a mutually convenient time to conduct the interview. Both participants chose a convenient time for the interview and the interview took place in a private community room where the parents meet weekly. To make sure that the privacy and confidentiality of the parents was protected, the interview for each interviewee took place on a different day.

During the meeting with each participant, I restated the purpose of the research. A response was made to any questions the participants had. Furthermore, I informed them of their rights to withdraw at any time without any consequences. The consent form about the participants' rights, privacy, and confidentiality was reviewed and signed followed by the interview. Each interview was audio recorded for an accurate record of the conversation. After the interview was complete, participants were informed that an email with the interview transcript would be sent shortly for member check. I explained to the participants that member check is to give them the opportunity to confirm the accuracy of the conversation and to add or clarify any points that they wished.

The interviews were confidential and no real names were released in this study. To protect the privacy of both participants, pseudonyms were created by the researcher and no name of the country, schools, community, or children were mentioned in this

study. Participants were informed that no one would have access to the information except the faculty supervisor and the researcher.

The rights of the participants were followed throughout the interview. Participants were informed that their participation was completely voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time during the interview. Participants were assured that once the research was completed, all recorded data would be erased from the computer and audio recording device. All hard copies, if any, would be cross-shredded. Moreover, participants were informed that if they withdrew from the study for any reason, all data would be destroyed as well and absolutely not used in the findings of the research. Participants had full right to choose not to answer a question without providing a reason.

### **Summary of the Chapter**

This chapter explained the methodologies and procedures followed to conduct this research. Since this was a case study approach, basic concepts about this approach were introduced to the readers. In addition, the readers were informed about the qualitative approach and the reason why this approach was used in this research. This chapter also addresses how the participants for this study were selected and how the research site was chosen. Following that, data collection and analysis were explained in details. Researcher's positionality and ethical considerations were the last two subheadings discussed in this chapter.

A very important part of this chapter is the introduction of the data analysis tool, Nvivo, used for coding and theme development in this research. The readers were informed what Nvivo is and why it is used in qualitative research. The following chapter presents the findings of this research.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

This chapter will restate the purpose of the study and description of the participants involved in this study. Themes that were developed during data analysis will be systematically described. Furthermore, through those themes, the perceptions of the two immigrant mothers about their involvement in their children's education inside and outside of school are specific components of this chapter that will be discussed which will inform the response to the research questions.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study was to find out what views immigrant mothers, from different ethnical backgrounds, have on the importance of their involvement in their children's education.

The following research questions were addressed in this study:

1. In which ways are the parents involved in their children's education inside or outside of school settings and what supports their involvement?
2. Are there any challenges that the parents might face that prevent them from being actively involved in their children's learning?
3. Is there a difference between the mother's and father's involvement and, if yes, how so? What are the differences and why do those differences exist?

### **The Interviewees**

The aim of this study was to interview five or more immigrant parents from a community parents' group. Only two parents responded and they were interviewed individually for this research. Both participants were females, immigrant mothers with

children in the Canadian educational system. Demographic characteristics of both participants are explained previously in Table 1.

Teresa is a mother of two children enrolled in grade 2 French Immersion school. With her parents, she emigrated from Southeast Europe to Canada and earned an undergraduate degree in a Canadian University. Throughout the interview, she addressed that she has some background knowledge and experience on how the Canadian educational system works and about the parental involvement policy. Teresa finds that being actively involved in her children's education largely depends on the free time available and the parent-teacher partnership.

Sue emigrated from East Asia and holds a college degree with English as a major. Sue has three children involved in Canadian schools, all somewhere between grade 1 and 5. She is less familiar with the Canadian educational system, especially regarding the parental involvement policy in schools. Throughout the interview, Sue expressed disappointment that she did not know much about the parental involvement policy and how to contribute to her children's education in school.

The following are tables and graphs developed during the qualitative analysis that present the themes and subthemes of both interviews. The three broad themes "also called categories" (Creswell, 2012, p. 245) developed during data analysis include: (a) factors influencing parental involvement, (b) mothers' vs fathers' involvement, and (c) parental involvement experience. Each of these themes comes with a certain number of different subcategories which will be outlined in Table 2, graphically presented for each participant, and later on explained systematically in the text.

Table 2

*Categories and Subcategories Developed During Data Analysis*

<b>Factors influencing parental involvement (CG- 1)</b>	<b>Mothers' vs Fathers' involvement (CG- 2)</b>	<b>Parental involvement experience (CG-3)</b>
Subcategories	Subcategories	Subcategories
Education	MI and competence	Parent involvement perspective and initiative
Communication	FI and competence	Parent groups and activities
Parent involvement policy		Parent involvement inside and outside of school
Parent involvement resources		Parent involvement alternative
Language proficiency		
Open door policy		
Parent involvement barriers		
Workshops		
School initiative and activities		

Note. CG- category, MI-mothers' involvement, FI- fathers' involvement.

Figures 1 and 2 represent the subcategories (subthemes) that developed during data analysis for both participants. Figure 1 represents Teresa's involvement in her children's education and Figure 2 is a presentation of Sue's involvement in her children's education. The shaded row following the graphs title explain the abbreviations used in the graph.

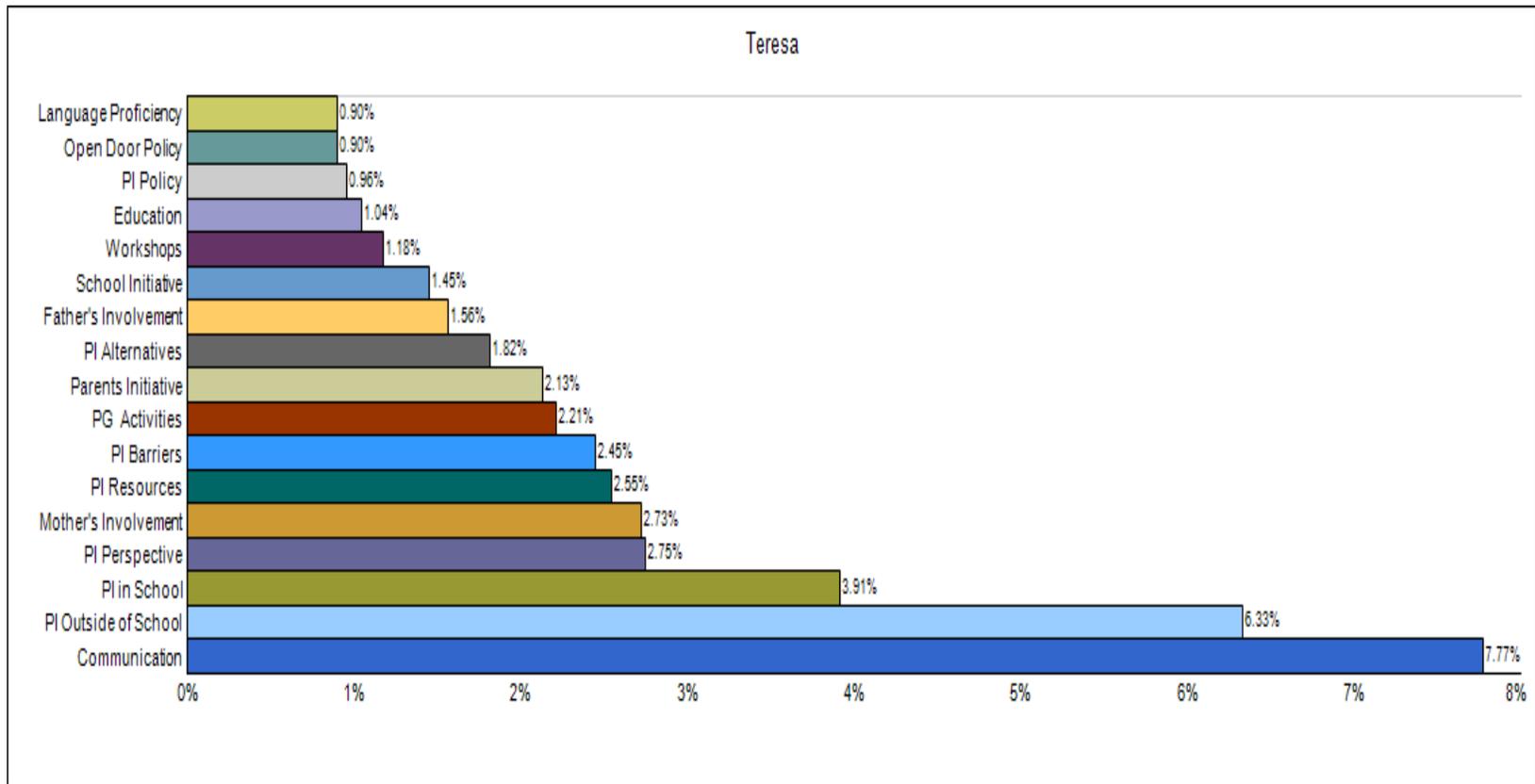
### **Factors Influencing Parental Involvement**

Both participants agree that parents' active involvement in children's education is very important both inside and outside of school. Some of the subcategories are mentioned many times during the interview but also those subcategories that are mentioned less will be explained. The reason for that is to see why those subcategories are ranking low on the graph.

#### **Education**

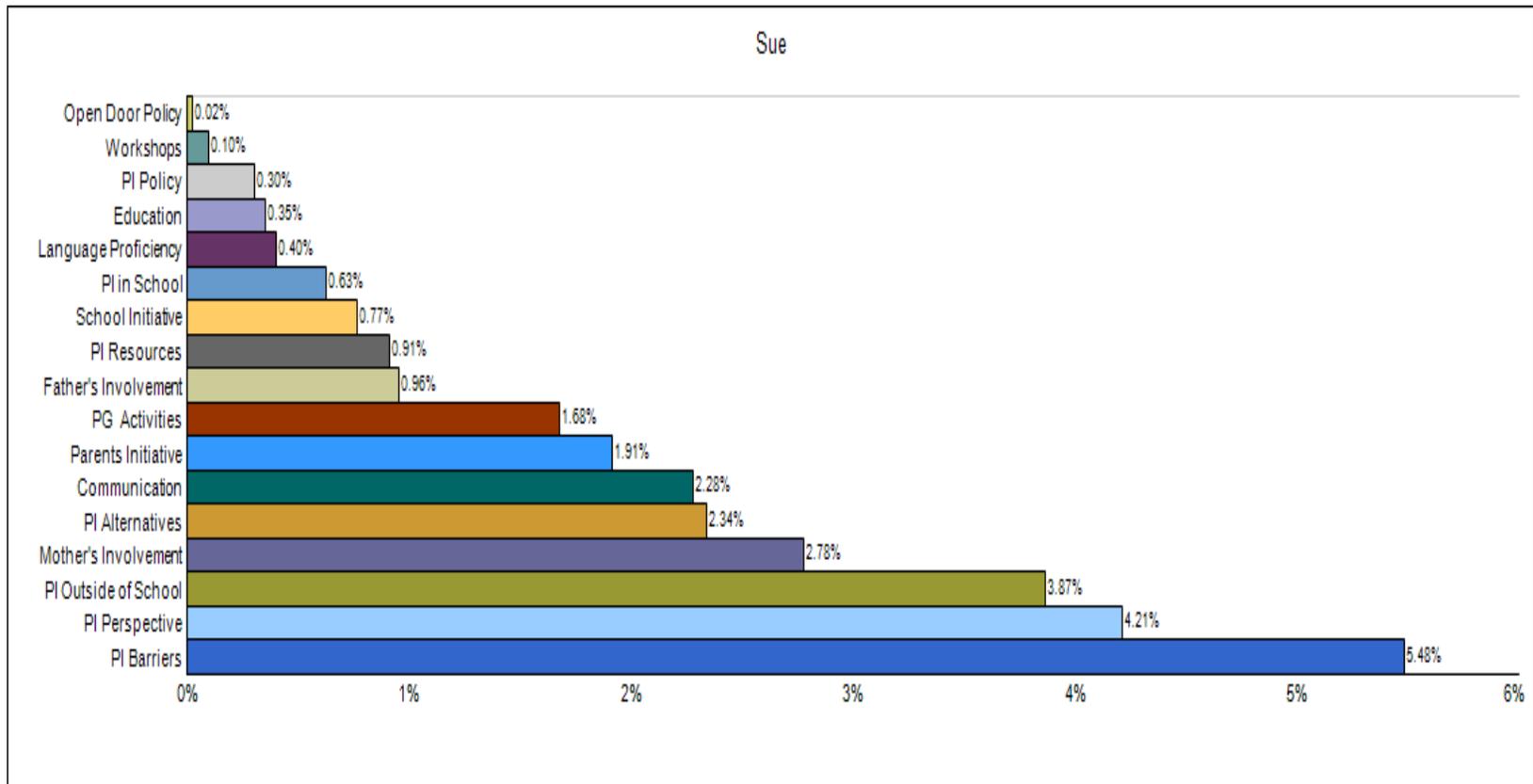
Coming from different cultural backgrounds, Teresa and Sue share some similar experiences when it comes to their education. During the interview, Sue said that when she was in elementary school, she had two working parents who could not get very involved in her education and "[she] was pretty independent." Sue holds a different point of view of being involved in her children's education and she sees herself more involved with her children than her parents were involved in her education. Back in her country, she graduated from community college, majoring in English.

During the interview, Teresa was not asked nor did she mention if her parents were working or not. She said that her parents were not as involved in her education as she is with her children. Explaining her parents' point of view on involvement in education, in her statement she said:



*Figure 1.* Teresa's involvement in her children's education.

PI- Parent Involvement    SI- School Initiative    MI- Mother Involvement    PG- Parents Group    FI- Father Involvement



*Figure 2.* Sue's involvement in her children's education.

PI- Parent Involvement   SI- School Initiative   MI- Mother's Involvement   PG- Parents' Group   FI- Father's Involvement

My parents come from a generation where the teacher knows best and it was a sort of one-way communication where the teacher gave information home but the parents would not necessarily seek information from home about the school. I think that here in Canada is very different. I think it is more of a two-way conversation where the parents can also initiate the conversation; it is not just one way. And it's more of an equal level playing field rather than sort of the teacher having all the authority and the knowledge and the parents not having anything. By immigrating to Canada, Teresa earned a university degree in psychology and gained more familiarity with the Canadian educational system than Sue did.

### **Communication**

Both Teresa and Sue are experiencing different ways of communication with the school. For Teresa, there are many different ways of communication between the school and home. Some of the ways of communication Teresa addresses in her interview response:

They have a website where I can access their schedules. Their teacher doesn't have a website of her own but the school itself has a website. So any announcements, I can get it from there. I also have the teacher's email. I can communicate with her through email or I can see her face-to-face. There are a lot of options that I can access.

Furthermore, Teresa explains that another way of communication with the school is through the agenda that her children bring home every day. She found it very useful that the parent-teacher interviews are long enough to discuss any issues regarding her children's education. Teresa mentioned that parent-teacher interviews are usually about

30-minute slots. Since she has two children in the same classroom, her meeting with the teacher ranges from 30 to 45 minutes. What is very important is that interviews happen two or three times a year.

Conversely, Sue explains that there is not enough communication between the school and home. The only way she communicates with the school is through the phone or email and that only happens if there are any rising issues regarding her children's education or behaviour problem. In one of her responses she said:

There is not so much communication. Only time that we get to see their teacher is when report cards for my kids were sent home and the school have teachers and parents interview day. We talk how they are doing academically at school.

While the length of Teresa's interview with the teacher ranges from 30 to 45 minutes, Sue said that her interviews are usually about 5 minutes each. It is clear that Teresa's and Sue's way of communication with the school is very different. Sue pointed out that even though she can communicate with the school through email or phone, she prefers "to go and see the teachers and talk to them face-to-face."

A similar experience that Teresa and Sue shared regarding parent-teacher interviews is that they are mostly used to discuss report cards or behavioural issues.

### **Parent Involvement Policy**

Teresa's graph indicates that she is more familiar with the parent involvement policy than Sue. During the interview, Teresa mentioned that her children's school has the information on its website about the parent involvement policy that states "engaging parents means engaging children." She explains that the website talks about parental involvement but she could not remember the details.

Different from Teresa, Sue does not know anything about the parental involvement policy in her children's school. She pointed out that the school has a website created for parents which contains information about the school and she had seen it once. However, she could not recall any information whether the website talks about parental involvement in children's education. Although Sue could not remember if the website has any information about parental involvement, because she visited the website only once, there is a possibility that the school could put some new information about parental involvement.

### **Parent Involvement Resources**

When it comes to parent involvement resources, there was not much information from either participant. Sue mentioned that one of the teachers in her children's school created a website for parents. On that website, the teacher posts some resourceful links where children can go and practice activities related to math, science, and literacy.

Teresa shared when her children were in kindergarten there was a blog where teacher and parents share the information about what is going on in the classroom. She pointed out that some teachers in her children's present school "have this new app that the parents can, can access where every day there's a summary of the things that are happening that can actually come to your smart phones." Even though she personally did not have experience with this app, it was useful to share the information about resources the school provides in general. Teresa has mentioned that the reason for not having this app is because her children still have a substitute teacher.

### **Language Proficiency**

One of the requirements for this research is that the parents have been in Canada for more than 3 years and that they are able to communicate effectively in English. Teresa has been in Canada longer than Sue and she speaks English fluently. The interview with Teresa went very smoothly and only few clarifications were needed during that interview.

Sue does speak English well but not as fluently as Teresa. Even though back in her country Sue's major was English, that did not help her to be fluent in English. She said that in college she did not learn how to speak English; she learned "how to read, how to write, and some grammar." More follow-up questions and clarifications were necessary during the interview.

### **Open-Door Policy**

Since the time for many parents can be very busy, an open-door policy is one of the best ways schools can get parents involved in their children's education. Sue argues that her children's school does not promote any open-door policies where she just can drop in and see how her children are progressing. She pointed out that the school does not have anything like that but if she wants to know more about her children's progress, she can make a phone call at any time. When Teresa was questioned about open-door policy she said

I do like the daily interactions; I also do see the teacher face-to-face whenever I drop in outside of the scheduled parent-teacher interview times. She has an open-door policy which is really good. Not every teacher does. So I find that very

useful. Even a 5 or 10-minute chat just to see how they're doing, either before or after drop off, is very useful and helpful for me.

As it can be seen from both examples, Sue and Teresa share very different experiences regarding an open-door policy in their children's school.

### **Parent Involvement Barriers**

What was very interesting during the data analysis and coding was to see that parent involvement barriers scored the highest on Sue's coding graph. Regarding Teresa's graph, parent involvement barriers are somewhere in the middle of the graph and communication was the first most important component. This makes an interesting finding that for parents' active involvement in their children's education, communication is key.

Sue mentioned during the interview that the school has a website which she only visited once. Some of her responses indicated that the website was not updated but since she visited it only once, it cannot be generalized whether the website got updated later on. The first barrier for Sue's active involvement in her children's school was that the school never invited her or provided any volunteer opportunities that she could participate in. In one of her responses, she said "they don't have any activities like clubs; there is no after school activities or anything like that." From this example, it can be assumed that even though Sue might want to get involved in her children's education in school, the school does not provide any opportunities for that.

Furthermore, Sue shared that another barrier for finding out how to get involved in school is that the only time she sees the teachers is during the parent-teacher interview. The length of each interview is about 5 minutes which is not even enough to discuss

report cards. One of the questions I asked Sue was whether she ever asked the teachers how she can get involved in her children's education in school. Her response was "Actually, no. I should have but I haven't talk to them. It's just this school is far away and I don't have that opportunity to talk to them so much. So unfortunately I never have done that."

Regarding her husband, Sue pointed out that his barrier of being actively involved in their children's education is his work schedule. The same barrier that Sue shares with her husband when it comes to active involvement is lack of knowledge in English. She explained that her fear of being unable to help her children is once they enter higher grades which will require more advanced English.

Similar to Sue, Teresa shared in her response that one of her barriers for being involved in her children's education in school is also language. This time it is not the English but the French language. Teresa's children are attending a French Immersion school and neither Teresa nor her husband has any background knowledge in French. Sometimes the children who attend French Immersion schools are able to interpret for their parent any papers coming from school or any other issues that the parents should know. In Teresa's case, she said that "[her children] are not at the level where they can tell [her] in English what their issues are and they can't act as the interpreters." In addition to that, Teresa said that she is afraid that if there is no tutor to help the children with homework, she would not be able to read the French and provide the support her children might need.

One more barrier that Teresa found interferes with her active involvement in her children's education is time management. In her response, she shared that both her and

her husband are working full-time and finding more time to balance family and work is challenging for her.

### **Workshops**

One of the best ways schools can involve parents in their children's education is by providing different orientation session or workshops. By providing this opportunity, parents can learn how to help their children succeed inside or outside of school. What was interesting to find out in this research is that neither Teresa's children's school nor Sue's children's school provided any workshops on parental involvement in education. Sue's response regarding workshops was "there is nothing" and Teresa gave a similar response saying "no, I don't recall any workshops."

One important point that Teresa brought up during the interview is that she feels pretty involved in her children's education even without any workshops. However, her concern is about newcomers to Canada and she said that workshops would benefit those who have no knowledge about the Canadian educational system.

### **School Initiative and Activities**

When it comes to parental involvement in children's education, schools play an important role in helping parents to achieve that. It largely depends on how the school's policy about parental involvement is laid out and how the information is spread to the parents. Communication between the school and home is a key to opening the door for parents to get involved.

Sue has mentioned before in her responses that the school does not provide any volunteer opportunities for the parents so that they can be involved in the school. However, after member checking of the interview transcript, Sue added in her response

that some of the activities organized by the school are “school trips, spelling bee [competition], and fun day.” Other than that, there are not any other activities taking place at school. When asked how often the school invites parents or initiates the communication, Sue said “there is no certain invitation.” Once in a year, when she received the midterm report card, Sue has the opportunity to go and talk to the teachers if she wants to. This is the only time that she sees the teachers face-to-face and in a 5-minute interview she has the opportunity to discuss any topics she would like to.

Conversely, the school that Teresa’s children go to “has a very active parent school council.” There is a strong partnership between the school and those parents who would like to get involved in their children’s education. Teresa stated that the parent school council that she is a member of

does various fundraisers and they also do a number of after school activities. In fact, last week we just had the [school] Fun Fair and I was part of the parent organizing committee. So they send out little messages using the agenda, using email, they also create an email group for the school committee. We meet on a monthly basis and again there’s organization and planning happening.

It seems that parental involvement largely depends on the school initiative along with parents’ initiative. Teresa also shares that not only does the school in general help parents get involved in their children’s education, but each teacher contributes to that involvement. In one of her examples about teacher’s initiative, Teresa said

One of my [children] is more of a visual learner rather than an auditory, so the teacher helps me to come up with strategies and how to reinforce them at home

and that's been helpful and maybe in communicating back and forth on that. So again I don't have any concerns I feel pretty involved in their education.

One more point that Teresa shared in her responses about teacher's initiative is giving Teresa recommendation of hiring a French tutor for her children. Teresa addressed that this was the best way of helping her and her children with the French language.

The participants agree that being involved in their children's education is important and it depends equally on both the school's and parent's initiative. The following is a second category that developed during data analysis titled Mothers' vs Fathers' Involvement. Two subthemes that emerged from this theme and will be explained in the following section are Mothers' Involvement and Competence and Fathers' Involvement and Competence.

### **Mothers' vs. Fathers' Involvement**

From the statements of the participants, it can be concluded that Teresa's and Sue's husbands are likely involved in their children's education. However, the only difference of the fathers' involvement is that they are less involved than the mothers but equally contributing for the well-being of their children. The following two sections will explain the differences between the mothers' and the fathers' involvement in the children's education inside or outside of school.

### **Mothers' Involvement and Competence**

Both participants indicated that they are more involved in their children's education inside or outside of school than their husbands. The main reason for their husbands being less involved in the children's education is their work schedule. Teresa's

and Sue's husbands are working longer hours and they have a hard time becoming more involved.

Sue pointed out that she is more involved with her kids and she is usually the one who follows up if the kids need any help with the school work. She explained that one of her children is very independent and does not require much help. However, Sue's other child has difficulty in English and she said that whenever help is needed, she is the one who helps. An important point that she said during the interview is that she is afraid that once the children enter higher grades, she would not be able to help them. The reason behind that is that neither she nor her husband is fluent in English and higher grades would require more advanced language.

Similar to Sue, Teresa's example shows that she is more involved in her children's education. In the interview, she states:

I would say I'm more, I'm more involved and hands on, but we discussed all the sort of our planning we discussed together. Our approach, our vision, and our goals for them are very, very much the same. I'm more being involved than he is in the day-to-day activities. Reading the agenda, following up and I just bring the information to him and we discussed in that way.

It can be seen from the example that Teresa is a mother who is very involved in her children's education but also eager to involve her husband in any way. Teresa feels that it is very important to help her children to not only learn the concepts of the school subjects in French, but in English, too.

She addressed that the difference between her involvement and her husband's involvement is "connecting with the teacher or connecting with somebody." She is the

one who takes advantage of the open-door policy, makes more connections with the teacher, and attends parent's group or community centers.

### **Fathers' Involvement and Competence**

The participants' responses do indicate that both fathers are somehow involved in their children's education inside and outside of school. Sue did not talk broadly about her husband's involvement. One of the examples that Sue shared is explaining that her husband is very busy but any time he is free he spends with their son in the activities outside of school. Furthermore, regarding school work, Sue said that her husband is more capable of helping the children if they need any help with science or reports that require use of technology. Besides helping the children in different subjects, Sue's husband also attends yearly parent-teacher conferences where they discuss the children's report cards and any other issues related to the children's education.

Regarding Teresa's husband, he also attends the parent-teacher conferences and "he likes to know what's going on but he is not necessarily the person who is involved in logistic per say." Teresa also justifies her husband's absence from involvement by saying that "he works longer hours than [she] does." From this example, it can be concluded that Teresa's husband has a harder time than Teresa to balance between work and home.

Teresa's husband might not be as much involved in the children's education as she is, especially when it comes to face-to-face with the teachers. However, in one of her responses, Teresa states that "he is definitely involved in the well-being of the children in terms of planning and our understanding where we are heading with them."

Overall, Teresa's and Sue's examples show that the fathers might not be fully involved in their children's education but anywhere where the mothers cannot provide

help, the fathers are the ones who do. The following is the third category that developed during data analysis titled Parental Involvement Experience.

### **Parental Involvement Experience**

Subcategories that will be discussed in this section are: parental involvement and initiative; parent groups and activities; parent involvement inside and outside of school; and parent involvement alternative.

#### **Parent Involvement Perspective and Initiative**

From Sue's perspective, she believes that her children's school is not doing enough when it comes to engaging the parents. She said that she would like to see more after school activities where the children can socialize and contribute to their own learning. Furthermore, during the interview, she pointed out a few times that the school does not provide any specific resources for the parents. One of her suggestions was that even though the school is far away, the teachers can provide some helpful resources for the parents by using an email.

Regarding Sue's husband, he thinks that the school is the only place where children should learn and after school they should have some fun activities not related to schoolwork. However, different from her husband, Sue states that she thinks "school and parents should work together." Her opinion about school is that the school does not do enough to engage the parents and she feels that the door for parental involvement is closed. In one of the answers to the follow-up questions, Sue said that she never initiated for the school to improve their open-door policy.

On the other hand, Teresa says that she thinks that parents are equally responsible to initiate involvement in their children's education. In one of her examples, Teresa said:

I think is more two-ways conversation where the parents can also initiate the conversation is not just one way. And it's more of an equal level playing field rather than sort of the teacher having all authority and the knowledge and the parents not having it.

Teresa's concern is that some of the new immigrants could have more challenges to get involved in their children's education if they have a lack of English or not enough initiative from the school. She said that one of her attributes is that she likes to ask a lot of questions about her children's education and look for the ways on how to get involved with the school.

### **Parents' Involvement Inside and Outside of School**

As it can be seen from Figures 1 and 2, Teresa is involved in her children's education in school while Sue's graph does not have any indications of her involvement in her children's school. Teresa is a member of the parent school council that do different activities and fundraisers for the school. In one of her examples, she talks about the parent council activities and said that

[Parents' council] organized sort of activity set where parents donated food items and other activities as well. I guess you know the part of the library project was that, they were collecting funds because the school is a mixed French Immersion and English language school. So we were collecting funds so that we can get extra French books for the library.

Teresa meets with other members of the parent school community once a month discussing how to be more involved in the children's education, whether inside or outside of school.

Besides being involved in her children's education in school, Teresa is trying to enrol them "in [other] extracurricular activities so that they develop in another ways that they don't necessarily get from school." Some of the activities that Teresa's children are involved in are cultural and physical activities.

Sue addressed, and Figure 2 showed as well, that she along with her husband is pretty involved in her children's education outside of school. Some of the activities that her husband supports their children, especially their son, are different sports and games. Very often, if the weather is good, Sue said that her husband goes camping with other fathers and their sons. Outside of school, Sue mentioned that she regularly communicates with other parents from school and exchanges ideas about education in her children's school.

At home, she mostly follows up what is going on in school and helps her children with their homework. However, she believes that because she and her husband speak different languages at home, it is very important to teach their children those languages. Other different ways that she is involved in her children's education outside is attending reading clubs at the local library. Moreover, to support her children's growth and development, Sue brings her children to swimming classes and other physical activities.

### **Parents' Groups and Activities**

Teresa and Sue weekly attend a community parent group created by immigrant parents from different ethnical backgrounds. It can be seen on the graph that both participants are actively involved in that group which indicates that there should be a specific reason for that involvement.

In that parents' group, Teresa and Sue organize different activities that their children do not have at school. Some of those activities are knitting, crafts, cooking, hiking, going together to the Sugar Bush, and occasionally organizing group swims. Sue said that the most important aspect of this gathering with other children and their parents is to support the children's social development. In her example about the parents' group, Teresa said:

We do different crafts and activities and also cultural education for [children] and I find that useful because that helps them to sort of gain their confidence in being who they are, making friends with the children who have similar interests and similar goals in life. I think again it just creates a more, well-rounded person, well-rounded children. So they get academic from schools, they have the academics after school but they also have social supports that they can connect to, they can connect with friends who are similar [or different] and the goals that they have.

Overall, the participants indicated that being a part of this parents' group is benefiting all aspects of the children's development and learning that are not practiced or supported at school. Both fathers and mothers are actively involved in their children's learning outside of school. Teresa indicated that her husband might not participate in many outside activities but he does drop off or pick up the children if Teresa is not around.

Sue explains that this parent group is mostly for the girls and her husband is involved in her son's learning outside of school. Furthermore, she indicated that by communicating with other parents in this group, she also learns what other community programs are available for families and which ones are good for children.

### **Parents' Involvement Alternatives**

As it can be seen from the discussion, the participants do have some challenges when it comes to the involvement in their children's education. However, Teresa and Sue, along with their husbands' support, look for alternatives to overcome those challenges. In the following paragraphs, I will explain what alternatives Sue and Teresa are using to get actively involved in their children's education, whether inside or outside of school.

Regarding the school work, Sue said that one of her children needs more support in English and she regularly checks his school work. She looks for the mistakes in his work sheets and then she explains to her child what the mistakes are and how to correct those mistakes. Even though her children are all somewhere between grades 1 and 5, she said that English could be sometimes challenging for her and as an alternative she uses a dictionary. She feels that she is still able to support her children with the knowledge she has and does not need any extra support for now. However, her concern is that once the children get older she would need to improve her English or look for other alternatives.

For the involvement outside of school, Sue is mostly the one who supports her daughters. Regarding her son, she indicated that her husband is being more involved and he is the one who participates with him in different outdoor activities. Yet, if he is busy, his friends usually step in and take their son to those activities.

Teresa's challenge is that her children are involved in French Immersion and that neither she nor her husband speak French. Since her children are not at the level where they can act as interpreters, Teresa and her husband decided to hire a tutor as an alternative. She explains that the children have homework once a week and without a

tutor they would not be able to help them. Teresa also sees the improvement in her children's knowledge in French and she believes that in following grades they will be able to interpret the text and Teresa would be able to help them in the English language. Besides getting help for homework in the French language, Teresa pointed out that because this was a transitional year for her children, "they also get support for math outside of school."

### **Summary of the Chapter**

This chapter explained the findings of this research and analysed the participants' responses to the research questions. There were three main themes with additional subthemes that systematically explained how two immigrant mothers are involved in their children's education inside and outside of school. Furthermore, findings show what challenges the parents are facing and what alternatives the parents use to overcome those challenges. For example, socializing with other parents and sharing information about education was one of the alternatives these parents used to know what is going on in schools. Organizing parents' groups and doing activities with the children that they usually do not participate in at school were also other alternatives. Getting this information helps to realize that some schools are not doing enough to engage immigrant parents in their children's education.

Before starting this research, expectations were that this study would reveal some information about the mothers' perception of the fathers' involvement in their children's education. Both participants shared some information about their husbands' involvement and agreed that they are not as involved in their children's education as Teresa and Sue.

However, from their responses, it cannot be concluded whether they think that their spouses' involvement was enough or if they have to do more.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This chapter provides a conclusion with the findings in relation to each research question, implications, and recommendations for future research and practice.

### **Conclusions**

This qualitative case study explored how two immigrant mothers contribute to their children's education inside and outside of school. The participants were provided with 15 open-ended questions and some additional follow-up questions. All these questions were designed to obtain each participant's perception about parental involvement in their children's education and where improvement is needed. The information gathered helps us to understand what is missing and what schools should do to make stronger relationships with these parents and get them more involved in their children's education.

Following is an explanation of the findings in relation to each research question.

Question 1: In which ways are the parents involved in their children's education inside or outside of school settings and what supports their involvement?

Participants had different experiences when it came to the involvement in school but similar experiences for the involvement outside of school. Sue's example shows that one of the reasons she is not actively involved in her children's education in school is because the school neither has an open-door policy nor a parent involvement policy. Although there is face-to-face communication with the teacher, this only happens once in a year and those meetings are very short for broader discussions.

Sue found other ways and alternatives outside of school to support her children's learning and development. Poza et al. (2014) argued that most of the time parents do not

receive credit for these types of involvements. What is important, as Poza et al. indicate, is that any type of parental involvement affects children's attitudes towards school. Unfortunately, Sue's example shows that the school is not making enough effort or providing any activities where the parents can contribute and participate.

On the other hand, Teresa's example shows that having a parents' involvement council is one of the strategies that can encourage parents to be engaged. Through the interview, she pointed out how her children's school has an open-door policy and parents have the opportunity to drop by and talk to the classroom teacher. Furthermore, in the discussion section, I described the activities Teresa's children's school is providing to encourage parental involvement inside and outside of school.

Therefore, results showed that both participants are more involved outside of school and they participate in the activities that children do not necessarily get from the school. This example showed that parents very often depend on each other and contribute to their children's education without school involvement. What is important, I believe, is to start recognizing this type of parental involvement and do more research on this rather than parents' involvement in school. By looking at these types of involvement, like this parents' group, schools and the community can think about what activities parents are looking for and how to bring those activities inside the school and increase the parents' involvement.

Question 2: Are there any challenges that the parents might face that prevent them from being actively involved in their children's learning?

Looking back on the analysis and discussion of the interviews, responses of the participants showed that they have different challenges when it comes to the involvement

in their children's education. Poza et al. (2014) state that teachers and administrators "often complain of parents' indifference or lack of involvement in children's schooling because of their low visibility at school events and relatively little face to face communication with teachers and school administration" (p. 119). The reason for this can be, as seen in Sue's example, lack of an open-door policy or lack of the English language. Furthermore, Sue's other challenge was that the school did not have strong communication with parents and parent-teacher conferences were not long enough to discuss how parents can be involved in their children's education.

Conversely, Teresa has the opportunity to get more involved in her children's education in school. However, while Sue's challenge is the English language, Teresa's challenge is the French language. Since Teresa's children are in a French Immersion school, Teresa has to hire a tutor to help her children with the homework in different subjects. What both participants shared in common is the fear that once children enter higher grades, they will not be able to be as much involved in their education as they are now. The most important component of being actively involved in schools for both participants, especially Sue, is to be able to communicate effectively in English.

Question 3: Is there a difference between the mother's and father's involvement and, if yes, how so? What are the differences and why do those differences exist?

Some research has showed that married couples are equally involved in their children's education (Peters et al., 2008) but this research revealed that mothers are more involved than fathers. The response of the participants showed their perceptions of how fathers are involved in their children's education. Answers from participants demonstrated that fathers are involved in children's education but not equally as mothers.

Similar reasons for both fathers of not being as involved as mothers were long working hours and different cultural beliefs about the involvement in children's education. The literature also revealed that fathers are less involved and that there should be more research done to find out why this is so (Terriquez, 2013). Similar to Terriquez, Rimm-Kaufman and Zhang (2005) stated that there is a shortage of literature about the benefits of fathers' involvement in children's education, especially those from visible minorities.

Participants' responses showed that even though fathers might be less involved they step in and fill the gaps where mothers are not able to help their children in school or outside of school work.

### **Implications**

This qualitative study provided a deeper understanding of the immigrant parents' involvement experiences in the Canadian educational system. Furthermore, it provided which avenues parents are taking if schools do not initiate any parental involvement or do not provide parental involvement policies. The participants in this research appeared to have different experiences when it comes to the parents' involvement inside and outside of school. While they have some similar experiences when it comes to the involvement outside of school, their experiences inside the school are very diverse.

While there is not much literature about fathers' involvement in children's education, there is quite a lot of literature that relate to the amount of mothers' involvement (e.g., Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994; Peters et al., 2008; Vera et al., 2012). This study also revealed that mothers' involvement in children's education is higher than fathers' involvement. However, this case study sample was too small to make general conclusions and these two participants did not represent the larger population. It is

important to realize that from the participants' perspective, schools have to find the ways on how to engage parents, especially those from visible minorities. It is better for the schools to recognize parental involvement outside of school as an important aspect of children's learning and find the ways to engage parents inside the school by creating those activities in the regular classroom.

From the parents' perspective, it is important to have good communication with the school teacher and initiate involvement in the children's education. Parents should share their ideas and resources with the school and show their interest for the involvement.

Based on the results, the researcher drew a main conclusion on engaging immigrant parents in their children's education. There has to be equal effort and initiative from all stakeholders including the parents, school, and community when it comes to parents' active involvement in children's education. What is important to keep in mind, according to Frew, Zhou, Duran, Kwok, and Benz (2012), is that parents get more involved in their children's education if schools "offered a greater numbers of outreach activities" (p. 27). This means that there are more responsibilities on schools to facilitate active parental involvement in children's education.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

From the beginning of this research, my idea was to interview at least five immigrant parents who have been in Canada for more than 3 years, were able to communicate in English, and who have children in school somewhere between grade 1 and grade 6. However, only two parents responded to participate in this research which

limited the research results. The following are suggestions for future research regarding immigrant parents' involvement in children's education.

### **Revision of the Interview Questions**

I found out that the questions were too broad and there were many similar responses to different questions. There was a need for asking some follow-up questions to get the responses the researcher was looking for. Some of the questions were so long that they could be broken into two different questions. One of the examples is the following question:

How often you are invited to meet the school teacher regarding your child's progress, like are you typically able to attend those meetings. Can you describe an example of such a meeting from the time you arrive until the time you leave? Like how long are those meetings and what types of discussions are there?

This example shows that parents might get confused on what information the researcher is looking for and what to answer first. This question could have been broken up into two or three simple questions. If I were to repeat the research, I would ask each question individually rather than putting all as one question.

### **Involving More Participants Including Fathers**

Since this was a very small sample with only two participants, they cannot represent the general population of their community. It will be interesting to interview the fathers and see if there is any contradiction regarding the information between the mothers and the fathers. Furthermore, when looking for a sample, a limitation was that participants have to be from the specific community parents' group which also lead to a small number of responders. In future research, an invitation letter should be sent to

different community centers including schools that the immigrant parents have access to. After the fact thought, I realised that I should have put in a modification to the ethics to be able to interview more immigrant parents, not limiting only on this specific parents' group.

Given that this was a face-to-face interview with the parents, it might be useful to employ other ways of data research methods such as questionnaires. The reality is that many parents might be uncomfortable to have face-to-face interactions and feel more comfortable to answer questionnaires. Moreover, it will be interesting to find out what the teachers' perspectives are about immigrant parents' involvement in children's education and see if they are similar to each other or if there is some difference between those perspectives. Finally, this research focused only on parents who have children from grade 1 to grade 6 and future research should include those parents who have children in higher grades. It will be interesting to find the literature that relates to parental involvement in higher grades and compare it to the parental involvement in children's education in lower grades.

## References

- Abel, Y. (2012). African American fathers' involvement in their children's school-based lives. *Journal of Negro Education, 81*(2), 162-172.
- Areepattamannil, S., & Lee, D. L. (2014). Linking immigrant parents' educational expectations and aspirations to their children's school performance. *Journal of Genetic Psychology, 175*(1), 51-57.
- Baker, A. J., & Soden, L. M. (1997, March). *Parent involvement in children's education: A critical assessment of the knowledge base*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Education Research Association, Chicago, IL.
- Beard, C. (2011). The importance of fathers in the lives of their children. *Exchange (19460406)*, (198), 52-54.
- Cheung, C., & Pomerantz, E. M. (2012). Why does parents' involvement in children's learning enhance children's achievement? The role of parent-oriented motivation. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 104*, 820-832.
- Chung, H. (2013). Korean temporary migrant mothers' conceptualization of parent involvement in the United States. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education, 33*(4), 461-475.
- Constantino, S. M. (2003). *Engaging all families: Creating a positive school culture by putting research into practice*. Washington, DC: R & L Education.
- Creswell, J. W. (2012). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson Education.

- El Nokali, N. E., Bachman, H. J., & Votruba-Drzal, E. (2010). Parent involvement and children's academic and social development in elementary school. *Child Development, 81*(3), 988-1005. doi:10.1111/j.1467-8624.2010.01447.x
- Epstein, J. (1995). School/family. *Community partnerships: Caring for the children we share. Pi Delta Kappan, May*, 701-712.
- Epstein, J. L. (2010). School/family/community partnerships: Caring for the children we share: When schools form partnerships with families and the community, the children benefit. These guidelines for building partnerships can make it happen. (*Kappan Classic*) (Report). *Phi Delta Kappan* 3, 81.
- Everett, H. E. (n.d). *Edward Everett Hale quotes*. Retrieved from [http://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/8183.Edward\\_Everett\\_Hale](http://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/8183.Edward_Everett_Hale)
- Fan, W., Williams, C. M., & Wolters, C. A. (2012). Parental involvement in predicting school motivation: Similar and differential effects across ethnic groups. *The Journal of Educational Research, 105*(1), 21-35.
- Frew, L., Zhou, Q., Duran, J., Kwok, O., & Benz, M. (2012). Effect of school-initiated parent outreach activities on parent involvement in school events. *Journal of Disability Policy Studies, 24*(1), 27-35. doi:10.1177/1044207311427163
- Frideres, J. S. (2002). *Immigrants, integration and the intersection of identities*. Commissioned by Canadian Heritage. Retrieved from [Canada.metropolis.net/events/diversity/immigration.pdf](http://Canada.metropolis.net/events/diversity/immigration.pdf)
- Grolnick, W. S., & Slowiaczek, M. L. (1994). Parents' involvement in children's schooling: A multidimensional conceptualization and motivational model. *Child Development, 65*(1), 237-252. doi:10.1111/1467-8624.ep9406130692

- Hamilton, H. A., Marshall, L., Rummens, J. A., Fenta, H., & Simich, L. (2011). Immigrant parents' perceptions of school environment and children's mental health and behavior. *Journal of School Health, 81*(6), 313-319.  
doi:10.1111/j.1746-1561.2011.00596.x
- Hamilton, P. (2013). Fostering effective and sustainable home–school relations with migrant worker parents: A new story to tell? *International Studies in Sociology of Education, 23*(4), 298-317.
- Henderson, A., & Berla, N. (1994). Introduction. In A. Henderson & N. Berla (Eds.). *A new generation of evidence: The family is critical to student achievement* (pp. 1-20). Washington, DC: National Committee for Citizens in Education, Center for Law and Education.
- Marschall, M. J., Shah, P. R., & Donato, K. (2012). Parent involvement policy in established and new immigrant destinations. *Social Science Quarterly (Wiley-Blackwell), 93*(1), 130-151. doi:10.1111/j.1540-6237.2011.00833.x
- Mauch, J. E. & Park, N. (2003). *Guide to the successful thesis and dissertation: A handbook for students and faculty*, (5th ed.). New York, NY: Marcel Dekker.
- Moayeri, M. (2010). Classroom uses of social network sites: Traditional practices or new illiteracies? *Digital Culture and Education, 2*(1), 25-43.
- Neuman, W. L. (2010). *Social research methods: Qualitative and quantitative methods* (7<sup>th</sup> ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson.

- Ontario Ministry of Children and Youth Services. (2007). Best start expert panel on early learning. *Early learning for every child today: A frame work for Ontario early childhood setting*. Retrieved from <http://www.cfcollaborative.ca/wp-content/uploads/2010/10/ELECT.pdf>
- Ontario Ministry of Education. (2005). *Ontario parent involvement policy*. Retrieved from <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/nr/05.12/developing.pdf>
- Ontario Ministry of Education. (2007). *The early learning for every child today*. Retrieved from <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/childcare/oelf/continuum/continuum.pdf>
- Ontario Ministry of Education. (2010). *A parent engagement policy for Ontario schools*. Retrieved from [http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/involvement/PE\\_Policy2010.pdf](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/involvement/PE_Policy2010.pdf)
- Peters, M., Seeds, K., Goldstein, A., & Coleman, N. (2008). *Parental involvement in children's education 2007*. Research Report No DCSF-RR034. London, UK: DCSF.
- Poza, L., Brooks, M., & Valdés, G. (2014). Entre familia: Immigrant parents' strategies for involvement in children's schooling. *School Community Journal*, 24(1), 119-148.
- Rimm-Kaufman, S. E., & Zhang, Y. (2005). Father-school communication in preschool and kindergarten. *School Psychology Review*, 34(3), 287-308.
- Schaller, A., Rocha, L. O., & Barshinger, D. (2007). Maternal attitudes and parent education: How immigrant mothers support their child's education despite their own low levels of education. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 34(5), 351-356.

- Sotiriadou, P., Brouwers, J., & Le, T. (2014). Choosing a qualitative data analysis tool: A comparison of NVivo and leximancer. *Annals of Leisure Research, 17*(2), 218-234. doi: 10.1080/11745398.2014.902292
- Tam, V. W. (2009). A comparison of fathers' and mothers' contributions in the prediction of academic performance of school-age children in Hong Kong. *International Journal of Psychology, 44*(2), 147-156. doi:10.1080/00207590801910242
- Terriquez, V. (2013). Latino fathers' involvement in their children's schools. *Family Relations, 62*(4), 662-675.
- Thirumurthy, V. (2014). Homework, homework everywhere: Indian parents' involvement with their children's homework. *Childhood Education, 90*(2), 83-90.
- Turner, D. W. (2010). Qualitative interview design: A practical guide for novice investigators. *The Qualitative Report, 15*(3), 754-760.
- Vera, E. M., Israel, M., Coyle, L., Cross, J., Knight-Lynn, L., Moallem, I., & Goldberger, N. (2012). Exploring the educational involvement of parents of English learners. *School Community Journal, 22*(2), 183-202.
- Walliman, N. (2006). *Social research methods*. Thousand oaks, CA: Sage.

## Appendix

### Interview Protocol

**Location:** .....  
**Interviewer:** .....  
**Interviewee:** .....  
**Date:** .....  
**Interview start time:** .....  
**Interview end time:** .....

#### **Intro**

Hello. My name is Mejra and I am a graduate student at Brock University. My field of specialization is *Teaching Learning and Development*. The purpose of this study is to explore how you, as a parent, are involved in your child [ren]'s education. Through this research, you will have the chance to voice your opinions, share your experiences, and tell your stories about your involvement in your child [ren]'s education in and out of school. I hope that anyone reviewing this research will gain insights that may inform future outreach efforts at the classroom, school and potentially school board level.

#### **Participants' privacy, confidentiality, and safety**

The interview is completely confidential. No real names will be released in this study. Only I and a Faculty advisor will have access to the details of this interview. You have full right to choose not to answer a question without providing a reason. Your participation will be kindly appreciated but you may stop the interview at any time and make arrangements that suit your schedule.

#### **Consent**

I hope that you understand all the rights mentioned previously.

I would like to start with some basic questions if you are ready.

Before starting our interview I would like to ask if you have any questions about this study. Please feel free to interrupt me during this interview if you have any further questions or concerns. Is it okay with you to start the interview now?

#### **INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

1. Would you like to tell me a little about yourself and your educational background?
2. What grade is your child [ren] in?
3. Do you know if your child's school has a mission or vision statement about parental involvement? If yes, can you describe how parental involvement is being discussed in the mission statement?
4. Do you feel that your child's school promotes parental involvement and how?

5. Which ways of communication is the school providing for you as a parent? Do you find that way of communication convenient or no and why?
6. Many times schools provide various opportunities for parents to be involved in school activities; do you know if your school provides any? If so, can you identify what types of school activities are offered, are you able to participate in these activities?
7. How often are you invited to meet with the school teacher regarding your child's progress, are you typically able to attend those meetings, can you describe an example of such a meeting from the time you arrive until the time you leave?
8. Does your child's school provide workshops or orientation sessions that support you in becoming involved in your child's education? Can you provide some examples? If not, what would you like to see the school doing in regards to that matter?
9. Explain how your involvement in your child [ren]'s education is different from your parents' involvement in your education.
10. Can you describe in which ways you are involved in your child [ren]'s education in school and outside of school?
11. Do you help your child with homework on a regular basis? Does your spouse contribute in the same way (more, less, or equally)?
12. Which subject do you feel your child needs the most help with? Are you capable to help and if not, what is your alternative? Where do you look for help?
13. Are there any community centers that you attend with your child that are useful for your child's education? Describe this please.
14. Are there any challenges that you might face that prevent you from being actively involved in your child [ren]'s learning?
15. Is there a difference between yours and your spouse's involvement in your child [ren]'s education? Can you explain this?