EXAMINING MOTHERS' PERCEPTIONS ON THE EFFECTIVENESS
OF HOME INSTRUCTION FOR PARENTS OF PRESCHOOL YOUNGSTERS
(HIPPY) PROGRAM

ALMAZ ASFAW REDA

Supervisor: Don Dippo
Supervisor's Signature:

A Research Project submitted to the Graduate Program in Education in
partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Masters of Education

Graduate Program in Education
York University
Toronto, Ontario

August, 2009

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements

It is with great gratitude that I wish to acknowledge a number of people who supported me throughout the course. First, I applaud the Faculty of Education at York University for developing this unique Firgrove Pilot Master's Program. I was fortunate to experience a positive learning environment. It is with great admiration I thank my Professor and Course Director, Dr. Don Dippo and his assistant Pat Saul. I am grateful to both of them for their guidance throughout the course and unconditional support. These two distinguished persons were very patient and supportive even with my endless rewrites and draft papers. Respect to Dr. Patrick Solomon who was with us at the beginning of our course. I also thank my fellow classmates for their feedback, useful discussions and constructive suggestions. Especially, I like to thank Leolyn Hendricks and Maxine Welch who took an active interest in my learning.

Thank you also to Dr. Alison Griffith, outside reader, for her interest and encouragement. Thanks to Mina Singh for her kind offer to read my Major Research Paper. I would like to extend my deepest respect to all the teachers including Dr. Sandra Schecter, Dr. Neita Israelite, Dr. Patrick Slattery and Dr. Veronica Pacini-Ketchabaw. I have learned much and have been inspired by their progressive teaching. I would like also to take this opportunity to acknowledge all those people who supported my application to the Masters program, Cary Milner, Randy Palermo, Sue Wilkinson and

Abstract

The goal of this research is to examine participants' perceptions of the effectiveness of Home Instruction for Parents of Pre-school Youngsters (HIPPY) program in the Jane-Finch area of Toronto. HIPPY is an international literacy and early childhood program designed to work as a parent-focused, home-based early intervention program that provides parents with the support, information and tools they need to effectively assume their critical "first teacher" roles (HIPPY USA, 2008b). The primary focus of this study is to investigate whether the HIPPY program benefits mothers in fostering a positive relationship with their children, enhancing their knowledge and reinforcing their engagement in their communities.

The strategy of data collection was a Summative Evaluation methodological approach within a flexible qualitative research model involving a multi-method approach that includes individual interviews used in conjunction with focus-group discussions. Twenty participant mothers, eight HIPPY program workers and two residents participated in the study. Ten individual interviews, two focus group discussions and relevant literature were reviewed. After documentation, the original data was organized in an orderly fashion as described by Kirby, Graves & Reid (2006) to ensure research materials from being fragmented. The Miles and Huberman approach to qualitative data analysis was used to do data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing (Miles & Huberman cited in Robson, 2002, p.480). The

findings strongly indicated positive outcomes of the HIPPY program in the areas of parent-child interaction, personal growth and school and community involvement of mothers. Some challenges related to programming were also highlighted. Overall, the literature reviewed and the findings were in agreement in all areas of the research with one variable related to the effects of poverty. During data analysis, conceptual interpretation of similarities and variables were explored.

Through this research, the complex and ongoing influence of a positive parenting intervention and its crucial role in children's development was assessed. While determining the effectiveness of a program is complex, the consensus of positive outcomes of findings is a confirmation of effective attributes of the HIPPY program.

Chapter One

Purpose of Study

Early childhood programs may vary in their design and service delivery, but their intended goal is to provide families with the social and material resources to raise their children to be healthy, educated, and productive members of their communities. Home Instruction for Parents of Pre-school Youngsters (HIPPY) is one of the early childhood programs in the Jane-Finch community. The goal of this research is to examine the effectiveness of the Home Instruction for Parents of Pre-school Youngsters (HIPPY) program in the Jane-Finch area of Toronto, Canada. HIPPY is an international literacy and early learning program designed to work as a parent-focused, home-based early intervention that provides parents in marginalized communities with the support, information and tools they need to fulfill their critical "first teacher" role. As well, HIPPY promotes community economic transformation through education, training and employment opportunities for parents (HIPPY USA, 2008b).

The Research Question

This study investigates participants' perceptions of the HIPPY program's effectiveness in the areas of parent-child interaction, personal growth and community involvement of mothers. The research question asks whether the HIPPY program benefits mothers in fostering positive interaction with their children, enhancing their skills or prospects for gainful employment and

reinforcing their decision to be involved in their communities. Emphasis was placed on the following elements of the program:

1. What effect did the program have in cultivating mothers' confidence in the areas of: teaching their children, participating in their children's schooling and other supportive community programs?

2. Did their involvement in the program enhance mothers' aspiration to upgrade their education, seek employment and training?

3. What role did the program play in influencing an attitudinal shift towards positive parenting?

Research findings were analyzed by measuring and comparing to the following outcome indicators:

1. Mothers' involvement in their children's learning (e.g. reading, interacting and communicating with their children).

2. Mothers' involvement in school and community activities such as parenting workshops, school meetings, accessing community resources, participating in community programs and seeking help when faced with social problems.

3. Mothers upgrading their education, looking for training or employment.

4. Mothers' attitudinal change – whether mothers deal with their children's behaviour differently.

The above indicators are consistent with research findings such as Younger (2003) who indicates that parents who participated in the HIPPY program continued to be engaged in higher education, employment services, community activities and their children's learning. The study suggests that helping isolated parents to be involved can genuinely increase a mother's confidence and self-esteem. By and large, this participation promotes lifelong learning that enables them to support their children in pursuit of further education (pp.13-14).

The hypothesis of this study is that the findings will show the positive role of the HIPPY program in affecting a mother's ability to nurture her children effectively. It will also highlight the influence the program has in encouraging mothers to be involved in community activities that could potentially promote personal growth and social change. The level of success may vary among participant mothers. Nonetheless, the effects of parental support, specifically of mothers, can play a great role as a change agent in the lives of mothers, their children and the development of their communities at large.

Reason for Study

The decision to focus my research on HIPPY was largely influenced by the fact that I live in the Jane-Finch community and have been involved in the beginning stages of HIPPY. As a community worker, I have been working in the Jane-Finch area for more than twelve years and have been involved as a resident volunteer for more than 18 years. During that time, I have been

privileged to work with the Caring Village, Jane-Milo and Edgeley Village residents. Together, we organized parents and local groups to work on identifying community concerns and possible solutions. As a result, issues such as extreme unemployment, inadequate resources to support children and parental involvement in schools were singled out as social conditions that challenge families in the community. On many occasions, the unwavering commitment of Jane-Finch residents instigated changes, namely the creation of the Caring Village.

Briefly, the Caring Village is a collaborative partnership among residents in the Jane-Finch community, local schools, local organizations and other concerned individuals to promote student success through education, parental involvement and school advocacy for positive system change. The membership of the Caring Village include residents, students, local schools, York University (CLASP, Faculty of Education, Kinesiology, School of Nursing, Atkinson, CEC, YUFA and etc.), Seneca College, Black Creek Community Health Centre, Working Women Community Centre and other local agencies. Throughout the years, the Caring Village has initiated and coordinated several educational activities to support children and engage parents. For example, Promoting Excellence is one of the programs that provide mentoring and other supports to students. The program also supports parents to be engaged in the schooling of their children at Westview Centennial Secondary School, Oakdale Middle School and Brookview Middle School.

In spite of these small successes, the community is still contending with numerous challenges including poverty and various school issues. Often, negative media publicity perpetuates the stereotypes that overshadow the root causes of issues and positive contribution of its residents. Of significance, the resilience and experience of many residents is overlooked or not always acknowledged as a community asset. Moreover, my role as a Settlement Worker has provided me with the opportunity to work with many parents on issues related to child rearing, school issues and school readiness. For many immigrant parents, the negative experience of resettlement affects the process of integration and rebuilding of their lives. In some cases, the anxiety of adjustment affects the relationship of parents and their children that often results in problematic behavior leading to conflicts and estrangement between family members. These issues have a negative effect on the relationship of children with their families.

According to research findings, positive parent-child relations is a significant indicator of children's emotional wellbeing and readiness to learn. For example, the Foundation for Child Development [FCD] (2007) Report suggests that the family bond can be extremely beneficial for children. When children feel loved and valued, they are more confident and more likely to try new tasks and invest themselves in school (p.8). The above statement clearly indicates the link between constructive parent-child interaction and children's learning.

On a personal level, I came to Canada with a small child. As a single mother, my resettlement and integration process was challenging; particularly, my role as a mother of a young child. Limited knowledge of the Canadian system, poverty, inadequate school supports and other systemic barriers played a part in my inability to effectively support my child. To be specific, the Toronto District School Board's "Zero Tolerance Policy" had a tremendous negative impact on my life and my child's learning. Many times, I questioned the adequacy of the knowledge and resources I had available for me. These extraordinary experiences influenced my decision to interrogate the role and significance of support in parenting.

Also it is important to assess the influence of HIPPY in mothering and determining the critical role of mothers in shaping the progress of their children and social capital of their communities. The HIPPY program promotes mothers as the first and best teachers of their children (HIPPY USA, 2008b). The program aims at helping mothers in fostering positive relationship with their children, enhancing their skills and revitalizing their communities. The spread of HIPPY across the world can be perceived as an indicator of parents' satisfaction and interest in the program. According to Working Women Community Centre, HIPPY international which is housed at Hebrew University Israel provides program consultation and staff training to all HIPPY programs around the world (PC3, personal communication, January 12, 2009). However,

research is essential to substantiate the uniqueness of the program that places mothers as the first and significant nurturer of their children's learning.

The HIPPY program in Jane-Finch promises positive outcomes but it does not have adequate resources to document best practices. In many cases, community members and program workers can articulate what interventions work but may not have the capacity to research and document their successes. Thus, the collective knowledge and creativity of the community is lost in the absence of documented research. Above all, the masters program I was part of, the Firgrove Pilot Program, was designed to encourage graduate students to do research on issues and programs based in the Jane-Finch community. I was inspired and unconditionally supported to share my personal and work experience in a meaningful way. It was an opportunity for me to participate in an educational forum that facilitated discussion about issues in my community and possible solutions. It is for all the above reasons that I have been inspired to examine HIPPY, a community initiated program, looking at the program's effectiveness in facilitating positive parent-child interaction, personal growth and community engagement of isolated mothers.

In addition, I would argue that communities know best in identifying their issues and proposing innovative solutions. As a resident, the fact that I am conducting a community based research project can potentially restore the confidence of parents in defining their issues and in developing solutions. Several studies such as Freire's work support action research that suggests

that those who live a situation or are involved must be the ones who analyze it

and identify possibilities for action and change (Hinchey, 2008, p.15). My

interpretation of Freire's statement is that research can be instrumental in

facilitating critical reflection and social change when those who are involved

conduct it.

Chapter Two

Historical Overview of HIPPY

HIPPY is an international literacy and early learning program with eight sites in Canada, 146 in the United States and hundreds more located in Australia, Germany, Italy and Israel. The program is also established in Austria, El Salvador, New Zealand and South Africa. The Netherlands and Turkey have a national program that operates based on the HIPPY model. There is also a growing interest in starting a HIPPY program in Portugal, Singapore, Zimbabwe and some cities in China. The HIPPY program is available in several different languages: Arabic, Chinese, Creole, English, French, German, Hebrew and Spanish (HIPPY Worldwide, 2008c). HIPPY was first developed in Israel in 1969 by Professor Avima D. Lombard in response to the identified immigrant families. In Canada, the program was established in Vancouver in 1999 as a collaborative effort among Simon Fraser University, Britannia Community Services Centre and the National Council of Jewish Women. In 2005, Working Women Community Centre developed the HIPPY program in Toronto in the Jane-Finch area (Bell, D., personal communication, HIPPY conference, Montreal, April 11, 2008).

As maintained by Younger (2003), the HIPPY program builds on the basic bond between parents and children, where parents interact with their children to promote cognitive, physical, emotional and social development (p.10). The program focuses on mothers' progress, rather than any assumed judgments on

lack of parenting. Families are not labelled in any way, thus, there is no stigma attached to mother's involvement (Younger, 2003, p.43). According to HIPPY Canada (2008a) and Younger (2003), the HIPPY program offers structured 30-week curricula a year and participants are required to enroll for two years. The program is designed for children ages three, four and five and runs concurrently with the school year. Every week, home-visitors deliver activity packets and related books to participant mothers. Parents are provided individual one-on-one support to follow different daily activities and are expected to spend 15 to 30 minutes with their children each day. This intensive parent-child interaction helps parents engage in a variety of activities. HIPPY provides parents with flexible and easy-to-follow instruction that helps them prepare their children for the demands of primary school (pp. 10-11). Based on the information I have obtained from the Working Women Community Centre, the program costs the organization a total of $1,200.00 Canadian dollars to enroll one child for two years (PC3, personal communication, January 12, 2009).

In addition, the HIPPY curriculum fosters the development of social, emotional and cognitive skills in children. The daily activities like storybooks and reading are developmentally appropriate for children. Educational materials and other supplies are provided free of charge. In the HIPPY curriculum, there is a balance between structured and non-structured activities. The structured activities use parents' role-playing as a style of

training. The way parents interact with their children and story-telling is non-structured or more open-ended. The HIPPY model allows parents to use their skills and imagination to be creative (Younger, 2003, pp. 44-45).

According to the Working Women community Centre, HIPPY uses home visiting as a method to provide the necessary support to families. Parents who were involved in the program are recruited to be HIPPY's home-visitors. The program offers comprehensive training including a home-visitor guide which has been developed as a tool for home-visitors. This guide is intended to increase the home-visitor's knowledge base in early childhood education (PC1, personal communication, January 12, 2009). What makes HIPPY unique and appealing to parents around the globe is that the program promotes community economic transformation through education, training and employment creation. Parents are trained and hired as HIPPY home-visitors to deliver service in their own communities. For most parents, it provides the point of entry for their first job and boosts their confidence. As well, HIPPY facilitates active participation of parents and promotes the formation of positive social networks of 'HIPPY moms' (Younger, 2003, P.47).

The HIPPY Program in Jane-Finch

The need for the HIPPY program was first identified by the Jane-Milo and Edgeley Village Tenant Groups supported by the Caring Village in response to the high percentage of school suspensions, expulsions and other social conditions in the Jane-Finch community (R1, R2, PM1 & PC1, personal

communication, January 12, 2009). Often, the HIPPY program is placed in low-income communities that share similar social and school issues such as poverty and children's school readiness. The Jane-Finch community has the highest level of poverty and highest percentage of single-parent families with young children, who are living well below or at poverty line. The overall population of Jane-Finch is approximately 250,000, and of these residents, 62.4% are first generation Canadians, whose primary language is neither English nor French. The neighbourhood is one of the most diverse and heavily populated communities with more than 100 ethno-cultural groups represented, speaking over 120 languages. The community has the largest concentration of subsidized high-rise buildings as compared to the rest of Toronto (Jane-Finch Neighbourhood action Plan Report, 2004).

The same point was highlighted in the United Way's study "Poverty by Postal Code" - The Geography of Neighbourhood Poverty: 1981-2001 (2004) confirms that the Jane-Finch is one of the neighbourhoods that have a higher percentage of racialized minorities, recent immigrants and low-income families in the city. The review noted that more than one in five of families in North York live in poverty. The Jane-Finch community was identified as one of the low-income "at risk" communities in Toronto. The report emphasizes that many poor communities do not have sufficient quality programs to motivate their children to be engaged positively (pp.4-7). As it was highlighted in the above studies, poverty affects the involvement of all families. Specifically, it can

have a devastating effect in the livelihood of newcomer families. Often, the process of integration for newcomers involves a period of re-adjustment. It can take families a significant period of time and energy to access personal supports depending on the individual's level of comfort and language skills. Hence, programs like HIPPY have become indispensable.

In addition, the Jane-Finch community faces several issues including school problems that continue to compromise the future of families. Information from the Caring Village reveals that many students experience exclusion and alienation in elementary and secondary schools. Students are disproportionately placed in basic non-academic level and special needs or at-risk programs. Because of policies like the "Safe Schools Act" and "Zero Tolerance," students in Jane-Finch are exposed to extremely high levels of school suspension and expulsion (R1& R2, personal communication, January 12, 2009). An investigation undertaken by The School Community Safety Advisory Panel and reported in The Road to Health: A Final Report on School Safety (2008) documented that the education system has failed to ensure equity and safety for all students. Support services for marginalized students have been systematically removed. The school boards were under-funded and under-equipped to address the needs of all of its students (p.32, volume 1). The report revealed that struggling families together with absence of supportive programs have a negative impact in low-income communities.

In their struggle for survival, many Jane-Finch residents face challenges presented by exceptionally high levels of poverty, limited employment opportunities and exclusions. The two residents who participated in the study echoed:

> We have issues related to poverty, youth issues, school suspension and expulsion. Families are working extended hours and they don't have the time and resources to support their children. As community members, we don't have resources to address the root causes of these issues but we can support families to minimize the negative impacts. It was then, our group talked about having the HIPPY program to support parents to support their young children. (R1 & R2, personal communication, January 2009).

The prevalence of these concerns forced the Jane-Milo Tenants' Group to explore possible solutions. As a result, the development of the HIPPY program was presented as a way of addressing some of the problems and engaging parents at the same time (R1 & R2, personal communication, January 2009). The choice of the program was favored because the HIPPY program builds on the basic bond between parents and children, where parents interact with their children on a daily basis (HIPPY Canada, 2008a). The tenants group was convinced that supporting parents to form healthy relationships with their children is crucial in ensuring school readiness and their overall wellbeing. In 2006, the HIPPY program began operation in Jane-Finch as a pilot project.

Initially, the program started with one coordinator and five home-visitors serving 62 families with 72 children. Today, the program has expanded to four other sites in Toronto: Thorncliffe, Flemingdon Park, Victoria Village, Malvern, Davenport Perth and the Francophone Community in Toronto. The program is furnished in English and French employing four Program Coordinators and twenty-one home-visitors who serve 138 families with 179 children (PC3, personal communication, January 12, 2009).

Chapter Three

Theoretical Framework: Literature Review

The review of the literature provides the theoretical framework for this study and is presented in four sections: the benefits of early childhood intervention, the benefits of the HIPPY program, HIPPY as community development, and conditions that influence parents' participation in their children's learning.

The Benefits for Parents from Early Childhood Programs

Early childhood programs may vary in their design and service delivery, but their intended goal is to provide families with the social and material resources to raise their children to be healthy, educated, and productive members of their communities. Such programs enable parents to help their children lay a sound foundation in childhood and beyond. Likewise, Warrilow, Fisher and Valentine (2004) emphasize that it is not possible to look at "early learning" in isolation from "parent support". Giving parents support fosters parental change in regard to their own self-worth, literacy levels and community involvement (p.19).

Many researchers, like Dr. Fraser Mustard, have demonstrated that the early years of a child's life are "critical for the process of developing a foundation for cognitive thinking, identity and social capacity. Accordingly, early child development is profoundly affected by the quality of caregiving and the degree of support provided to parents" (Mustard, 2006, p.52). This means

there is a relationship between the qualities of support parents have and the home environment they are able to create for their children. Verdon (2007) reports a study conducted by Statistics Canada's National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth [NLSCY] that home experience and family bonding during the early years of childhood and might set the stage for their readiness to learn (p.3).

A study by Braunger and Lewis (2005) reveals that nurturing and stimulating home environment has a long-lasting effect on children's learning (p.6). These findings emphasize that the role of positive home environment is critical in the development process of a child's early years and the absence of timely support for parents can have far-reaching consequences for children, their families and communities. In recognition of the benefits of early childhood programs, the Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI) study in 1997 illustrates how governments in many countries are beginning to recognize that superior school achievement depends on parental support, and thus they encourage parents to be more involved in the education system (p.3). The report confirms that this positive change is partly a result of research findings that suggest that parental involvement is associated with high academic achievement.

Positive Child-parent interaction is one of the significant factors that influence children's learning. Verdon (2007) indicates that children's readiness to learn is highly influenced by their home environment, positive child-parent

interaction and participation in daily reading (p.1). In the same report, it was noted that the quality of children's relationships with their parents and educational activities at home sets a stage for their readiness to learn (p.3). Warrilow, Fisher and Valentine (2004) point out that it is important to acknowledge the benefits of parent-child interaction in early learning (p.19). Also, the Foundation for Child Development [FCD] (2007) report suggests "family bond can be extremely beneficial for children. When children feel loved and valued, they are more confident and more likely to try new tasks and invest themselves in school"(p. 8).

A study by Entwisle (1995) states that parent beliefs about their children's ability can predict their performance as measured by standardized tests (p.139). Parents' optimistic views of their pre-school youngsters can produce positive long-term effects including children's school performance. A study by Gomby et al. (1995) highlights that, in some cases, early childhood programs combined with parent support, decrease aggressive and delinquent behaviour in children. These services influence parents to set high expectations for their children and create a healthy environment that fosters learning and positive parent-child interaction (p.11). The above findings indicate that early childhood programs support parents to improve their children's cognitive performance and success in school, thus increasing the likelihood that they will be non-violent and productive citizens.

On the other hand, Gomby et al. (1995) suggests that the best way to promote child development is to work directly with children, and not to take for granted that positive changes in parents necessarily mean or always lead to positive behavioural changes in children (p.16). The study acknowledges that early childhood programs have a positive impact on parents, but the evidence is not enough to conclude its direct influence on children. In contrast, findings such as HIPPY USA, 2001; Braunger and Lewis, 2005 and Verdon, 2007 signify that well-informed and better-equipped parents are in a unique position to help their young children to develop emotionally, socially and academically. Notably, there are early childhood programs such as HIPPY that confirm the need to support parents as the primary educator and nurturer of their children is the best way to ensure their learning.

The Benefits of Parents from the HIPPY Program

The HIPPY program enhances parents' ability to teach their children with confidence and increase children's readiness to succeed in learning. LeMare and Audet (2003) claim that:

> The HIPPY program acknowledges positive outcomes in supporting the development of at risk children cognitively, socially and supports them to develop positive relationships. The findings reveal that HIPPY children had the highest average IQ's and great social skills. Anecdotal comments from parents suggest that HIPPY has a powerful and positive impact on the quality of parent-child relationships. Such changes in parent-child

interactions had a positive impact on the children's social development including children modeling pro-social behaviour learned in the context of positive interactions with parents, enhanced feelings of self-worth... and possibly, greater feelings of security and accompanying changes in children's internal working models of the social world (pp. 8-9).

Mustard (2006) verifies that play-based learning, if properly designed, is one of the best strategies for children's brain development as well as for early learning (p.52). This statement confirms that a child's brain is shaped by their daily experience including their parents' gestures and other expressions. Therefore, parents' states of mind and emotional condition have an acute role in influencing the treatment of children positively or negatively.

A New Zealand study's findings show that programs like HIPPY can play a great role as a change agent in the lives of parents. The study profiled parents who left school early with few or no qualifications, worked in unskilled jobs and experienced a range of social problems. Younger (2003) reveals that their participation in the HIPPY program helped them to be better parents, better at teaching their children, communicating with their children's teachers with confidence and gained more knowledge about child development. They also increased their participation in educational programs, accessing resources and community activities. The report adds that parents listen to their children more, have more patience with their children and read more books than before. They also learned better ways of managing their children's behaviour, had

higher aspirations for and educational expectations of their children (pp.10-29).

Similarly, HIPPY USA (2001) refers to a study by Jacobson and Ramisetty-Mikler that looked at the effectiveness of HIPPY in areas of parental involvement in a child's education, parent-child educational experiences, and the child's school adaptability. The research asserts that a large percentage of parents reported attending to their children when they expressed interest in reading, frequently encouraging their children to read and become more aware of the importance of this activity.

Another study by Younger (2003) advised that mothers who participated in early childhood programs continued to be engaged in educational activities, their children's schooling, employment opportunities and community activities (p.13). The study notes that the HIPPY program motivates mothers to be involved in school and supportive programs. Programs such as HIPPY can be instrumental in helping isolated mothers to overcome social and educational exclusions by enabling them to support their children in pursuit of lifelong learning. A report by the Centre for Educational Research and Innovation [CERI] (1997) highlighted that "privileged and high-achieving parents pass on "cultural capital" to their offspring as they pass down financial capital. Cultural capital represents the values and patterns of organization which are characteristic in most societies of the middle classes"(p.22). Similarly, Griffith and Smith (2005) demonstrated how middle-class mothers use their mothering

to reproduce and maintain their economic status through schooling. This suggests that the HIPPY program can help mothers to transform their children's future and address the social inequalities in communities.

The Benefits of HIPPY to the community

Over and above helping parents, the research points out that HIPPY can rejuvenate communities. Westheimer (2003) asserts that the HIPPY program can be viewed as a community development project. Her findings show that significant changes were seen in the educational and employment aspirations of participant parents (Examining HIPPY's Impact in a Community Context section, para.1). The author emphasizes that the involvement of HIPPY parents in programs and their children's schooling benefits the broader community. It increases the comfort level of parents to engage in community activities and that in turn can promote social changes. anyon (2005**)** emphasizes that organizing parents around the issue of education creates social capital in communities, and encourages parents to utilize their collective strength to force system change. It also builds leadership in parents by providing skill training, mentoring and opportunity for public action (p.157).

Warren (2005) shares a story that brings to light the crucial role of parents in strengthening the relationship between schools and parents. The Logan Square Neighbourhood Association is an organization that serves low-income residents on the west side of Chicago. In response to children's literacy and school issues, "they trained local mothers to be parent mentors called

"Literacy Ambassadors". Their job was to support mothers and local school teachers to create understanding and positive learning environment for children"(p.155). According to Warren (2005), the parent mentors were able to realize positive outcomes. They "got teachers and parents at the same level. Now, teachers feel comfortable with parents. Parents understand teachers have a tough job; they understand each other's role" (p.157). Further, Warrilow, Fisher and Valentine (2004) specified that parents who are not involved in their communities have challenges to access information about services "some families are unaware of the potential benefits of early learning and this contributes to families not accessing services" (p.9). The literature reviewed emotes that parental involvement in their communities improves their relationship with schools, teachers and other community resources.

As well, a report from Working Women Community Centre strongly suggests that HIPPY's community development approach to service delivery details evidence in supporting families within a comprehensive system has had a direct effect on a parent's personal growth and a child's learning. HIPPY promotes community economic transformation through education, training and employment creation. Always mothers are trained and hired as HIPPY's "home-visitors" to deliver service to their own communities. For most of them, HIPPY provides the point-of-entry for their first job. Furthermore, home-visitors are provided training during their employment. After two years, HIPPY's home-visitors are encouraged to explore different job opportunities and that HIPPY

offers them an opportunity to establish meaningful career goals (PC3, personal communication, January 12, 2009). Also, a home-visitor role is seen as a potential vehicle for establishing home-school partnerships. Home-visitors encourage and facilitate communication between mothers and school officials. This increases parents' awareness of their strength and potential as home educators and advocates for their children (Westheimer, 2003, Examining HIPPY's Impact in a Community Context section, para.4). Active participation of mothers in their communities promotes the formation of parental networks and can help to identify mothers who have leadership potential. In turn, they will be able to advance grassroots community initiatives and bring together local community institutions to achieve common goals. Warren (2005) emphasized the importance of parents, school and other institutions working together to strengthen the environment for learning "We can think of social capital as a set of links across institutions working together for the development of families and children and achieve collective ends" (p.137).

Conditions that Influence Parental Involvement

Most of the literature reviewed is concurrent with the fact that all parents want to support their children. However, some of the literature indicated significant challenges that prevent parents from participating in their children's learning. For example, language barriers, literacy issues, low levels of education, lack of time, cultural gap, poverty and stress can also impair a parent's ability to nurture their children. These issues can also affect parents'

interactions with their children, communicating with teachers and evaluating their child's performance.

Language/Level of education.

A report by the FCD (2007) suggests that a large number of immigrant children are raised in "linguistically isolated" households, where no parent is proficient in English (p.4). Most of these parents are unable to help their children; therefore, it is necessary to support parents to help their children succeed in school and beyond. In agreement with this position, Braunger and Lewis (2005) affirm that early reading achievement is unquestionably a reliable predictor of subsequent school success. Reading is a complex and purposeful socio-cultural process and it is an issue when families have language and cultural barriers (p.3). This touches on the belief that culture has enormous weight in determining why immigrant families are reluctant to become involved in schools or programs.

Another study by the FCD (2007) identifies concerns related to parents' level of education. "Parents with less than a high school education might not have books at home nor read to their children consistently" (p.8). A mother's level of education "is often a leading indicator whether her child will be adequately prepared for kindergarten or not. Along with schooling and cognitive development of children, a lower level of a parent's education affects the financial wellbeing of the entire family"(p.8). Likewise, CERI (1997) states that parents' level of education affects mothers participation in the schooling of

their children (p.21). The study highlighted that parents who are not well-educated and are unfamiliar with the education system may not know how to support their children. This can weaken the effects of positive child-parent interaction (p.25). Similarly, Braunger and Lewis (2005) maintained that students who did not have high levels of literacy support at home experienced negative impacts on school achievement (p.46).

Culture.

In a number of studies, values and cultural differences of immigrant families were identified as possible barriers to parental involvement. The FCD (2007) report indicates that immigrant parents' modes of expressing affection, which are different from the North American cultural practices, can potentially create confusion and impact children negatively. These cultural disconnections within families can alienate children and complicate their interaction with their parents (p.19). Solomon, Levine-Rasky and Singer (2003) argue that "children's attitude is shaped by their parents and can be damaged intellectually and emotionally if they do not receive authentic and balanced images of other cultures. Thus, children may receive unrealistic and distorted pictures of themselves"(p. 141). Parent's cultural practices and their social condition at home play a role in the formation of children's mind-set and learning.

To the contrary, a research finding by Goodman and Marten (2007) asserts that the abundance of knowledge and experiences that exist in communities can inspire culturally relevant and responsive programs for

children (p.179). Besides, Goodman and Martens (2007) refer to decades of research challenging the low expectations of children growing up in marginalized communities and the authors contend that all families possess values and convictions (p.179). The review takes a stand that the issues of parent-child socialization practices at home are misunderstood. The wealth of experiences that exist in children's homes can instigate culturally relevant programs to help communities. As a result, those programs can inspire parents to participate and become innovators in their own neighbourhoods. The Jane-Finch corridor can be cited as an example where residents are involved in activities and the development of many grassroots organizations in the area, including HIPPY. The Griffin Centre (2005) inquiry demonstrates how the contribution and innovation of the diverse population of Jane-Finch brings a great deal of energy, creativity and courage that enriches their community and beyond.

Extended working-hours.

A Study was completed by NCJW Center for the Child and the Bush Center in Child Development and Social Policy, Yale University on Head Start programs. It indicates that, mothers were unable to participate in programs because of long hours of work, poverty, parental responsibilities, feeling down, health issues, language barriers, status (single parent) and stress. Lack of time owing to conditions of employment and family composition, such as having a baby or getting divorced, was identified as one of the barriers that prevent

families from being involved (Lamb-Parker et al., 1997, pp. 4-5). This substantiates the thesis that home visiting programs tend to be successful in serving families in marginalized communities because their families might not have the time to attend programs.

Poverty.

Poverty can limit a parent's ability to participate in their child's learning. Several studies such as HIPPY Canada, 2008a and FCD, 2007 share the view that parents from marginalized and low-income communities face serious difficulty in ensuring the well-being of their youngsters because of pronounced poverty. The same point was highlighted in the United Way (2004) study confirming that the Jane-Finch community has a higher number of families with young children living in poverty. Due to their economical condition, these families do not have adequate resources to support their children (pp.4-7).

The impact of poverty on immigrant families is significant and Entwisle (1995) indicates that differences in families' economic resources matter more for children's performance than ethnicity or any other reason (p.141). Verdon (2007) draws attention to the fact that children in lower-income households are less likely to have exposure to books and stimulating activities at home. Families who live in poverty might not have the necessary tools to assist their children learn (p.1). Consistently, the FCD (2007) made a suggestion that children of low-income and immigrant families need to obtain the right

supports so that they can grow up to make important contributions in the

workplace and the community (p.7).

A similar concern was raised by HIPPY Canada (2008a), which identified

over one million Canadian children are not ready for school because their

families struggle with conditions of poverty and low levels of literacy. On this

subject, Dr. Mustard (2006) insisted that:

If we are to reduce the proportion of the population in poverty, improve

equity in literacy and income, reduce violence, enhance social stability,

and improve the quality of human capital which is increasingly

important for a knowledge-based economy, societies have to invest in

early child development. (p.55).

Maeroff (2003) noted that, "Socio-economic-educational levels of families

go hand-in-hand with children's academic achievement levels" (p.3). The

author recommends that we identify ways to provide supportive social

programs to parents, which can help trigger productive experiences for

preschool children. The author's recommendation of universal support for

parents emphasizes that children's learning is a shared responsibility among

parents and communities.

The majority of the literature identified poverty as a factor that affects

family's participation. However, O'Connor & Fernandez (2006) examine school

issues and possible barriers that influenced negative outcomes. The author

stressed that "organization of schools play a critical role in exposing minority

children and their families to displacement and educational marginalization"
(pp. 6-11). O'Connor & Fernandez (2006) challenge the assumption that "poor
families exclusion is caused solely by the negative impacts of poverty. The
effects of poverty may be detrimental to families; nevertheless, it is
unreasonable to conclude it is the only factor that place families at risk" (pp.6-
11). As well, Pacini-Ketchabaw (2008) noted "when the term "at risk" is used to
describe children and families, the focus turns to the individual rather than the
historical forces of injustices that place families at risk in the first place" (p.8).
The above statements highlight that there are several factors that influence
families' social conditions, but it is necessary to acknowledge the historic and
systemic stereotypes that influence the culture and processes of learning.

In any given situation, it is important to understand the values and social
conditions of families that influenced the formation of their perspective and the
process of knowing. As ecofeminists would argue, "knowledge is always
influenced by the values of the culture in which it is generated and values are
molded by historical ideologies and individual processes of categorization"
(Warren, 2000, p.34). Therefore, the perspectives of individuals are often
subjected to the cultural values and stereotypes they hold.

When conducting research, it is important to consider looking at findings
within a wide-range of families' social context. Holden (2007) conducted a
literature review on the effectiveness of home visiting programs such as HIPPY
and her report laid out that " home visiting is the best strategy to help address

the systemic need for supporting families with young children and there is a need for coordinated and more in-depth research on all home-visiting programs such as HIPPY" (p.7). The author underlined that it is crucial for a research to be tested within a context of the broader family, community and service delivery system. As indicated by several studies, it is essential to understand the characteristics of households, levels of participation in programs and cultural values that may determine the point of view of families.

With few exceptions, most of the literature identified multiple barriers that prevent parents from participating with their children and communities. The findings made known that ensuring children's well-being depends on acquiring additional social supports for their parents. Often, poorly educated people produce persons who are unable to function in a society where skills matter the most. After all, enabling parents to support their children is developing human capital that can promote economic growth of families and communities.

Chapter Four

Strategy and Methodology of Data Collection

Summative Evaluation *Resea*rch was selected to be an appropriate method because it concentrates on assessing the effectiveness of programs and interventions (Robson, 2002). "Assessing the effectiveness of the program is not simply the summary of achieved stated goals but it covers the total impact of the program and detected consequences"(Robson, 2002, p. 206). This evaluation model is most effective in investigating what happens to clients as a result of participation in the program. According to Robson (2002), evaluation research findings represent the direct interest of participants and are more likely to influence the real world than traditional research (Robson, 2002, p.203). In addition, the skills required to carry out the activities such as knowledge of the program's development, program evaluation and sensitivity to socio-economic concerns of the community were consistent with the skill sets of the researcher (Robson, 2002, p.212). The checklist for planning and coordinating the process of an evaluation research was followed as described by Harlen and Elliott (Harlen & Elliott cited in Robson, 2002, p.212). The study took into account flexible design as its research strategy. Though no change of strategy or methodology is expected, it is a precaution taken to ensure the inclusion and accommodation of all participants' responses.

Participant Sample

The first cohort of HIPPY in Jane-Finch has 62 participant mothers, which is the maximum enrolment capacity of the program. Twenty-one mothers finished their term as their children graduated from the program and forty-one mothers are still enrolled. My goal was to interview twenty volunteer mothers who participated in the first cohort of the HIPPY program. The size of the participant sample was determined based on the nature of the topic and the depth of the interview (Robson, 2002, p.199). Twenty HIPPY participant mothers, eight HIPPY program workers and two residents participated in the research. A letter was given to all HIPPY program participants and HIPPY program workers to inform them about the study. In December 2008, an announcement was made in two HIPPY meetings to tell participant mothers about the research. Interested participant mothers were asked to contact the principal researcher if they wished to become involved in the study. I was present at one of the HIPPY meetings and I was able to communicate the information to participant mothers. At that moment, most of the HIPPY mothers who were interested in the research were allowed to register. The first twenty participants who responded were selected to participate in the study.

Involvement in the study was voluntary and all participants were required to sign consent forms to indicate their agreement to participate in the project. Participants were informed that they can choose to withdraw from participating at any time without any penalties and information they provided

would be destroyed. As well, deciding not to volunteer would not influence any relationship with the researcher or the organization that provides the HIPPY program. Using pseudonyms would protect their anonymity and identity. As described by Gordon, participants' identities would remain known only to the researcher and participants' data was identified by their pseudonyms unless agreed with the participant otherwise (Gordon, 2001b cited in Milroy, L., & Gordon, M., 2003, p.80). The pseudonyms were assigned privately to each participant by the principal researcher before the beginning of the focus group discussions and after the signing of the consents. Throughout the study, participants were asked to identify themselves by their pseudonyms. The consent forms and letters to participants are attached as appendixes.

The participants were diverse in all aspects. Three participants are going to school, seven are interested in upgrading their skills and ten are working. Their ages range between 25 to 55 years. The participants come from China, the Caribbean, Nigeria, Ghana, Somalia, Guyana, Cameroon, Philippines, Sri Lanka, India, El Salvador and Vietnam. The selection of HIPPY managers and staff are based on their roles, responsibilities and knowledge of the program. All participants were informed about the process of the research, their role in the study, the dates of focus group discussions and the interviews. All mothers were informed that they were going to take part in focus group discussions and ten of the participant mothers would be required to engage in depth interviews. As a result, ten of the mothers agreed to do one-on-one communications. During the

selection process, an attempt was made to ensure interviewees reflect the diversity of the participant pool.

Data collection

The methodology of collecting data involves a multi-method approach where individual interviews were used in combination with focus group discussions. Written self-completion questionnaires, for participant mothers, were excluded because it can be subject to response bias especially for those with language barriers (Robson, 2002, p.238). Data collection involved three steps. Participants were provided precise description of the research, the activity that is going to take place and what is being asked of them (Kirby, Greaves and Reid, 2nd ed., 2006, p188). Information from literature reviewed, program reports, videos and other documentations of the HIPPY program were included. These documents provided important information that was used to corroborate findings from interviews and focus-group discussions. For example, comments made by home-visitors and participant mothers were elaborated and highlighted.

First, literature related to early development and selected HIPPY programs in the United States, Australia, New Zealand and Canada, was reviewed and analyzed. In addition, relevant documentation such as program reports, proposal submissions, testimonials of HIPPY home-visitors, information from HIPPY events and partnerships was included. Reference was made to

community residents who played a significant role in the development of the HIPPY program in Jane-Finch.

Second, three focus group discussions were planned each with 10 participants as suggested by Stewart and Shamdasani (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990, cited in Robson, 2002, p.285). One focus group was planned to include eight HIPPY program workers and two residents. Two focus groups were organized to facilitate discussion with twenty participant mothers. However, the two participant mothers' focus groups that were scheduled back to back were merged. The meetings were scheduled at 9:00 a.m. and 10:00 a.m. at Seneca College. Owing to other program activities provided at Seneca College, all HIPPY participant mothers came to the meeting at 9:00 a.m. and suggested to merge both focus group meetings. As a result, the meeting became one big group session for all twenty participant mothers.

Two different focus group questionnaires were developed and used to facilitate the discussion with participant mothers and HIPPY program workers. The primary researcher moderated both focus groups. When facilitating both discussions, an effort was made to prevent partiality and attempting to confirm expectations as pointed out by Sim (Sim, 1998, p.347 cited in Robson, 2002, p.287). One of the focus group discussions was delegated for residents and HIPPY Program Workers, including three home-visitors, three program coordinators and two program managers. The first focus group provided perspective from residents and a broad range of program staff on how the HIPPY

program benefits mothers and the community in general. In the second one, HIPPY participant mothers highlighted benefits and challenges from a personal view point. Both focus group participants were encouraged to reflect specifically on the overall effects of the HIPPY program on parents and the community.

Third, interviews were conducted with ten HIPPY participant mothers. Qualitative research interview was selected as most appropriate to capture the effectiveness of HIPPY from those who participated in the program since its inception. As King (1994) emphasized that it is important to capture "the individual perceptions of processes within an organization and where individual historical accounts are required of how a particular phenomenon developed" (King, 1994, pp.16-17 cited in Robson, 2002, p.271). The interviews were scheduled and standardized as described by Briggs (1986), in that the principal researcher predetermined the questions and each participant was asked the same questions in the same order (p.20). The interviews were conducted one-on-one and each interview took approximately 60 minutes, as described by Milroy and Gordon (Milroy & Gordon, 2003, p.58).

During data collection and interviews, participants were asked if they need interpretation support to ensure the inclusion of participants with language barriers, preserve the integrity of information and trustworthiness of the study (Hinchey, 2008, p.35). A placement student from Working Women Community Centre attended one of the focus group meetings. She assisted in welcoming participant mothers and preparing the consent forms to be signed.

She also assisted in collating data after the initial documentation. The student did not participate in the interviews during focus group discussions and did not have access to participant's identities. Additionally, as per the policies of the Working Women Community Centre, all employees and students were bound to protect participant's confidentiality. The participation of the student provided support and opportunity for debriefing (Robson, 2002, p.175). Both, the interviews and the focus group discussions were audiotape recorded and destroyed after documentation. Research participants were given an opportunity to review their statements to ensure accuracy. This occasion gave participants a second chance to add information. Collected data was identified by participant's pseudonyms. The primary researcher and the research supervisor had access to the information collected. Documented data will be stored for six months in a locked cabinet before it is shredded.

Data Analysis

After documentation, the original data was organized in orderly fashion as described by Kirby (Kirby, Graves & Reid, 2nd ed., 2006, p212). The research material was divided into two parts as the 'Content File' and 'Process File'. The Content File contains personal information about research participants, signed consent forms, original literature and data gathered. The Process File contains the copies of non-personal data collected from participants and field notes. Then, it was further reorganized into three files for analysis.

1) The Identity File – It includes signed consent forms, the names, contact information of participants and corresponding pseudonyms. This information is going to be kept in a locked cabinet, for six months, beginning January 2009 to ensure confidentiality.

2) The Content File – It contains the original participant interviews and focus groups discussions, the original articles, documents, books, videos and the original Process File. These documents are kept in file to prevent collected materials from becoming fragmented.

3) The Process Copy File – It comprises the copy of the process file, which includes the field notes, the copy of interviews and focus group discussions that was used to categorize the information according to themes.

The Miles and Huberman approach to qualitative data analysis was used to do data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing (Miles & Huberman, 194, cited in Robson, 2002, p.480). Also, some of the tactics described by Miles and Huberman were used for generating meaning of the findings (Miles & Huberman, 1994, pp.245-6, cited in Robson, 2002, p.480). As part of the analysis, data reduction was applied through a process of coding. Data was first categorized according to the questionnaire sections. Then, it was coded according to themes such as the benefits of parents from the HIPPY program, parents' school and community involvement, HIPPY as community development and conditions that prevent parental participation. At the same time, these

major patterns that surfaced from the findings were consistent with the themes of the research questions being examined.

As a principal researcher, who works in the organization, I am conscious of the significance of reasoning and partiality in attempting to examine these findings. Looking at the interviews from a poststructuralist lens, it highlights questions of power and privilege (Sally Barnes cited in Mac Naughton, 2005, p.40). As a senior staff of the organization, interviewing HIPPY home-visitors, who may not feel they have the same associated privileges or possible conflict of interest, could have affected the response of some participants. Many times, I asked myself; what is the 'right way' of critically reflecting? As stated by Giugni, "critical reflection" means "taking a risk of questioning your practices in fair and equitable ways. There is not one particular way to "reflect" rather one has the capacity to develop their own ways to explore risk taking and questioning" (Miriam Giugni cited in Mac Naughton, 2005, p.53). Considering all the factors that can influence how information is selected, interpreted and contextualized, an attempt was made to avoid partiality and positive instances throughout the process.

Chapter Five

Research Findings

The findings prove how the HIPPY program benefits mothers to foster positive relationships with their children and enhance a mother's personal growth. Three questionnaires were designed to facilitate the discussion with participant mothers and HIPPY workers. The questions for both focus groups and personal interviews were focused on such areas as:

- How and why was the HIPPY program identified in the Jane-Finch area?

- How many parents attended school or work? Did HIPPY influence their decision and what are some of the challenges that may prevent parents from advancing their goals?

- What kind of training do parents and home-visitors obtain from HIPPY and how did they benefit from this training or support?

- Parents were asked to describe their relationships with their children? What kind of relationship do they possess and did the program assist them in accomplishing their goals? Is there any noticeable attitude change among parents, what was it, did the program influence those changes and how?

- Parent's involvement, in their children's schooling and their community, was discussed. They were asked if they are involved in school and community activities, in what way and how did they benefit from this involvement?

- At the end of each session, participants were asked if there is anything

   they would like to share that was not mentioned during our discussions.

   Many of them shared personal stories and examples that demonstrate

   how the program was beneficial to them. Some talked about the benefits

   of HIPPY to the community in general.

Positive outcomes were expressed in areas of education, employment,

training, positive parent-child interaction, participation in community

programs and school activities. In addition, the research highlights that the

HIPPY program support for parents had a positive effect in transforming

communities. Although all participants said that the HIPPY program is very

beneficial to their families, some shared challenges with recommendations for

consideration. The number one suggestion proposed by almost all mothers

was to expand the HIPPY program with some curriculum additions.

The Need for the HIPPY Program in the Jane-Finch Community

Jane/Milo and Edgeley Village Tenants' Council with the support of the

Caring Village first identified the need for the HIPPY program. These

community groups supported HIPPY recognizing that early years offer a window

of opportunity to positively influence children and enable parents to create a

healthy learning environment that fosters children's lifetime emotional and

social development. Similarly, one of the participant mothers interviewed

defined the HIPPY program as a foundation for children's learning. She said,

"When you build a house you need to build a strong foundation. The same

thing with children; they need a strong foundation for their learning and HIPPY

builds that strong foundation" (P2, personal communication, January 5, 2009).

Both tenant groups and the Caring Village were actively involved in the early

stages of HIPPY's program development. Through the Caring Village, residents

work with local organizations to create a community where all people can be

safe physically, emotionally, socially and economically so that everyone can

aspire to reach their fullest potential (R1 & R2, personal communication,

December 19, 2008).

The unusually high incidence of school expulsions suspensions of

primary school-aged children, in the Jane-Finch area, was a concern to many

families. Under-prepared children were left to function within the "zero

tolerance" policies instituted across the Toronto District School Board. Many

local children, children of immigrants who are not economically established

and a high number of newcomers in the area have come from unstable

countries where many of these people have been subjected to civil war, refugee

camps, and other injustices. The combination of low income and poor

supports prompted a grassroots movement and a burning desire to find

programs that could improve outcomes for area children. The development of

HIPPY was selected as a way of addressing some of the problems and engaging

parents, similarly. Both tenant groups and the Caring Village were persuaded

that supporting parents to form early healthy relationships with their families

will help ensure the school readiness and overall well-being of their children

(R1 & R2, personal communication, December 19, 2008). Within this context, the Jane-Finch neighbourhood became an obvious choice in which to launch the HIPPY program. Working Women Community Centre initiated the program's planning and implementation. Few neighbourhood active mothers were identified; the process of disseminating the information to isolated individuals and recruiting families was completed by the home-visitors relatively and quickly. Families were selected based on need and personal commitment. Families made a two-year commitment to participate 30 weeks per year. The program runs concurrently with the school year (PM1 & PC1, personal communication, December 19, 2008).

The HIPPY program in Jane-Finch began with 62 participant mothers, which was the maximum capacity of the cohort. According to the HIPPY Program Coordinator, 21 families completed the program as their children graduated from HIPPY and 41 families still enrolled in the program. Approximately 35 mothers work (PC3, personal communication, December 19, 2008).

In this research, 20 mothers participated in the focus group and ten of them volunteered to participate in one-on-one interviews. Out of 20 participant mothers, ten are working; seven of them part-time and three fulltime. Seven of them work for HIPPY; five home-visitors and two program coordinators. Eighteen participants have incomes under $20, 000 and the other two earn $30,000 to $40,000 per year. Four of the mothers attend school, two of them

are at College and two are involved in English upgrading. Six mothers chose to

remain at home, working with their children. Four of the participant mothers

were single parents and 16 were married.

The Benefits of the HIPPY program

All participants said they chose the HIPPY program because it

encouraged positive parent-child interaction creating strong bonds, provided

free books, a teaching curriculum and one-on-one home support. The fact that

a home-visitor attends participants' residences makes the program unique and

convenient for mothers with young children. One mother said, "I used to take

my children to other programs. When I joined HIPPY, I noticed the difference.

HIPPY provides training, free materials, a curriculum to follow, information on

child development and individual guidance from home-visitors. No program

has that type of coordinated support" (P6, personal communication, January

19, 2009).

One of the strengths of the program highlighted, by almost all

participants, is the one-on-one support. Some said, "They help us to deal with

our social issues, language and other barriers. The home-visitors are a

support, a resource and someone who is committed to listen (P13 & P14,

personal communication, January 12, 2009). All participants indicated that

the home-visitors are from our community and mothers like us; we feel

comfortable talking to them. They are flexible with meeting locations,

scheduling, courteous and respectful (P1 – P20, personal communication,

January 12, 2009)). In addition, home-visitors are role models for participant mothers. A mother who became one of the HIPPY's program coordinators said, "My personal growth is inspiring moms to believe in themselves. Now, participants talk about getting a job or training instead of worrying about not having Canadian experience. They participate in activities with enthusiasm" (P10, personal communication, January 16, 2009).

Several mothers praised the HIPPY curriculum saying "HIPPY's curriculum is better than the school curriculum because instructions are understandable and easy to follow (P17, P19 & P20, personal communication, January 12, 2009). In addition, participants talked about how the program creates easy to facilitate positive learning experiences and routines (P1 – P20, personal communication, January 12, 2009). In agreement, HIPPY's program worker pointed out the strength of the program as a well-structured program, play-based, and written at a grade 3 level of English. More importantly, HIPPY is a free program and provides families with books, activity packets that families can use and one-on- one home support (PC3, personal communication, December 19, 2008).

All of the participant mothers said they are more confident and their overall interaction with others has changed noticeably. For example, one mother related how she changed the way she communicates with people and how she now talks to her children. She said, "I never spoke in public before. Now, I am confident to share my ideas and lead a discussion. My participation

in HIPPY made me believe in myself. My contribution was valued and

respected, and that combination of attributes encouraged me to get involved"

(P10, personal communication, January 16, 2009).

Others reflected how HIPPY channelled their abilities and afforded them

an opportunity to shine. One mother shared one of the things that made her

feel confident and proud of herself. She said:

I love speaking but I never had an opportunity to speak about anything

significant. HIPPY gave me an opportunity to make presentations about

the program. People listen. I used to think I didn't have any skills and

that I am just a mom. Now, I feel very different. I have skills and I am

capable of doing much more. It's a great feeling. (P6, personal

communication, January 19, 2009).

In agreement, one of HIPPY's program workers said that the program

heightens a mother's sense of pride, ability, confidence, leadership skills,

positive attitude and awareness of community resources (PC2, personal

communication, December, 2008).

Education

All participant mothers echoed how HIPPY exposed them to many

possibilities and enabled them to aim for the best. Four of the research

participants were attending school and ten of them were planning to upgrade

their education, enrolling in courses, as ECE, Social Work, Community Work,

LINC and upgrading their credentials at Seneca College (P3, P4, P5, P6, P7,

P11, P12, P13, P14 & P15). The remaining six mothers, for the time being, want

to focus on their children. One of the program workers, of HIPPY, noted that

"the routine of mothers practicing their English regularly has given them

confidence; some mothers have diplomas and degrees from their native

countries. The only factor preventing them was their ability to navigate around

English. Some have voiced taking LINC" (PC1, personal communication,

December 19, 2009). For example, a participant mother said, "I am planning to

continue my education. I now know I can do better and I am exploring different

interests. I see many opportunities opening up for me" (P5, personal

communication, January 15, 2009).

Participant mothers, who chose to focus on their children, emphasized

that they consider their participation in HIPPY as a learning experience

because they receive regular training on the HIPPY curriculum and several

child-development activities. The single parent participants expressed on not

having enough time to attend school. Their priority centred on supporting their

children, through their participation in HIPPY, and to work to support their

families. Some of the mothers said, "We wanted to focus on our children. We

are learning how to teach and we should focus on that. We are learning to

teach children and that is education" (P1, P10, P17 & P18, personal

communication, January 12, 2009).

A program worker at the Working Women Community Centre was asked

if she thinks the HIPPY program influences a mother's decision to frequent

school. Her answer was "children become used to involving their parents in their schooling/education from an early age and this pattern becomes reinforced. Also, parents gain confidence in their own abilities to teach and this confidence translate into their desire to improve their own education" (PM2, personal communication, December 19, 2008). The Program Worker's statements are consistent with my own findings which reveal that participants are eager to support their children which eventually lead some mothers to obtain additional education.

Overall, most mothers pointed out that they were required to upgrade their education to help their children effectively. Helping with homework, especially math, is difficult for some mothers. Some said, "I am teaching my children but I am realizing that I need to improve my own skills. It is very difficult to help them with homework" (P11 & P12, personal communication, January 12, 2009). This fact indicates that parents are interested to learn in order to help their children. However, some mothers expressed concern in enrolling in regular schools because the school system does not support the requirements of parents with younger children. Two of the mothers noted, "I need to upgrade but attending school is not an option. The school system is not accessible and I don't have money to pay for tutoring, childcare and transportation. I wish the HIPPY program can teach us also" (P11 & P12, personal communication, January 12, 2009). In addition, the lack of accessible upgrading for parents was raised as a worry. Lack of accessibility affects the

future need of their children. As their children grow and reach higher grades, the level of support that's called for changes according to their children's grades. Without HIPPY's support, parents might never realize the academic skills that are required to assist their children. Many of the participants echoed the same refrain: "At this time, our children are young and we can follow the curriculum to teach them. But, our concern, is how to help our children when they go to school" (P7, P11, P12, P13, P14 & P15, personal communication, January 12, 2009).

Training

HIPPY provides regular training to parents, program coordinators and home-visitors. According to the HIPPY's program worker, the Working Women Community Centre provides training for HIPPY home-visitors, program coordinators and parents regularly. HIPPY program coordinators may possess different experiences and skill sets. Their training is designed to bridge their skills in Settlement and Early Childhood Development; setting a strong foundation of supervision and program coordination. Some of the training includes: "Facilitation Skills, Time Management, Conflict Resolution, Evaluation Framework, Immigration and Settlement, Early Childhood Education, Advanced Supervision and Adult Education issues" (PC3, personal communication, December 19, 2008).

Home-visitors receive weekly training sessions to enable them to successfully deliver weekly activities to families. The training for the home-

visitors includes "Early Childhood Education, children's safety, community

services, cultural competencies, conflict resolution and group facilitation" (PC3,

personal communication, December 19, 2008).

Participant mothers are provided with a wide range of training. Home-

visitors participate in all of the workshops provided to attendees. Some of the

topics are (1) Effective discipline – what to do instead of yelling, screaming and

spanking, (2) Coping with stress, (3) Sibling rivalry, (4) Helping children deal

with their anger, (5) Developing a positive relationship with your child, (6)

Building your child's self esteem, (7) I love you rituals, (8) Dealing with school

and daycare concerns, (9) Let's talk about temper tantrums, (10) Let's talk

about spanking, (11) Single parenting survival tips, (12) Parenting in Canada,

(13) The impact of domestic violence on children, (14) Bullying, (15) Working

with the active child, (16) Behaviour management, (17) First Aid, (18) Cultural

competencies, (19) Early Childhood Education issues, and (20) Conflict

resolution (PC3, personal communication, December 19, 2008).

In addition, HIPPY Canada supplants training by way of regional and

national conferences. Some mothers have been schooled in how to conduct

community based research as well. A mother who participated in a research

project said, "Personally, I learned how to do research including interviewing

and documentation. I was so proud to see my work documented, presented as

a research and I was named a community researcher" (P10, personal

communication, January 16, 2009). The above supports assist mothers to

become better informed instructors of their children. In confirmation, a mother said, "I learned how to introduce education and create a positive learning experience that will enable my children to love learning. Before, I didn't know how to do that. Now, we can have fun and learn while we play" (P2, personal communication, January 12, 2009).

Employment

A program worker from the Working Women Community Centre shared her experiences in how HIPPY is providing new opportunities to enhance the employability of mothers "The HIPPY program furnishes a small-step entry point into the world and context of employment. By providing employment opportunities for home visitors, HIPPY models the transition from home-bounded newcomers to employable community members" (PM1, personal communication, December 19, 2008). In addition, HIPPY lays down training opportunities for participant mothers and home-visitors. The home-visitors' model shows how to attain work/life balance.

Ten of the participant mothers work, three full-time and seven are part timers. Seven of the mothers work for HIPPY; five as home-visitors and two as program coordinators. All participants emphasized that the HIPPY program gave them hope and an opportunity to work. For most mothers, this was their first job in Canada (P1, P2, P4, P6 & P10, personal communication, January 12, 2009). One mother noted, "It was my first job in Canada. HIPPY gave me an opportunity to gain Canadian work experience. I am confident now and have

gained additional skills. I am studying English and have established links to other resources" (P4, personal communication, January 5, 2009). In support, one of the program workers affirmed, "HIPPY helps participants to overcome barriers by opening the doors for them. Parents who have been involved in the program have gained self-esteem to enter the workforce and become more employable" (PC3, personal communication, December 19, 2008).

The HIPPY program promises important supports for the development and reinforcement of a mother's self esteem and ability. Often, resettlement in a new country is difficult. Many newcomers feel like they are starting over, that all of their experience must be re-proven, in an environment where no one is willing to accept their skills. "HIPPY values the contributions and skills of the parent and trusts that all parents have the capacity to be the first and best teacher of their children (PM1, personal communication, December 19, 2008). This allows mothers to access those employment supports that prepare them for full participation in the work force, and explore the possibility for self-development.

For others, HIPPY is a program that boosts their confidence. A mother said that, "I always wanted to work but I was not confident. I used to say I am just a mom. HIPPY motivated me, gave me the support I needed and the opportunity to work. I see HIPPY as a first step" (P6, personal communication, January 19, 2009). Another mother noted:

I always worked part-time. Now, I am encouraged to get involved in

different activities, improve my skills and plan to get a better job. The

program also provides training on regular basis. That made me think I

am capable of doing better. It gave me a reason to set long-term goals. I

see HIPPY as a stepping stone to better opportunities. (P5, personal

communication, January 15, 2009).

Another mother shared her experience with her participation in the

HIPPY program. HIPPY helped her to discover needed information and to find

employment. She said:

I was introduced to a variety of resources and training opportunities

within the community. With this knowledge, I was able to contact an

employment resource centre to obtain help with my job search, resume

and interview skills. Before being introduced to this knowledge and

aware of what's out there, I was a stay-at-home mom wanting to go out

into the real world, hoping to get my life back on track. But, I did not

know where to begin or where to obtain the help I needed. (P9, personal

communication, December 19, 2008).

In addition, HIPPY initiates parents to explore different opportunities

within the community. Participants said HIPPY enabled them to acquire

training, knowledge about community resources, employment, education,

volunteer work and how to communicate with school officials. For most

parents, HIPPY is their first job and some indicated it was the first positive step

in their lives. One participant explained an example "I started as a HIPPY mom, became a home-visitor and now I am a HIPPY co-coordinator. To me, this is evidence that HIPPY enhances a mom's confidence as well as a mom's skills" (P10, personal communication, January 16, 2009). This shows that an opportunity allotted to one mother can instill a positive response on the confidence of other participants. In short, enabling one mother to succeed promotes hope and empowerment to those other mothers who may not consider themselves capable.

Parent-Child Interaction

All mothers acknowledged they spend some time with their children. They read at least for 15 minutes and then, they are engaged in other activities for 45 minutes. They all affirmed they read, talk, walk, role-play, have fun, laugh, and attend the library and other community events with their children. All stated that they have good interaction with their children and learned much. All of the participants, except one mother, said they have sufficient time to spend with their children. Participants, who work as part-time HIPPY home-visitors, indicated their work schedule is flexible and convenient because it permits home-visitors to take their children to work (P1-P20, personal communication, January 12, 2009).

The mothers said they have a strong bond, a positive relationship and special moments with their children. Some mothers shared personal experiences. One participant remarked, "I remember one time, my child and I

spent the entire evening building a puzzle. It was very difficult because it was complicated. When we finished the job, I realized the closeness we had was priceless. It feels great" (P5, personal communication, January 15, 2009). Another mother shared:

> In December 2008, my child was selected by his teacher to receive an award for reading. They had an assembly at school where the award was presented on stage. Due to my responsibilities at work, I was not able to attend this award ceremony but my sister went in my absence. When I arrived home, they told me all about it. I celebrated and praised my son telling him how proud I am of him for working so hard and doing so well. My son turned to me and told me that he was proud of me also for teaching him and "being such a good mommy. (P9, personal communication, December 19, 2008).

In agreement, one of the home-visitors indicated, "HIPPY builds bonds between mothers and children. All HIPPY moms I talked to told me that their relationship with their children became better and stronger. They learned positive ways of communicating with their children" (HV1, personal communication, December 19, 2008). One of them said, "I did not know children could do a lot of things at a young age. HIPPY taught me about child development" (P18, P16 & P17, personal communication, December 19, 2008). This shows participants are pleased with the interaction they develop with their children and are learning things they did not know before.

Moreover, all participants articulate they learned an immense amount about child development from their participation in the HIPPY program. As a result, they were able to create a positive home-environment for their children. They said, "they learned to be patient, listen to their children, talk positively, praise their children and respect their children's opinions" (P1 –P20, personal communication, January 12, 2009). This is an additional example from a mother who said:

> HIPPY taught me to speak positively to my child and my child reciprocates this language. Communicating in this manner has been the way I built the foundation as an important aspect of my child's leadership skills. HIPPY has also influenced the ways I educate my child. I am able to understand my child, identify his challenges and work with him to discover what learning styles best suit him. (P9, personal communication, December 19, 2008).

All participant mothers said HIPPY afforded them the opportunity to interact with their children. The skills they acquired to teach their children were instrumental in facilitating and promoting a positive relationship with them. A mother added, "I am teaching my child. Someone else does not do it as I watch from the sidelines. This allows me to interact with my child, understand my child's learning habits and his areas of challenges" (P9, personal communication, December 19, 2008).

All mothers strongly agreed on the importance of adopting a positive parent-child relationship. They said, "When families have open communication with their children; children are more likely to trust and share their difficulties with them (the parents). I think it is wonderful we have a HIPPY program in our community" (P5 & P10, personal communication, January 15-16). One of the residents, who participated in the focus groups, emphasized the importance of parent-child interaction. She feels the success of her children is an outcome of a positive relationship. "I was very involved in their lives. I spent time with them, with their schooling and community activities. As a result, I was able to build a strong bond with my children and an opportunity to nurture them (R1, personal communication, December 19, 2008). The resident continued, "We have many youth issues and family problems. I think, when children do not have a strong bond with their parents, these issues fester" (R1, personal communication, December 19, 2008).

Another participant added, "I read a report recently that suggests that children who do not have good relationship with their parents, they [the children] are more likely to be involved in crime and leave school. We have a whole lot of youth issues in this community" (P5, personal communication, January 15, 2009). In agreement, some referred to the relationship between positive parent-child ties and school attainments saying, "HIPPY enables families to develop a healthy rapport and a positive learning environment. Helping to prepare children for school, and assisting them to solve school

issues permits children to succeed in their chosen-fields of learning" (P10, personal communication, January 16, 2009). The above findings clearly show that spending quality time, positive parent-child interaction builds a strong bond among families and creates a healthy environment conducive for a child's learning. As stated by many of the participants, HIPPY builds positive parent-child interaction, strong bonds and improves communication among families. Most participants concluded that the presence of the HIPPY program impacts positively on the lives of families and communities.

Parents' Attitudinal Change

Participant mothers noted that their attitudes toward child rearing changed because of their involvement in HIPPY. The way mothers interact with their children, solve problems, discipline children and communicate with them has changed. A mother explored the changes in herself saying:

I used to be demanding and give orders to my children. Now, I talk to them and reason with them. If we disagree, I respect their opinion. For example, I came from a community where children must be obedient. They have to do what adults tell them to do. We need to learn to communicate and to negotiate with our children. HIPPY raised my awareness about these issues, and now I have a great relationship with them. (P5, personal communication, January 15, 2009).

As well, another mother shared what she discovered in her relationship to her child and herself. She noted, "I am careful about how I say things. I

understand my child better. I manage issues of discipline differently and I feel I

have positively influenced her. I am also able to communicate and conduct

myself positively" (P4, personal communication, January 5, 2009). Similarly, a

mother reflected:

> I learned to be patient with my children. HIPPY changed the way I deal
>
> with my children and my perspective about them. For example, if my
>
> child draws a picture or says something incorrectly, I used to rush to
>
> correct or criticize my child without understanding the reason behind it.
>
> Trying to understand or give my child an opportunity to explain was not
>
> something I considered doing. My participation in HIPPY taught me to
>
> listen, try to see things from a child perspective, talk and negotiate with
>
> my child. Now, I am more accepting, that all people; including, my child,
>
> have their own personalities and I have to respect that. (P5, personal
>
> communication, January 15, 2009).

The above statements are consistent with the observations of the

program worker from WWCC who suggests the HIPPY program enhances the

bond between mothers and their children, and has a positive influence on both

child and mother's attitudes. She claims:

> I attended HIPPY's graduation ceremony and as usual, I was struck by
>
> the almost 100% attendance of participating families. Moms and Dads,
>
> sat with their children, the environment was festive, as it always is, the
>
> potluck lunch looked appetizing with a myriad of dishes from all over the

world. The graduation ceremony began and one-by-one the children were

called forth with their graduation hats on their head to receive their

certificates. This time however, because of a generous donation from one

of the benefactors of the program, each child received a book. As they

returned to their parents, every last one of the parents, beamed with

pride at, not just the achievement of their children, but also their own

successes. The children, almost without exception, sat down and asked

their parents to read a story to them. There was little disappointment

that what was presented was a book and not a toy. There wasn't the mad

dash to drop the book and run around and play with other children.

Instead, what I saw was a demonstration of a new "habit", to read with

their parents, to sit and share that experience with them. In that image,

I felt that the program had indeed achieved its ends, and had managed to

instill in each of the program participants' with a feeling of pride in

HIPPY values. (PM1, personal communication, December 19, 2008).

Parents' School Involvement

All parents said they were involved in their children's school and have

fostered positive relations with school officials. They participate in school

activities, school council meetings, trips, events and other events. All

participants said that HIPPY encouraged them to take part in school activities.

They all said that their involvement in the HIPPY program helped them

understand how the school curriculum operates and that fact boosted their

own level of confidence. As a result, they were able to communicate with school officials about school curricula and their own child's progress. In addition, one mother talked about how HIPPY helped her to understand the school system, "In this country, the education system is different and I want to know how to prepare my children for school. The HIPPY program taught me the process of teaching, curriculum and how the system works" (P2, personal communication, January 5, 2009).

Some of the HIPPY staff articulated, "When parents understand the school system, they are able to identify challenges their children may face. Then, they (the parents) will communicate and work with their children's teachers and other school officials to build on their children's success" (PC2 & HV2, personal communication, December 19, 2008). As an example, one mother noted, "Before I didn't understand the school system and how the school curriculum works. So, I didn't know what to say to the teachers and I used to avoid talking to them. Now, I am comfortable talking with my children's teachers" (P10, personal communication, January 16, 2009). The above example is consistent with the experience of other mothers in the community.

In some cases, the relationship between mothers and school officials can be negatively affected by misunderstandings. One of the home-visitors talked about her experience how, "life experience, cultural shock, isolation and long working hours force mothers to be disengaged with their child's school and

learning. HIPPY creates a positive environment to engage mothers in their child's education" (HV1, personal communication, December19, 2008).

Parents' Community Involvement

All participants stated they are involved in community activities such as Early Years, Parks and Recreation, library, church, training at Seneca College and other community agencies. HIPPY participants are expected to be involved in community activities. They attend workshops such as parenting, child development, community events and other children activities. According to one of HIPPY's coordinators, the program assists mothers to come out of isolation and access community services in their neighbourhood. They meet with other mothers to share experiences, make friends, and become involved in their communities. They attend ongoing training, and participate in many different enrichment activities according to their needs (PC3, personal communication, December 19, 2008). In addition, the program builds capacity within communities and families. The emphasis on connecting and familiarizing participants with local community support also provides a longer term "tool kit" that will support the family beyond their participation in the program (PM1, personal communication, December 19, 2008).

One of the mothers said, "HIPPY motivates parents to go out to the community with their children. Children who are reared in their communities will learn to value community involvement and will develop a sense of belonging" (P5, personal communication, January 15, 2009). Similarly, another

mother expressed that community involvement is good for her children. She said her children learned to care for others. When they see her involvement in the community, they learn to appreciate their involvement (P6, personal communication, January 19, 2009).

Others talked about how by embracing HIPPY encouraged them to partake in other community programs. Their engagement in community activities has benefitted them in many ways. For example, a mother said:

I was able to discuss child-rearing difficulties with other moms and parenting professionals. From the learning, I was able to encourage positive behaviour with my child. I was able to make new friends and communicate positively and respectfully with others. I was able to obtain a job and become self-sufficient. I have knowledge of community resources and I know where to go for help when I need to. (P9, personal communication, December 19, 2008).

Some mothers expressed the hope that their commitment to the community is personally rewarding and helps prevent social isolation. They said, "It is good for us and our children. We get support socially and emotionally. Volunteer work gives people personal satisfaction, helps people to grow personally and professionally. When people are involved, it creates a healthy community"(P5, P6, P9 & P10, personal communication, January 12, 2009).

Participants indicated that their community involvement is good for their personal growth. It gives them an opportunity to learn how the Canadian system works, get information about community resources, training and employment opportunities. Some talked about how having information will help mothers to obtain a better job or go back to college to get an education (P2 & P5, personal communication, January 12, 2009). In addition, it helps mothers to learn more about their rights and advocate on behalf of their families. All of the participants said their involvement in the HIPPY program taught them to be comfortable advocating for themselves and their children. Some gave examples of the advocacy they did. One mom talked about her experience about advocacy before her involvement in the HIPPY program saying, "In the past, I received help from my church and HIPPY but I didn't know my rights and I didn't advocate for anything. Now, I am very comfortable and able to advocate on behalf of my family (P10, personal communication, January 12, 2009).

Benefits of HIPPY to the Community

One of the unique attributes of HIPPY is its ability to create opportunities for families through employment, skills and community development. Community residents are trained and employed to deliver programs in their own communities. A mother expressed her views how HIPPY changes communities. She said, "Jobs are created in the community by residents for residents. In the process, community members are working together to address

their issues. This is a clear demonstration of community development" (P10, personal communication, January 16, 2009).

As per training, a mother shared how HIPPY enhances a community's economic situation and capacity by providing supports to enhance a mother's personal growth. For example, HIPPY home-visitors and participant mothers were trained to conduct a community research project. The study was investigating the links between the private time that HIPPY parents spend interacting with their children and the level of social inclusion they enjoy. The focus was the way cultural identity is transmitted through intergenerational caring for children in minority ethnic groups particularly, the influence of HIPPY on a mother's identity. A mother, who participated in the study, testified, "I conducted a community-based research project called 'Care Identity and Inclusion – CII'. I learned a lot and I gave other mothers a chance to gain new skills too. I was named a researcher. I am proud of myself" (P10, personal communication, January 16, 2009). This is a demonstration of community capacity-building where mothers are being trained to conduct research on their issues in their own communities.

In addition, the program facilitates community partnership, which is often characterized as overall community economic transformation. As an example, several HIPPY staff shared highlights from an organizational perspective that HIPPY facilitates and promotes the creation of solid and sometimes unlikely community partnerships with service providers. Working

with local early years centres, community groups, adult education supports

(LINC), Public Health Departments, TVO media outlet, educational institutions,

such as, Seneca College and York University are all engaged in a holistic

support network that supports the entire family in achieving its goals.

Based on the findings, several mothers talked about TVO. HIPPY's

partnership with TVO media outlet was highlighted as a great example of

community development and educational support for mothers. In addition, I

had an opportunity to look at some TVO videos and documents to understand

the information I had from participant mothers. I also met with the staff from

TVO and Working Women Centre to learn more about the partnership between

HIPPY and TVO. Briefly, TVO is an educational media outlet established in

1970 as Ontario Educational Communications Authority. Since then, the

organization has developed several educational programs and supports for

parents and their children.

According to Stacie Goldin, Education/Research Advisor, the

organization "thrives to educate, inform, inspire and stimulate children and

parents through interactive educational activities such as books, videos, TV

shows, parental supports, research and interactive web-sites. Among other

things, TVO promotes parents' involvement in the teaching of their

children"(Personal communication, February 19, 2009). Patricia Ellingson,

Creative Head Children's Media, Content & Programming indicated that "TVO's

programs are designed to equip parents with expertise essential to nurture

their children to be healthy and positive towards learning at a young age"
(Personal communication, February 19, 2009). Based on these statements, the
organization is committed to motivating and engaging families constructively in
the process of their children's development.

Thus, TVO is engaged in disseminating information about the HIPPY
program to promote positive parenting. A program for parents is in progress, to
shadow a home-visitor doing her regular HIPPY activities and it will be posted
on TVO web site (Jeanette Kong, Producer/Director Content & Programming,
TVO, personal communication, February 19, 2009). As well, TVO recorded a
show titled "My Backyard" in four areas of the Jane-Finch corridor. Children
from the HIPPY program were invited to participate in the activities. These
activities exhibit the positive contributions of participant mothers in the
community. Many participants applaud TVO for being inclusive and
pioneering ideas that show positive contributions of families in Jane-Finch (P10
& P5, personal communication, January 12, 2009). It is revealing that TVO's
approach of engaging families in the schooling of their children is consistent
with the goal of the HIPPY program.

During focus group discussions, participants indicated that "TVO's
educational instructive tools such as "Get Ready for School", "Gisele's Big
Backyard" and "TVOParents" promote values similar to those of HIPPY's. Some
emphasized that TVO programs for children and parents are healthy for
families" (P5 & P10, personal communication, January 12, 2009). The

partnership with TVO and the initiatives in progress have a very positive effect on HIPPY home-visitors, participant mothers and the local residents who feel that, for a change, they are being seen as the harbingers of innovative and exciting community initiatives. For a change, residents of Jane-Finch have something to see on TV that they have to be proud of. For example, one of the home-visitors remarked:

> You know, TVO is going to shadow my home-visits and show it on TV.
> People are going to see something positive about our community on TV.
> At a personal level, my participation in TVO is an opportunity to learn
> and may be that will take me somewhere. The first time I knew about the
> partnership and my role in it, I was surprised. I felt proud of my
> accomplishments and myself. I was selected because I am good at what I
> do. It is a new beginning for me. I felt like a new kid in a new school for
> the first time" (P5, personal communication, January 15, 2009).

Already, the TVO's constructive and inclusive approach to servicing communities is having a positive influence on families in Jane-Finch. In so many ways, the home-visitor's statement reveals that community development starts with meaningful participation of individuals and communities in shaping their lives. Learning and change happens when people are acknowledged for their contribution, challenged to identify shortcomings and engaged meaningfully throughout the process. The hope and positive attitudes toward

life, expressed by the home-visitor, can be viewed as a meaningful participation that contributes towards community transformation.

Conditions that Influence Parents Involvement

Programming/Access.

While all participants praise HIPPY as a splendid program, some have advanced suggestions to enhance the program further. The most significant one was to expand HIPPY support beyond age 5. The program serves newcomer families with children under 5 years old. Almost all participant mothers revealed, "We don't want the support to stop. We would like to see the support of the HIPPY program expanded. All parents need support to help their children at all ages (P1, P3, P4, P7, P8, P9, P11, P12, P13, P14, P15, P17, P18, P19 & P20, personal communication, January 12, 2009).

As well, limited program funding was identified as a barrier affecting program enrollment. HIPPY has limited resources. The program is funded to help newcomer families who have been in Canada for less than 5 years or families who do not possess Canadian Citizenship. As a result, some families are unable to participate in the program. This issue was highlighted by many of the participants and one mom said, "If we don't spend money to help mothers to support their children, we are going to spend much more to deal with their problems. "It does not make any sense" (P10, personal communication, January 16, 2009). On the same note, a home-visitor added, "Many children in our community are growing up with little support. Why are we spending money

to correct youth who did something wrong but we don't have funding to teach children right from wrong? Where is the common sense?" (HV1, personal communication, December 19, 2008).

Everyone agreed that the HIPPY curriculum is well designed. However, there was a suggestion to have a coordinated assessment mechanism to document the progress of HIPPY children (P2, personal communication, January 5, 2009). By doing so, parents will be able to know how well they are teaching their children. There was also a recommendation from some mothers that there should be activities to enhance children's knowledge of Canada's multi-cultural heritage (P6, personal communication, January 19, 2009). Children learn to be inclusive, tolerant and respectful of others at an early age and we need to expose our children to different cultures and historic accounts. In addition, participants expressed discomfort about changing home-visitors in the middle of the program (P5, personal communication, January 15, 2009). They felt it affects the level of communication between mothers and home-visitors because an entire new relationship has to be established.

One of the program managers indicated that the program's limitation is that "HIPPY is a springboard; it is a shorter-term intervention that is intended to provide a base from which participant families can build and grow. The same holds true of the employment feature of the program which is intended to provide an entry point into the workforce" The organization is addressing this issue by providing built-in employment supports to help home-visitors and

mothers to engage more successfully in the job market (PM1, personal communication, December 19, 2008).

Language/Level of education.

Some mothers expressed difficulty in helping their children with homework which requires a high level of language skills. Some suggested that the home-visitors should be allowed to assist their children if the mother suffers from a language barrier. Some declared, "Sometimes, we have language barriers or some parents may or may not have formal education and may not be able to help their children with homework. So, we need to support mothers to improve their education"(P13 & P14, personal communication, January 12, 2009). Others emphasized the need to upgrade their education because they find it difficult to help their children with homework, especially math. However, the regular school was not an easy option for many of them. They said the school system is not flexible with scheduling to accommodate the need of mothers with young children. They thought it would be great if home-visitors could teach parents at their homes (P11, P12, P13, P14, P15, P7 & P20, personal communication, January 12, 2009).

Extended work-hours.

Not having sufficient time and stress related symptomology were classified as barriers that prevented mothers from participating in programs. One of the moms works full-time and expressed difficulty in finding time for her children. She alleges:

I leave work at 5:00 p.m. I have to pick up my child before 6:00 p.m.

Once I pick up my child and we get home, I have to start preparing

dinner. I help my child with homework; eat dinner, HIPPY, bath and then

its bedtime. Bedtime is at 9:00 p.m. for my child. I usually get home after

6:00 p.m. and between 6:00 p.m. and 9:00 p.m., there is not much time

to spend with my child, as I am usually busy with duties. On weekends, I

am exhausted and yet there is still so much to do such as house

cleaning, laundry, HIPPY homework, church and preparing my child for

school for the next week. Due to exhaustion, there is not much time to

spend with my child. It is great though to work full-time to get enough

money (P9, personal communication, December 19, 2008).

Similarly, another mother shared her wish to find more time to be with

her children. "I work full time and my children are in a day-care. I spend time

with them after work. I wish I can spend more time with them but I cannot

afford to do so" (P10, personal communication, January 16, 2009). In addition,

not having access to free child-care services was identified as a drawback that

prevented mothers from participating in programs and activities. Participants

talked about their difficulties of attending training and engaging in volunteer

work. They hoped to see some kind of child-care arrangement incorporated into

the HIPPY program (P12, P13, P14, P15 & P7, personal communication,

January 2, 2009).

According to participants' financial profiles, most mothers come from low-income communities. As well, HIPPY serves mothers in marginalized communities that face multiple encumbrances including poverty. While the HIPPY staff identified poverty as a principle factor, none of the mothers spoke candidly about the role of poverty in preventing their active involvement in their child's learning. During focus group discussions, some of the mothers talked about not having sufficient time to spend with their children owing to full-time work. For example, a mother expressed how her financial situation determined the time she could afford with her children saying, "Not having money can be a barrier sometimes. I am grateful to have a job. It can affect the things you wish to do for your children" (P10, personal communication, January 16, 2009). Another mother said, "As an immigrant, who came from a country so called "third world", Canada is better. I don't have much, but it is better than where I came from in some ways. I hope my children's lives will be better" (P5, personal communication, January 15, 2009).

Some of the HIPPY staff shared their views about the issue of poverty. For example, one staff member talked about how sometimes newcomer communities view poverty as a temporary condition of settlement not as a societal issue. She said,

It is a concern when we are not able to recognize the negative effects of poverty in our lives or our children's development. It is because of poverty that children go to school hungry; parents work extended hours

to make ends meet and parents cannot afford to hire a tutor to help with

their failing children. However, it is going to take some time to change

the way people think and acknowledge the negative impact of poverty in

a child's early learning. (HV1, personal communication, December 19,

2008).

 In agreement, another staff member questioned whether some families

view their economic conditions as "poverty". It is important to discuss how the

devastating effects of poverty hinder children's normal health and development.

She added:

Poverty causes desperation which can, in turn, account for social and

emotional disadvantage. Poverty is the outcome of past or present

discriminatory policies which exclude marginalized communities and

individuals such as women to realize their potentialities. Language and

cultural barriers also can nourish this cycle of poverty. (PC1, personal

communication, December 19, 2008).

Similarly, another one highlighted:

The HIPPY program focuses on the innate desire that mothers have, to

want the very best for their children; they are willing to participate in the

program. Some may not be conscious of the broader reasons such as the

well-proven connections between economic disadvantage and school

performance, but the desire to want the very best for their children

prevails…. they can relate to parenthood and wanting the best for their

child. (PM1, personal communication, December 19, 2008).

The above findings reflect the different views and opinions of participant

mothers, program workers and residents on how the HIPPY program benefits

mothers and the community. The richness of the information that was

produced in this Masters Research Paper is a strong foundation for the

development of the analysis and discussion illustrated in chapter six.

Chapter Six

Analysis and Discussion

The analysis of the effectiveness of the HIPPY program is founded on the data from the findings and the literature reviewed. Information from participants interviewed and my interpretation of the interviews were used to generate dialogue of ideas and informed the opinion of the effectiveness of the HIPPY program. The lessons to be learned and suggestions that are recommended in this study are based on conclusions drawn from my analysis of the findings. These suggestions are intended to explain and improve the practices of the HIPPY program. In this analysis, the benefits of the HIPPY program, as described by participant mothers, are clearly presented emphasizing the positive image of motherhood, mothers' personal growth and community development.

Overall, opinions were voiced that the HIPPY program promotes participants' personal growth positing mothers as teachers while maintaining their role as caregivers. Based on the findings, HIPPY participants share a positive image of motherhood as "HIPPY moms." As one mother described, "I used to think I am just a mom" (P6, personal communication, January 19, 2009). All participant mothers expressed that they did not know they were capable of teaching their children or doing anything significant. They all indicated that HIPPY gave them the opportunity to learn and be acknowledged as the first teachers of their children (P1-P20, personal communication,

January 12, 2009). A study by Younger (2003) supports HIPPY's focus on the

child's positive progress, rather than any assumed judgement on mothers' lack

of parenting. There is no stigma attached to parent's involvement (p.43). This

is another aspect of the program where it presents a chance to deconstruct the

marginalized image of mothers in a society where stereotypes and cultural

norms define perceptions (Naughton, 2007, p.53). HIPPY presents a positive

image of motherhood and emphasizes a mother's competence to nurture her

child. On this subject, one of the participants stated, "HIPPY values the

contributions and skills of parents and trusts that all parents have the capacity

to be the first and best teachers of their children (PM1, personal

communication, December 19, 2008). The program validates the different

competencies mothers' possess and provides them with the opportunity to

acquire the much vaunted Canadian experience that ameliorates the conditions

of their present social location.

All of the participants underlined that they learned to support, teach and

create a positive learning environment for their children. They said, "We

learned to be patient, listen to our children, play and read with them, talk to

them positively, praise and respect their opinions" (P1 –P20, personal

communication, January 12, 2009) . According to Verdon (2007), studies like

Statistics Canada's National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth note

that children's readiness to learn is highly influenced by their home

environment, positive child-parent interaction and partaking in daily reading

(p.1). In one of the focus group discussions, six out of twenty participants connected youth violence to lack of positive parent-child interaction (R1, R2, HV1, P5, P6 & P10, personal communication, January 12, 2009). Participants suggested that parents who have positive interaction with their children are more likely to be able to help their children when they get in trouble. Early childhood programs combined with parent support decrease aggressive and delinquent behaviour in children (Gomby et al., 1995, p.11). Without hesitation, all participants emphasized that the family bond is critical to the overall well being of children. It was clearly communicated by all participant mothers that the bond they have with their children could be attributed to the HIPPY program.

Warrilow, Fisher and Valentine (2004) illustrate that it is not practical to look at "early learning" in isolation from "parent support". Supporting parents fosters parental change to their personal growth, literacy levels and community involvement (p.19). Based on the findings, it is clear that the HIPPY program is a great resource for parents. The findings from the research are also consistent with Younger's study (2003) that reveals mothers' participation in the HIPPY program helped them to become better parents, better at teaching their children and able to communicate with their children's teachers with confidence (pp.10-29).

The participants interviewed praised the program for its one-on-one support, easy to follow curriculum and home-based service delivery (P1-P20,

personal communication, January12, 2009). The strength of the program was described by HIPPY staff as "a very well-structured play-based program written at a Grade 3 level of English" (PC3, personal communication, December 19, 2008). One of the participant mothers said, "When you build a house you need to build a strong foundation. The same can be stated about children; they need a strong foundation for their learning and HIPPY builds that strong foundation" (P2, personal communication, January 5, 2009). Dr. Fraser Mustard (2006) noted that play-based learning if properly designed is one of the best strategies for children's brain development as well as for early learning (p.52). In reference to the quality of the HIPPY program, participants said that HIPPY made them realize that they could teach their children and that gave them the confidence to upgrade their skills. Presently, four of the participant mothers are going to school and ten have stated their intention to upgrade their education.

Moreover, the HIPPY program was applauded for providing training and employment opportunities for all participant mothers and home-visitors. Regular training played a positive role in raising the bar of mothers' learning and employability. In addition, HIPPY participant mothers are employed and trained to provide service in their own communities (P1-P20, personal communication, January 12, 2009). Ten out of twenty mothers who participated in the research are working. The HIPPY program employs seven of

them and five said it was their first job in Canada. This element of the program shows that HIPPY enhances the skills and economic capacity of mothers.

Additionally, the program builds capacity within families and communities. All participant mothers said that they are involved in their children's school activities. All of them reiterated that they learned how the school system works, the role of parents and how to communicate with school officials. They participated in school activities, attended school council meetings, trips and had positive communication with school officials (P1-P20 personal communication, January 12, 2009). One of the mothers mentioned how HIPPY helped her to understand the school system, "in this country, the education system is different and I want to know how to prepare my kids for school. The HIPPY program taught me the process of teaching, curriculum and how the system works" (P2, personal communication, January 5, 2009). A report from the Centre for Education Research and Innovation [CERI] (1997) argues, "Parents who are unfamiliar with the education system may not know how to support their children" (p.25). Similarly, one HIPPY staff said, "When parents understand the school system, they are able to identify challenges their children may be facing and work with school officials to build their children's success" (PC2 & HV2, personal communication, December 19, 2008). The literature and the findings are in agreement that parents' school involvement is dependent on their knowledge of the school system.

The research findings note that HIPPY exposed participant mothers to many opportunities that enhanced their personal growth through their participation in community programs. Many talked about benefiting from their participation in local organizations including Working Women Community Centre, Black Creek Health Centre, Seneca College, Ontario Early Years, the Caring Village and Toronto Parks and Recreation children activities. They said they participated in academic upgrading, skills training, parenting sessions, children's activities and social community events (P1-P20, personal communication, January 12, 2009). Also, some participants proudly mentioned that their participation in the HIPPY program inspired them to be involved in community action research. Program participants and home-visitors conducted a research project examining the role of HIPPY on the identity of mothers (P10, personal communication, January 16, 2009). As detailed in the findings, the process of conducting research was very educational and empowering for participant mothers.

The partnership with TVO is also another demonstration of how HIPPY can contribute to a community development. The partnership engages HIPPY participant mothers in creating inclusive educational activities to promote a positive image of the contribution of mothers in their community. It also educates viewers about the social realities that exist in Jane-Finch. For instance, HIPPY mothers and TVO are recording a show titled "My Backyard", showing four backyards in the Jane-Finch community (Jeanette Kong, personal

communication, February 19, 2009). The program My Backyard is going to educate children that all backyards are not the same. Using their acquired knowledge, HIPPY mothers were able to conduct community-based research and work creatively with several organizations including the media experts from TVO.

These two examples illustrate that the HIPPY program can create partnerships that allow communities to utilize research to identify their issues and promote positive societal attitudinal changes through programs such as TVO's educational activities. As one of the program workers noted, the emphasis on connecting and familiarizing participants with local community supports provided a long-term support for families beyond their participation in the program (PM1, personal communication, December 19, 2008). Westheimer (2003) repeatedly highlighted that the HIPPY program can be viewed as a community development project (Examining HIPPY's Impact in a Community Context section, para.1). The program links mothers with community stakeholders. For example, the partnership with TVO and the initiatives in progress have a very positive effect on HIPPY home-visitors, participant mothers and other local residents who feel that, for a change, they are proud of being seen as the visionaries of innovative community initiatives. Some praised TVO for "running healthy programs for families and promoting positive images of their communities"(P5 & P10, personal communication, January 12, 2009).

Studies like Warren's (2005) places emphasis on the importance of parents, schools and local organizations working together to strengthen the environment for children's learning. The author said "We can think of social capital as a set of links across institutions working together for the development of families and children to achieve collective ends" (p.137). Creating a healthy environment for families is a collective responsibility we all need to accept. Only then, can we have an environment that fosters community activism that leads to social change. Equally, anyon (2005) & Warren (2005) insist that active participation of mothers creates social capital in communities, and encourages parents to employ their collective strength to force system change.

Another inquiry by Warrilow, Fisher and Valentine (2004) implies that parents who are not involved in their communities have challenges to access information about services: "Some families are unaware of the potential benefits of early learning and this contributes to families not accessing services" (p.9). Accordingly, HIPPY mothers' involvement could have a positive effect on their children and the progress of their communities.

 Some of the recommendations that were put forth by the entire group of participant mothers are related to aspects of HIPPY programming that require improvements. The participants unanimously wanted the HIPPY program to expand and assist children of all ages (P1-P20, personal communication, January 12, 2009). As well, the criteria for selecting program participants were

identified as an issue. The HIPPY program is funded to help only newcomer families who have been in Canada for less than 5 years or families who do not have Canadian citizenship (P1-P20, personal communication, January 12, 2009). As a result, families who are not newcomers are unable to participate in the program (PC3, personal communication, December 19, 2008). Exposing HIPPY families to multiculturalism and Canadian Heritage through the HIPPY curriculum was also suggested. Participant mothers wanted their children to learn about Canadian history and the social make-up of their new country. As well, the need to evaluate the progress of children in the HIPPY program was expressed by two participants. They thought it would help determine the need for additional support by identifying the growth of their children academically and socially.

The following are some of the barriers encountered by the participants. Ten out of twenty participants indicated English language proficiency and mother's level of education were regarded as hindrances. Some said, "Sometimes, we have language barriers; parents may not have formal education and may not be able to help their children with homework. So, we need to support mothers to improve their education"(P13 & P14, personal communication, January 12, 2009). Moreover, many of the mothers talked about challenges related to school access and free child-care services in the community. They said that the school system is inaccessible for mothers with young children. Inflexible scheduling, transportation and lack of free child-care

services were mentioned as issues that prevented them from taking part.

Studies reported by FCD (2007) & CERI (1997) indicate that parents' level of

education influences their involvement in the schooling of their children. Also,

Lamb- Parker et al. (1997) indicated that, mothers were unable to participate in

programs due to long hours of work, feeling down, stress, health issues, not

having dependable childcare, parental responsibilities, language barriers and

immense burden of living in poverty (pp.4-5). This is consistent with the

findings of this research where participants identified language barriers and

extended working hours as challenges that prevented them from participating.

According to most of the literature reviewed, poverty was identified as a

barrier that prevented parents from participating in their children's learning.

For example, reports like Entwisle (1995) affirm that families' economic

situation matter more for children's performance than ethnicity or any other

reason (p.141). Likewise, Verdon (2007) draws attention to the fact that

children from low-income families are less likely to have exposure to

stimulating activities at home (p.3). Although poverty can affect families

negatively, one can also challenge the above theories that indicate being

situated in poverty results in underachievement (O'Connor & Fernandez 2006).

Further to the findings, some of the challenges participants identified

were understood as the consequence of financial conditions. In so many ways,

participants indicated that they do not have enough money for transportation,

childcare, tutoring support and taking time to rest (P2, P4, P5, P7, P9, P10,

P11, P12, P13, P14 & P15, personal communication, January 12, 2009). Most of the HIPPY participants do indeed come from low-income families; it is not uncommon to expect some may have financial challenges. However, I was surprised that none of the participant mothers identified themselves as poor in spite of their economic conditions. Nor did they attribute any of the difficulties to the effects poverty has on their lives. It may well be that families have social conditions that determine their realities where many compare their present challenges with their prior experiences of persecution and injustices. As one of the HIPPY participant mothers said, "I am planning to continue my education. I now know I can do better and I am exploring different interests. I see many opportunities opening up for me" (P5, personal communication, January 15, 2009).

In this case, it is evident that there is a positive view of education that has the HIPPY parents engaged. As a result of historical experience, in some communities, education is viewed as having a utilitarian value as a tool for breaking the cycle of poverty. For some, the HIPPY program is therefore an opportunity to capitalize on this philosophical view on education and may explain why they did not name their challenges as poverty.

Based on the profile of the research participants, it is evident that they all come from different social conditions, life experience and cultural values that may have shaped the way they view and explain challenges. Hence, it is important to preclude stereotypical norms when hypothesizing. Weis and Fine

(2004) point to ways of positioning analysis and critical theorizing when conducting research. The authors note that "the emergent montage of groups must simultaneously be positioned within historically shifting social and economic relations...we work hard to situate our analysis of communities and lives historically, economically and socially so that the material context within which individuals are making sense..." (p. xvii-xviii). Similarly, Holden (2007) emphasizes that it is important for a research to be analyzed within a context of family and the perspective of their community. My interpretation of the above statements is that we all view and explain experiences in different ways. So, it is necessary to be conscientious when interpreting findings because our conclusion can be influenced by our own values.

Without exception the participant mothers chose to confront their struggle with the tenacity of hope. They articulated their ideas about how they might advance their own skills and their children's learning instead of dwelling on their difficulties. For example, a mother discussed how her participation in the HIPPY program inspired her to hope: "I think I am capable of doing better. HIPPY gave me a reason to do long-term plans. I see HIPPY as a stepping stone to a better opportunity" (P5, personal communication, January 15, 2009).

In analyzing the findings, I observed a consensus amongst participant mothers wherein their consistently optimistic outlook can be interpreted in line with hooks's (2003) "Pedagogy of Hope". hooks (2003) describes "Hope" as "hope that emerges from a place of struggle where I witness individuals

positively transforming their lives and the world around them" (p.xiv). Having

inner-strength and perseverance can inspire hope and enable people to focus

on what is possible rather than on what is not. hooks (2003) noted that those

who suffer know how to appreciate more than those who dwell in their

sufferings and praised those who aspire to hope saying "to attend to what

works are vital even as one understands the need to resist (p.183). Slattery

and Rapp (2003) talk about "Proleptic Hope" a situation described as "a hope

that offers a way to access the strength to act for justice even in the midst of

personal tragedies" (p.74). These statements explicate that the ability to hope

comes from the strength of overcoming difficulties. One theme that was

constantly emphasized by participant mothers was "HIPPY gave us hope" (P1-

P20, personal communication, January 12, 2009). Thus, participant mothers'

optimism in the face of their difficulties, speaks to the essence of both theories

of "hope". It is possible, therefore, to conclude that, for some of the HIPPY

participant mothers, it may be true that hope comes from their deeper sense of

resolve and resiliency.

Conclusion

        This research presented me with a unique opportunity to explore the

complex and ongoing influence of positive parenting on children's development.

Among other things, I am convinced that this study was a venue of opportunity

for residents, parents and HIPPY workers to reflect and reconceptualize the role

the HIPPY program plays in the lives of mothers and the progress of their

communities. Through this research, all parents clearly expressed that they want the best for their children and were enthusiastic to contribute to the progress of their communities. Positive images of motherhood, initiatives of community development, mothers' personal growth and one-on-one support were illustrated. Some recommendations that enhance programming were suggested also.

In all, the HIPPY program demonstrated positive outcomes in providing resources for mothers to grow and create a healthy learning environment for their families. One of the HIPPY staff said she observed "the demonstration of the new 'habit': to read, sit and share experience with their children. In that image, I felt that the program had indeed achieved its ends, and had managed to instill the HIPPY philosophy in each of the program participants" (PM1, personal communication, December 19, 2008). This is a confirmation that the HIPPY program reinforces a positive learning environment and a strong bond between parents and their children. The portrayal of mothers as the first teachers of their children re-affirms the fact that all children can and will learn when there is investment in the vast resource of mothers.

Furthermore, evaluating the HIPPY program as an early childhood education model utilizes a "mother" as a primary teacher and challenges the dominant patriarchal views of motherhood. It recognizes the value of a mother's contribution as a professional role model and places her in society as an early nurturer of her children. In addition, it is my thesis that programs like HIPPY

enable and mobilize mothers in marginalized communities to be involved in the

schooling of their children. In turn, their activism can address some of the

inequities in education and advance the causes of social mobility. Griffith and

Smith (2005) gave detailed historic accounts on the relationship between

families and schools using the discourse of mothering. Their book clearly

illustrates how middle class mothers make use of their mothering to reproduce

and maintain their economic status through schooling. As well, the Centre for

Educational Research and Innovation (1997) notes that "privileged and high-

achieving parents pass on cultural capital to their children as they pass down

financial capita"(p.22). Therefore, HIPPY's constructive support can be

customized to assist mothers not only prepare their children for learning but

also to challenge systemic social barriers through mothering.

     As was illustrated in all the studies reviewed, Warrilow, Fisher and

Valentine (2004) noted that it is not practical nor does it make sense to look at

"early learning" in isolation from "parent support" (p.19). In recognition of this

intersectionality, supporting parents to foster a positive learning environment

is critical in re-enforcing a value that promotes education as an exercise of

human investment. Several studies like Community Economic Development

(2007) have stressed the need for universal, free and publically funded pre-

school programs to support all families (p.3). In agreement, all of the

participant mothers concurred that the HIPPY program is an assurance that

their children have an early nurtured start preparing them for a lifelong

journey. What makes the HIPPY program not only effective but also unique, is

its ability to inspire participant mothers to hope and channel their efforts

towards being the best that they can be which is "the first and best teachers of

their children". Perhaps, this may be one of the ways to confront inequality and

use education to ensure social mobility, and the insurance of responsible

members of the overall Canadian mosaic.

Chapter Seven

References

anyon, J. (2005). R*adical possibilities: Public policy, urban education, and a*
new social movement. New York: Routledge Taylor and Francies Group.

Briggs, C. (1986). *Learning how to ask: A sociolinguistic appraisal of the role of*
the interview in social science research. New York: Cambridge University
Press.

Braunger, J., & Lewis, J. P. (2005). *Building a knowledge base in reading (2nd*
ed.). Newark, Delaware: International Reading Association.

Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (1997). *Parents as partners*
in schooling. Paris, France: Organization for Economic Co-operation
and Development.

Committee for Economic Development (2002). *Preschool for all: Investing in a*
productive and just society, 1-25. Retrieved on January 15, 2008 from
http://www.issuelab.org/research/preschool_for_all_investing_in_a_pr
oductive_and_just_society

Lamb-Parker, F., Piotrkowski, C.S., Baker, A. J. L., Kessier-Sklar, S., Peay,
L., & Clark, B. (1997). *Executive summary: Final report: Parental*
involvement in Head Start. New York: NCJW Centre for the Child.
Retrieved on January 15, 2008 from
http://www.mailman.columbia.edu/popfam/pubs/docs/headstrt.pdf

Entwisle, D. R. (1995). The role of schools in sustaining early childhood

program benefits. *The Future of Children, 5 (3), 133-144.* Retrieved on

January 15, 2008, from http://www.jstor.org/pss/1602371

Foundation for Child Development (2007). *All our children? The health and

education of children of immigrants, 1-35.* New York: Retrieved on

January 15, 2008 from

http://www.fcd-us.org/usr_doc/2007AnnualReportAllOurChildren.pdf

Goodman, Y., and Martens, P. (Eds.), (2007). *Critical issues in early literacy:

Research and pedagogy.* New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates,

Publishers.

Griffith, A. I., & Smith, D. E. (2005). *Mothering for schooling.* New York:

RoutledgeFalmer.

Hinchey, P. H. (2008). *Action research primer.* New York: Peter Lang

Publishing Inc.

HIPPY Canada (2008a). *Helping communities, help parents, help children:

Why Canada needs HIPPY, HIPPY Canada, how HIPPY works &

benefits.* Available from HIPPY Canada Web site,

http://www.hippycanada.ca

HIPPY USA (2008b). HIPPY USA: *A love of learning begins at home:* Available

from HIPPY USA Web site http://www.hippyusa.org

HIPPY (2008c). *HIPPY Worldwide: HIPPY's on the map.* Available from HIPPY

Worldwide web site http://hippy.org.il/html/map.html

Home Instruction Program for Preschool Youngsters USA (2001). *What we know about how HIPPY works: A summary of HIPPY evaluation research.* New York: Retrieved on January 15, 2008 from

http://www.hippyusa.org/research/research-sumary.html

hooks, b. (2003). *Teaching community: A pedagogy of hope.* New York: Routledge.

Holden, T. (2007). *Home visiting, research, training and infrastructure: A literature review.* BC Council for families: British Colombia. Retrieved on January 15, 2008, from http://www.hippycanada.com/library.php

LeMare, L., & Audet, K. (2003). *The Vancouver HIPPY project, preliminary evaluation findings from a multicultural program.* Faculty of Education, Simon Fraser University: British Colombia. Retrieved on January 15, 2008 from

http://www.hippycanada.ca/downloads/hippy_evaluation.pdf

Maeroff, G. I. (2003). *Universal Pre-Kindergarten: State of play working paper series. Report:* Foundation for Child Development, New York. Retrieved on January 15, 2008 from http://www.ffcd.org/pdfs/UniversalPre-KindergartenStateofPlay.pdf

Mustard, J.F. (2006). *The Brookings Institution: Early child development and experience-based Brain development – The scientific underpinnings of the importance of early child development in a globalized world, 1-86.* Toronto: The Canadian Institute for Advanced Research retrieved on March 30,

2009 from

http://www.brookings.edu/views/papers/200602mustard.htm

Milroy, L., & Gordon, M. (2003). *Sociolinguistics: Method and interpretation.* Canada: Blackwell Publishing.

Mac Naughton, G. (2005). *Doing Foucault in early childhood studies: Applying poststructural ideas.* New York: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group.

O'Connor, C., & Fernandez, S. D. (2006, September). *Race, class, and disproportionality: Re-evaluating the relationship between poverty and special education placement.* Course material, York University: *Educational Research, 35 (6), pp.6-11.*

Pacini-Ketchabaw, V. (2008, June). *The politics of difference and diversity: From young children's violence to creative power expressions.* Paper presented at the 16th Reconceptualizing Early Childhood Education Conference, School of Child and Youth Care, University of Victoria, British Columbia, Canada.

Robson, C. (2002). *Real world research: A resource for social scientists and Practitioner-Researchers (2nd ed.).* Malden, USA: Blackwell Publishing.

Verdon, L. (2007). *Education matters: Are 5-year-old children ready to learn at school? Family income and home environment contexts, 4 (1).* Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 81-004-XIE. Ottawa: Retrieved on January 11, 2008 from http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/81-004-x/2007001/9630-eng.htm

Slattery, P., & Rapp, D. (2003). *Ethics and the foundations of education: Teaching convictions in a postmodern world.* Boston: Pearson Education, Inc.

Solomon, R. P., Levin-Rasky, C., & Singer, J. (Eds.). (2003). *Teaching for development for equity and diversity: Research to Practice.* Toronto, Ontario. Canadian Scholars' Press.

The Griffin Centre (2005). *Jane Finch neighbourhood action plan report: Literature review, 1-20.* Toronto, Ontario. Retrieved on December 15, 2007 from http://www.twpcommunityministry.org/home/ editorfiles/Jane_Finch_Neighbourhood_Action_Plan.pdf

Gomby, D. S., Larner, M. B., Stevenson, C. S., Lewit, E. M., & Behrman, R. E. (1995). Long-Term outcomes of early childhood programs: Analysis and recommendations. *The Future of Children, 5 (3), 6-24.* Retrieved on January 15, 2008 from http://www.jstor.org/pss/1602365

The School Community Safety Advisory Panel (2008). *In the road to health: A final report on school safety, 1, 1-165.* Toronto, Ontario. Author.

United Way (2004). *Poverty by postal code - The geography of neighbourhood poverty: 1981-2001.* Toronto, Ontario. Retrieved on December 15, 2007 from http://unitedwaytoronto.com/whoWeHelp/report/pdf/PovertybyPostalCodefinal-pdf

Warren, M. R. (2005). Communities and Schools: A new view of urban

education reform. Course material, York University: *Harvard Education*

Review, research library, 75 (2).

Warrilow, P., Fisher, K., & Valentine, K. (2004). *Early learning strategies*

final report for families' first Cumberland prospect. Family at Work, 1-

35. Sydney, Australia: The University of New South Wales Research

Consortium, Social policy Research Centre. Retrieved on November 15,

2007 from http://www.sprc.unsw.edu.au/report/Earlylearning.pdf

Warren, K. J. (2000). *Ecofeminist philosophy: A western perspective on what it*

is and why it matters. Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

Weis, L. and Fine, M. (Eds.) (2004). *Working method: research and social*

justice. New York and London: Routledge.

Westheimer, M. (2003). Introduction: A decade of HIPPY research. Israel:

The Hebrew University Magnes Press, 19-45. Retrieved on November

23, 2007 from

http://www.hippy.org.il/sources/contents_abstracts.pdf

Younger, S. (2003). *We talk in our family now: The stories of twelve HIPPY*

Tutors. Pacific Foundation: New Zealand.

Date: December 15, 2008

Dear Participants,

My name is Almaz Reda and I am conducting a Major Research Project as part of the requirements of the Masters of Education degree in Language, Culture, and Teaching from York University. The goal of the study is to examine participants' perceptions of the effectiveness of the HIPPY program by looking at parent-child interaction, personal growth and the community involvement of mothers. It is anticipated that the findings will make public the benefits and unique aspects of the program. HIPPY participants and HIPPY program workers will participate in interviews and focus group discussions. Interpreters will assist participants with language barriers.

The first twenty participants who respond to this letter will be selected to participate in a focus group discussion and ten of them will be required to participate in one-on-one interviews. The meetings will be held at Seneca College, Yorkgate Campus. Both the interviews and focus group discussions will each take 90 minutes. The discussion will be audio taped and will be destroyed after documentation. Participation in the study is voluntary and one may choose to withdraw at any time without any penalties. The data collected as a result of participation will be destroyed.

Participant's anonymity and confidentiality will be protected by using pseudonyms unless agreed with participants otherwise. If you wish to participate in the study or require more information, please call Almaz Reda, Principal Researcher at 416-491-5050 ext. 4740.

Thank you,

Almaz Reda, Researcher

APPENDIX B

CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS

Study Title: Examining Mothers' Perceptions on the effectiveness of the Home Instruction for Parents of Pre-school Youngsters (HIPPY) program.

My name is Almaz Reda and I am conducting a Major Research Project as part of the requirements of the Masters of Education degree in Language, Culture, and Teaching from York University. The study is sponsored by York University Graduate Program in Education. This research has been reviewed by the Graduate Program in Education Human Participants Review Committee and approved for compliance on research ethics within the context of the York Senate Policy on research ethics.

The goal of the study is to examine participants' perceptions of the HIPPY program's effectiveness in areas of parent-child interaction, personal growth and community involvement of mothers. The study will make public the benefits and unique aspects of the program. HIPPY participant mothers and program workers will participate in interviews and focus group discussions. I do not anticipate any risk to participating in this study. However, participants may become uncomfortable answering some of the questions. Participation in the study is voluntary and no incentive is offered. Participants have the right not to answer questions and may choose to stop participating at any time without any penalties. If you decide to withdraw, data generated as a result of your participation will be destroyed. Your

decision not to volunteer will not influence the nature of your relationship with the program provider, York University or the student researcher.

Both the interviews and focus group discussions will each take 90 minutes. The meetings will be held at Seneca College, Yorkgate Campus. The interviews will be audio taped and will be destroyed immediately after transcription. The hard copy of the transcription will not include names or anything that identifies participants. Collected data (written documents) will be stored in a locked cabinet in my office and will be destroyed (shredded) after six months. Two workers from Working Women Community Centre, Spanish and Tamil speaking will assist as interpreters if and when requested by participants with language barriers. The interpreters will not have access to any data other than the information given during the time of their interpretation service. Also, one placement student who works at Working Women Community Centre will participate in the focus group discussions and assist with data transcriptions. After the transcription of the focus group data, the student will not have access to any information including participants' real names. As per the policies of the Working Women Community Centre, all employees and students are bound to protect participants' confidentiality.

All participants in the research will be identified by pseudonyms as P1-P20, PM1-PM2, PC1-PC3, HV1-HV3 and R1-R2. The Student Researcher will assign the pseudonyms in private before the meetings. Only the Primary Researcher and the Research Supervisor will have access to collected

information. Confidentiality will be provided to the fullest extent possible. Data collected will be used to inform the study and may be reported in conference presentations, articles or publications. The study will be shared with HIPPY National, HIPPY participants, Working Women Community Centre and their funders. Should I share specific examples or testimonials in any public reports, I will protect participants' anonymity unless agreed with the participant otherwise. Pseudonyms will be used to identify participants' in order to preserve their anonymity and confidentiality.

If you have any questions about the study or about your participation, please feel free to contact Almaz Reda, Student Researcher, at 416-491-5050 ext. 4740. You can also contact Professor Don Dippo, Research Supervisor, York University at 416-736-5004. If you have any ethical concerns regarding the research, please contact the Graduate Committee Program in Education Human Participants Review Committee at 416-736-5018. By signing this form, you are giving me the permission to use the data of your interview and focus group discussion in this study.

I,_____ consent to participate in the Examining mothers' perceptions on the effectiveness of the HIPPY program. I have understood the nature of this project and wish to participate.

I, _____ do not consent to participate in the study.

( ) I consent to allow the researcher to use my name in the study.

( ) I do not want my identity to be identified in the study.

 Signature of participant _____ Date _____

 Signature of Principal Researcher _____ Date_____