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PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AND ADOLESCENT PIANO
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PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AND ADOLESCENT PIANO STUDENTS

By

Amanda Kay Harris

A THESIS

**Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
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ABSTRACT

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AND ADOLESCENT PIANO STUDENTS

By

Amanda Kay Harris

Parental involvement as an influence on student achievement in music and student satisfaction with music lessons has been studied, but few conclusions have been reached that lead to specific recommendations for practice that could positively affect the student. In this study, 28 piano students, parents, and piano teachers were surveyed to determine parental involvement levels, student achievement, and student satisfaction using a five-point Likert scale. The results showed that parental attendance at their child's piano recitals was positively related to student achievement, parental reminding to practice was negatively related to student achievement, and many activities had no relationship to student achievement. Student satisfaction was positively related to parental observation of practice time and parental participation in other musical activities. Also, results showed that as students age, parental involvement decreases.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Tables.....	iv
Introduction.....	1
Parental Involvement.....	1
Parental Involvement in Music Lessons.....	2
Parental Involvement in Piano.....	3
Adolescents in Music.....	4
Related Research.....	7
Summary.....	12
Methodology.....	14
Results.....	16
Reliability of the Survey Results.....	16
Relationship Between Parental Involvement and Student Achievement.....	17
Relationship Between Parental Involvement and Student Satisfaction.....	19
Relationship Between Age and Parental Involvement.....	19
Relationship Between Age and Student Satisfaction.....	20
Summary of Results.....	21
Summary and Conclusions.....	22
Conclusions.....	22
Implications for Practice.....	23
Future Research.....	24
Appendix A: Survey For Current Piano Students.....	27
Appendix B: Survey For Parent of Current Piano Students.....	29
Appendix C: Survey for Teachers of Current Piano Students.....	30
Appendix D: Permission Letter and Consent Form for Piano Teacher.....	31
Appendix E Permission Letter and Consent Form for Parent.....	33
Appendix F: Permission Letter and Consent Form for Student.....	35
Appendix G: Reminder Postcards for Participants.....	37
Reference List.....	39

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Pearson Product-Moment Correlations Between Student and Parent Answers, Questions 1-7	17
Table 2: Pearson Product-Moment Correlations Between Teacher-Student and Teacher-Parent Answers, Questions 1-3.....	17
Table 3: Pearson Product-Moment Correlations Between Parental Involvement and Student Achievement.....	18
Table 4: Pearson Product-Moment Correlations Between Parental Involvement and Student Satisfaction	19
Table 5: Pearson Product-Moment Correlations Between Parental Involvement and Student Age.....	20
Table 6: Pearson Product-Moment Correlations Between Student Age and Student Satisfaction.....	21

INTRODUCTION

Parental Involvement:

Parental involvement has been championed as an essential element for success in children's lives. Trying to establish the connection empirically, researchers have conducted thousands of studies to try to identify the relationship between various parental activities and student achievement (Fan & Chen 2001). Parental involvement has been defined and re-defined in study after study in the hopes of finding the core activities that parents do with their children that result in increases in their children's achievements.

The variety of definitions of parental involvement makes unifying research results difficult. However, Epstein (1987) has published research about parental involvement in the public school system and has created a definition of parental involvement that has become standard. Epstein has divided the activities that parents do with their children into four types of parental involvement: basic obligations (physical needs), school-to-home communications, parent involvement at school, and parent involvement and learning at home. Within the school sub-category, she has defined an additional six types of parental involvement, ranging from communication between the parent and school to parental volunteering at school functions.

Additionally, Steinberg et al. (1992) identified the type of parenting that benefited teenagers in academic achievement as being authoritative parenting, such as “high acceptance, supervision, and psychological autonomy granting” (Steinberg et al., 1992, p. 1266). When parental involvement is paired with the use of authoritative parenting, students receive the most benefits in terms of academic achievement from the interactions.

The Harvard Family Research Project (2007) also found correlations between

parenting style, parental involvement, and achievement. They found that children of disengaged and restrictive parents participate in extra-curricular activities significantly less than the children of supportive parents:

When adolescents feel more supported by their families and their families are more engaged in a variety of youth contexts, youth are more likely to sign up for and stay involved in structured out-of-school time activities (e.g., after school programs, band, team sports, student government, etc.) that are linked to academic and social benefits. (Kreider et al., 2007)

Differences in parental involvement levels can also be seen in socio-economic levels. Parents belonging to the middle class were shown to be more involved in their child's schooling, while working-class parents felt that the job of teaching was best left to the teacher alone (Crozier, 1999).

Parental Involvement in Music Lessons

While there have been thousands of studies done on parental involvement, focusing on parental involvement within the context of private music lessons is a smaller branch of research. Music lessons differ from most academic environments in that music lessons are typically private, one-on-one activities that occur for 30 minutes to an hour, once a week. This requires the students to work for significant periods of time without supervision or aid from an adult, unless a parent decides to take the initiative and become involved in the child's musical life.

The most heralded use of parental involvement within music lessons is Suzuki classes, which reinforce parental involvement in the lesson and at home (Kendall, 1986). Since the appearance of the Suzuki method in America in the 1960s, it has become a

popular beginning teaching method. The goal of the Suzuki method is to learn music in the same manner that people learn language- what Suzuki called the “mother tongue approach.” This includes utilizing the parent as a vital part of the child's education. At the child's lessons, the parent is an active participant, learning the material with the child, so that the parent can supervise and assist practice during the week (Brathwaite, 1988). As a result, the parent is highly involved in the child's musical life and acts as a constant supporter in the child's education. Two studies have looked at the actual success rate of Suzuki students: Blaine (1978) and Sperti (1974). They both discovered that adapted Suzuki programs (in these studies, the Suzuki program was adapted to brass and clarinet students, respectively) significantly improved the quality of student performance.

The concept of parental involvement appeals to music teachers and has been verified as an asset to students in previous studies. Brand (1986) looked at home environment and its affect on second grade students' musical achievements. Brand's results indicated that “the strongest relationship found was between musical achievement and overall parental attitudes toward music and musical involvement with the child” (Brand, p. 118). In another study looking at violin players, Doan (1973) found a positive correlation between parental involvement and performance achievement.

Parental Involvement in Piano

Few quantitative studies have looked specifically at parental involvement in piano lessons. Macmillan (2004) looked at attitudes that piano teachers have towards parents being involved in their children's piano lessons and practice. She found that private piano teachers tended not to encourage parental involvement, and, even if the teachers were convinced that parental involvement was beneficial, they did nothing specific to

encourage parental involvement.

Govel (2004) studied teenagers aged 11 to 15 who had thought about dropping piano lessons as well as those who had decided to not continue in their lessons. She found that most students who had dropped out of private piano lessons reported that their parents were not as involved in their piano studies as those parents of students who had kept taking lessons.

Adolescents in Music

Most students start music lessons while they are still young children. By the time they reach adolescence, private music lesson participation drops dramatically (Steinel 1984). To some extent, starting music lessons when they are younger helps students to continue when they cross into adolescence.

The findings indicate that those children who are more likely to continue playing after making the transition to secondary school had already been playing an instrument for at least a year while they were at primary school. Starting an instrument younger, and having played an instrument for longer, appears to act as a protective factor in terms of continued interest and commitment toward the instrument at secondary school.

(O'Neil et al., 2001).

Not only does this mean that teenagers are missing out on the opportunity to become better musicians, but also that piano teachers have a difficult time retaining their paying students.

From the perspective of the students, motivation to continue lessons tends to become internal, as opposed to external as students reach adolescence. Asmus (1986)

studied motivation in music students in students in grades 4 through 12, and discovered that as they got older, students more often credited an innate musical ability for the reasons that certain people were successful at music. The young students were more likely to believe that more effort would make one a better musician, while the teenagers thought that more effort would not have an effect on achievement in music. Besides this shift in belief about musical ability, different activities— sports, computers, and friends-- all distract the contemporary teenager from private music lessons. Govel (2004) cited these reasons and more, as well as tied lack of parental support to the dropping of piano lessons by teenagers, especially to parents who were not involved in lessons or practicing, or who knew little about the music.

Because of these factors, parental involvement is an external factor that has the potential to affect the happiness and retention of adolescent students greatly. Teachers might be able to encourage the participation of parents and give them resources to help guide students past the age that most of them drop private lessons.

With the purpose of improving private piano instruction and retention for teenagers, this study will investigate the relationship between parental involvement and student achievement and satisfaction levels with piano lessons as well as the relationship between student age and parental involvement and student satisfaction. The problems of this study will be as follows:

1. What are the relationships between student, parent, and teacher self-reporting?
2. Is the level of parental involvement related to the level of achievement of teenage piano students?
3. Is the level of parental involvement related to the satisfaction of teenage piano students?

4. Is the age of the student related to the level of parental involvement of teenage piano students?
5. Is the age of the student related to the level of satisfaction of teenage piano students?

RELATED RESEARCH

Parental involvement is a subjective topic; how involved a parent is in their child's life cannot be concretely defined by numbers alone. Perhaps for this reason, the majority of studies concerning parental involvement are qualitative. One researcher who has looked at parental involvement repeatedly using quantitative methodologies is Zdzinski. In his 1992 study, "Relationships Among Parental Involvement, Music Aptitude, and Musical Achievement of Instrumental Music Students," he surveyed 113 students in grades 6 to 8 (ages 10 to 14) about the level of parental involvement they experienced, using his Parental Involvement Measure (PIM) test. On a five-point Likert scale, students rated their parent's frequency of participation in certain activities. Students were also tested for their musical aptitude, musical achievement, and performance achievement. He found no significant relationship between parental involvement and performance achievement or overall musical achievement. He did discuss, however, that "parental involvement's effects upon musical achievement may differ with student age" (Zdzinski, 1992, p. 122). This led to his later 1996 study, "Parental Involvement, Selected Student Attributes, and Learning Outcomes in Instrumental Music," where he did find a relationship between parental involvement and overall performance. In this second study, he used some of the same research problems but used 397 students, ranging in grades from 4 to 12. The study used multiple tests to study each aspect of the students' abilities, such as using both the Music Achievement Tests (MAT) and the Iowa Tests of Music Literacy (ITML), to study cognitive musical achievement. In total, 17 subtests were given to the students over a number of days of research. This time, Zdzinski found that parental involvement was related to the student's abilities, in attitude, cognitive abilities, and performance. Age was a significant factor in the results, showing that there was a

relationship between parental involvement and cognitive abilities as well as performance but only for the elementary school children. The secondary school students had a strong relationship between parental involvement and their attitudes towards music, which was stronger for the high school students than the middle school students.

Brand (1986) found that parental involvement had a significant effect on musical achievement. This study was done with second graders- an age at which children are more influenced by parents, as Zdzinski (1996) discovered. Instead of looking at age of the students, Brand looked closely at the musical environment in which the students were involved at home. The parents of 116 predominantly Mexican-American children were given the Home Musical Environmental Scale (HOMES), which gathers information about the musical environment in the homes of lower elementary school children. The results showed multiple aspects of parental attitudes about and involvement with music, including parent attitudes about music, attendance at concerts, ownership of recorded music, and the parent's ability to play a musical instrument. The students' tonal and rhythmic aptitudes were measured using the Primary Measures of Musical Audiation (PMMA), while their achievement was measured by their teachers with the Music Achievement Assessment Form (MAAF). Brand found that some elements such as parental attitudes about music and activities, such as singing with the child, had a large influence on the child, while the parent's ability to play an instrument was not related to the child's achievement.

Rife et al. (2001) studied children's satisfaction with private music lessons in students aged 9 to 12. With the intent to discover the factors that children enjoy most about taking lessons, they surveyed 568 students. The students rated statements about their music lessons on a five-point Likert scale. Ultimately, the 34 strongest statements

were used in the results to determine student feelings. Statements ranged from “I like music lessons because I have a good time” to “I like when my friends compliment me nicely about how I play” (Rife et al., 2001, p. 28). Results suggested a range of activities that students enjoy most about their lessons, including how students want to be playing their instrument as much as possible during their lessons and that duets are a fun activity for the students. Age was also explored in the study, and the researchers noted that “9-year-old children did report significantly greater levels of satisfaction than did 12-year-olds” (Rife et al., 2001, p. 29) in their private lessons.

With maturation into adolescence, children start to become less satisfied with their music lessons, putting them at risk for dropping out. One factor could be that, as they get older, they receive less praise from their teachers during their lessons (Kostka, 1984). In her study, Kostka observed 96 piano lessons of students in multiple age ranges, ranging from elementary school children to adults. She discovered that as the students got older, they wasted less lesson time, but also received fewer statements of approval. As more negative factors become a part of lessons as the student grows up, it becomes apparent that research needs to be done to see what is effective in retaining students in the piano studio.

Perhaps one of the more conflicted studies about parental involvement is Fan and Chen's 2001 article “Parental Involvement and Students' Academic Achievement: A Meta-Analysis.” They searched for studies that focused on parental involvement and achievement and found roughly 2000 publications and reports. Of these, they analyzed “only those from which Pearson correlations between any of the parental involvement indicators and any of the achievement outcome variables could be obtained” (Fan and Chen, 2001, p. 5), which left them with only 25 studies. They were then able to create a

list of variables within the umbrella concept of parental involvement and study which variables had the highest correlation with student achievement. Fan and Chen discuss the lack of quantitative studies as well as the lack of a consistent definition of parental involvement. They also point out “the inconsistencies in the literature both about the *existence* of any measurable positive effect of parental involvement on students' academic achievement, and about the *extent* of such effect” (Fan & Chen, 2001, p. 4). While teachers might believe that parent involvement is beneficial for a child, there is a lack of studies citing empirical evidence to support this. “This finding confirms the intuition harbored by many educators and researchers, that parental involvement and students' academic achievement are positively related, although in individual studies, there has been considerable inconsistency about the magnitude of such relationship” (Fan & Chen, 2001, p. 12). Fan and Chen did report some of the same conclusions as other studies regarding parental involvement.

The results here appear to suggest that parental involvement, as represented by parents' supervision of children at home (e.g., home rules for watching TV, for doing school work, etc.), has the weakest relationship with students' academic achievement ($r=.09$), whereas parents' aspiration and expectation for children's educational achievement appears to have the strongest relationship with students' academic achievement ($r=.40$) (Fan & Chen, 2001, p. 13).

Supporting Fan and Chen's (2001) conclusions is a study published by Davidson and Borthwick (2002), who wrote a longitudinal case study about a musical family in which all members played an instrument. The mother, a professional violinist, taught both of her sons to play the violin, while the father was a pianist, music teacher, and music

administrator. The family dynamics were explored through interviews, and it was revealed that the oldest son was recognized within the family as the talented, gifted one, while the younger son was merely referred to as an adequate musician, despite a three-year age difference. Davidson and Borthwick concluded, "This paper has revealed that the parental perceptions of children can become prophecies to fulfil [sic], an expectation becoming a fact, shaping the progress of one specific child, and the paths of the remaining sibling too" (Davidson & Borthwick, 2002, p. 135). This reinforces the idea that Fan and Chen discussed- that, more than anything else, it is the expectation that the parent has for the child that will predict the success of the child in achievement of goals.

Macmillan (2004) studied teacher attitudes towards parental involvement and examined how a small sample of British piano teachers either encouraged or discouraged parental involvement in their teaching of the children. She interviewed 20 piano students, one of their parents, and their teacher. To make sure all participants were qualified piano teachers, all of the teachers involved were members of the European Piano Teachers' Association. The teachers were asked to volunteer two students for the survey, and all students were either 10 or 14 years old. Students answered questions about their musical environment, parental presence at lessons and practice time, and their enjoyment of piano playing. Parents answered questions "about their child's musical environment, parental communication with the teacher and attendance at piano lessons, parental assistance with practice, and their assessment of their child's motivation for playing the piano" (Macmillan, 2004, pp. 297-298). Teachers answered questions about their teaching history, their students, parental involvement at lessons, their encouragement of parental involvement, and their student's motivation and enjoyment of playing the piano. The study's results show that, although teachers might be aware of a relationship between

parental involvement and student achievement, they do little, if anything, to apply this knowledge. In some instances, teachers even actively discouraged parental involvement. Yet Macmillan found no correlation between parental involvement and student enjoyment of playing the piano. Also apparent after reviewing the study is the lack of clear communication between the three parties involved in the music education of the child: the piano teacher, the parent, and the child. A number of parents involve themselves in their child's musical education without informing the piano teacher of their intent or actions. Additionally, interpretation of parental involvement was different in each group. Each party was asked about certain events- such as a parent's presence at lessons or practice time- and each party reported different views of the same events (with the parent claiming more attendance and involvement than the child recalled). These results show the need for examining parental activities from several perspectives.

Summary

In summary, studies have suggested that younger students are more affected by parental involvement than older children (Zdzinski 1996). Studies do not always agree on particular activities that parents participate in that will have an effect on their child, but many tend to conclude that the parental attitudes that exist in a household affect the children (Brand 1986). Additionally, as children mature into teenagers, their attitudes about music shift, as well as their experiences (Rife et al. 2001, Kostka 1984). This is sometimes reflected in parents' beliefs about their kids, and sometimes expectations for the children can become self-fulfilling prophecies (Davidson and Borthwick 2002). Finally, Macmillan (2004) showed that, even if the effect of parental involvement is unknown, parents sometimes still become involved, even against the wishes of the

teacher; implementing studio policy about parental involvement might be needed if teachers want to standardize what their students are doing at home. Because of the inconclusive results of these studies, it is important to continue to research what aspects of parental involvement make the students happy with their musical education, and what, if any, parental activities have any correlation with student achievement or satisfaction.

METHODOLOGY

In this study, the subjects were current teenage piano students ranging in age from 13 to 18 years old; the mean age of the students was 15.39 years old. Initially, 42 prospective students in the mid-Michigan area, as well as their teacher and the parent who was more involved in the piano studies of each child, were mailed the survey. While the piano teachers had a 100% response rate, the parents had a 69% response rate, and the students had a 67% response rate. Only complete sets of responses (student, parent, and teacher) were usable, which made the sample size of this study 28 students, 28 parents, and nine teachers. Piano students were purposely taken from multiple teachers to control for influences from a particular teaching style. Of the students, 57% were female, and 43% were male.

The data was collected through surveys on a five-point Likert scale. Multiple aspects of parental involvement were investigated, including transportation to/from lessons, observation of lessons, attendance at piano recitals, observation of practice time, helpful commenting on practicing, and participation in other musical activities. The students were surveyed about their impressions of their parent's involvement in their music lessons, their own satisfaction with piano lessons, their enjoyment of playing the instrument, and their age [see Appendix A]. The parents of the students who were more involved in their child's piano lessons were surveyed about their musical interactions and involvements with their child. Their survey asked about their presence and involvement in lessons and practice time [see Appendix B]. The piano teachers were surveyed about parental presence at lessons and recitals to verify the information collected from the students and parents. Teacher surveys also included a question about the student's piano achievement level, asking them to rank the student's ability to play, as compared with

other students their age, as top 10%, top 25%, average, bottom 25%, or bottom 10% [see Appendix C]. Many aspects of this study were based on the study that Macmillan (2004) conducted, including verifying data from all three sources, looking at parental presence at lessons and practice time, and asking the student about their musical enjoyment.

Each participant in my study (teacher, parent, student) was mailed the corresponding survey, a letter with a consent form attached [see Appendixes D, E, and F], and a self-addressed stamped envelope. The teachers received a letter and a consent form, as well as surveys labeled with the name of each student involved in the study. Each participant who did not respond within two weeks received a reminder postcard in the mail [see Appendix G].

Results from the study were analyzed using Pearson product-moment calculations. The relationships analyzed were: student, parent, and teacher responses; parental involvement and student achievement; parental involvement and student satisfaction; parental involvement and student age; and student age and student satisfaction.

RESULTS

Survey questions were based on a five-point Likert scale, which resulted in answers on a word-based scale of: always, frequently, sometimes, rarely, and never. These answers were then converted into a numeric response, ranging from 5 (always) to 1 (never). Of the student and parent surveys, questions one through seven inquired about parental involvement in specific activities. By adding up the scores to these responses, I was able to create a composite parental involvement score. Similarly, from the student survey questions 8-12, I was able to create a composite student satisfaction score. However, to create an accurate composite student satisfaction score, question ten in the student survey was scored negatively (always = -5, never = -1). This was due to the fact that the question was phrased negatively and asked the student about the frequency they thought about quitting lessons. In this way, a higher number always meant a positive response.

Reliability of the Survey Results

Due to the variety of perspectives involved, student, parent, and teacher responses had the potential to vary. In this study, student and parent responses to the same questions sometimes differed. In correlating the answers of the students and parents, one can see how the student and parent responses relate to each other for each question.

Table 1: Pearson Product-Moment Correlations Between Student and Parent Answers, Questions 1-7

Variable	r
Parental transportation to lessons	.69
Parental observation of lessons	.80
Parental presence at recitals	.99
Parental observation of practice time	.61
Parental reminding to practice	.66
Parental commenting on practice	.35
Parental participation in other musical activities	.67

The relationship concerning parental commenting on practice is noticeably lower than the others. However, the answers to the rest of the questions show general agreement between the student and the parents. Because the teachers were asked three questions about parental involvement too, one can compare correlation coefficients of questions 1-3 between the teachers and the students, and between the teachers and the parents.

Table 2: Pearson Product-Moment Correlations Between Teacher-Student and Teacher-Parent Answers, Questions 1-3

Variable	Teacher-Student	Teacher-Parent
Parental transportation to lessons	.49	.76
Parental observation of lessons	.63	.76
Parental presence at recitals	.98	.99

The teacher-parent answers are stronger correlations than the teacher-student answers: the teachers and parents have answers that are more similar than the teacher and student. However, as with the student/parent answers, the correlations are generally strong and positive.

Relationship Between Parental Involvement and Student Achievement

Table 3 shows the relationships between parental involvement and student

achievement, both as a composite and as it relates to individual questions. Both the results from the student and parent were used in the analysis. The overall relationship between parental involvement and student achievement as viewed through the lens of the student was positive but not statistically significant. As viewed through the lens of the parent, the relationship was negligible. However, the answers to some of the individual questions were meaningfully related to the teacher ratings of each. Parental presence at recitals was positively related to student achievement, as reported by both the student and parents.

Table 3: Pearson Product-Moment Correlations Between Parental Involvement and Student Achievement		
Variables	Student Answers	Parent Answers
Composite Parental Involvement Score	.11	-.05
Parental transportation to lessons	.21	.24
Parental observation of lessons	.23	.25
Parental presence at recitals	.36*	.39*
Parental observation of practice time	-.08	-.22
Parental reminding to practice	-.27	-.28
Parental commenting on practice	.05	-.10
Parental participation in other musical activities	-.19	.11
*Statistically significant beyond the .05 level		

While not statistically significant, parental involvement in other activities tend to be positively related to student achievement, and these relationships might have been statistically significant if the sample size had been larger. Parental transportation to lessons and observation of lessons both show moderate correlations. More interesting is the moderate negative correlation between parental reminding to practice and student achievement. It shows that parents who remind their children to practice tend to have children who do not have strong achievement levels in piano.

Relationship Between Parental Involvement and Student Satisfaction

Table 4 shows the relationships between student satisfaction and parental involvement from both the student and parent perspectives. The factors of parental involvement that rated statistically significant to student satisfaction were parental observation of practice time and parental participation in other musical activities as reported by the students. While not reported at statistically significant levels, the parent responses also showed that observation of practice time had a moderate correlation with student satisfaction. No activity was significantly correlated to student satisfaction according to the parent answers. Parental commenting on practice did show moderate positive relationships with student satisfaction, in both the student and parent answers, and might have resulted in a significant relationship if the sample size had been bigger.

Table 4: Pearson Product-Moment Correlations Between Parental Involvement and Student Satisfaction		
Variables	Student Answers	Parent Answers
Composite Student Satisfaction Score	.17	.06
Parental transportation to lessons	-.12	.10
Parental observation of lessons	-.07	-.02
Parental presence at recitals	.13	.16
Parental observation of practice time	.35*	.22
Parental reminding to practice	-.03	-.19
Parental commenting on practice	.22	.23
Parental participation in other musical activities	.34*	.12
*Statistically significant beyond the .05 level		

Relationship Between Age and Parental Involvement

As students progress through their teenage years, does parental involvement change? Table 5 shows how parental involvement scores relate to student age. Overall,

parental involvement significantly decreases as children grow older. Individual aspects of the parental involvement relationships are as follows:

Table 5: Pearson Product-Moment Correlations Between Parental Involvement and Student Age		
Variables	Student Answers	Parent Answers
Composite Parental Involvement Score	-.61*	-.42*
Parental transportation to lessons	-.50*	-.44*
Parental observation of lessons	-.25	-.07
Parental presence at recitals	-.22	-.26
Parental observation of practice time	-.20	-.07
Parental reminding to practice	-.60*	-.61*
Parental commenting on practice	-.62*	-.34*
Parental participation in other musical activities	.06	.10
*Statistically significant beyond the .05 level		

Numerous parental activities significantly decrease with age, including transportation to lessons, observation of lessons, reminding to practice, and commenting on practice. Parents tend to be less involved in the musical lives of their children as the children get older.

Relationship Between Age and Student Satisfaction

The composite relationship between satisfaction and age was not statistically significant and was close to 0. However, there were aspects of the satisfaction scores that stood out. This included a positive correlation between age and enjoyment of practicing. A moderate negative correlation was found between age and the frequency of playing repertoire that was not assigned to them, as well as to enjoyment of performing. These statistics show that, as students age, they enjoy practicing more, but enjoy performing less, and that they less frequently play music not assigned to them by their teacher.

Table 6: Pearson Product-Moment Correlations Between Student Age and Student Satisfaction	
Variables	r
Composite Student Satisfaction Score	-.10
Enjoyment of lessons	.12
Enjoyment of practicing	.31
Think about quitting?	-.17
Enjoyment of performing	-.22
Play other music	-.25

Summary of Results

Overall, the results show that students sometimes had different answers to the questions to which both their teachers and parents responded. There was a statistically significant positive correlation between parental presence at recitals and student achievement. Between parental involvement and student satisfaction, parental observation of practice time and participation in other musical activities as reported by the students was positively correlated with student satisfaction. Looking at the relationships between student age and parental involvement, this study shows that as students age, parental involvement decreases, including in their involvement in transportation to lessons, reminders to practice, and comments on practice. The relationship between student age and student satisfaction shows that, while not statistically significant, enjoyment of practicing increases as students grow up and enjoyment of performing goes down.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Conclusions

This study investigated the relationships that parental involvement has with student achievement and satisfaction, as well as the relationships that student age has with parental involvement and student satisfaction, in order to improve teenage piano lessons. The relationships were investigated by surveying teenagers about their experiences as piano students. Their parents and teachers also were surveyed, to verify the data collected from the student.

Like Macmillan (2004) discovered, students and parents differ somewhat on reporting about the exact same event. Most notably this is seen in events related to practicing. A parent observing or listening to a child practicing in the next room might not come across as such by the child. Additionally, the correlation between parent and student answers from the question about helpful parental comments to the child about their practicing has the lowest correlation coefficient.

From the results of this study, there is little relationship between parental involvement and both student achievement and student satisfaction. However, these are some positive trends showing that, with a larger sample size, these trends might prove meaningful. The relationship between piano student and parent is complex and needs more study to fully explore its depth. A strong correlation was found between student achievement and parental presence at recitals, which is not as helpful as other results would be, as almost every parent goes to all of their child's piano recitals. What is more interesting is the lack of results from the other facets of parental involvement: despite a parent's interaction with a child, their actions seem to have little relationship with a student's achievement at the piano. Similarly, their actions have little relationship with the

student's satisfaction; only student report, not parent report, of parental observation of practice time had a strong correlation with student satisfaction. From this, we can conclude that only when the student is cognizant of a parent observing them that their satisfaction score is high; when the student is unaware of observation, it has little impact on them.

Previous studies had looked at the possibility that student satisfaction in music lessons decreased as students entered puberty (Zdzinski, 1996; Rife, et al, 2001) but not whether their satisfaction increased as they grew up. Most interesting from the results is that practicing enjoyment tended to increase as the students increased in age. Reasons for this could be many, from gaining a longer attention span to the possibility that students learn how to practice better as they get older and therefore enjoy it more.

Implications for Practice

This study did not show that, if parents do certain activities, their child will achieve more or be happier at the piano, or that a teacher can encourage a parent to do more in order to have a happier piano student. It did not even suggest that increased parental involvement is always good for the success of the child: the results suggested that parents who frequently remind their child to practice tend to have children who played less well than those who were not reminded. This study yet again shows that, while the concept of parents being highly involved in their child's life might be thought of traditionally as a positive influence, quantitative studies have yet to be able to prove this.

Many parents feel comfortable in approaching their child's school teacher about problems or in inquiring about ways to increase their involvement constructively in the home for the benefit of the child, partially due to the fact that they feel more comfortable

in a school setting. Fitting into Epstein's (1987) definitions of parental involvement, parental involvement and learning at home is a location where the parent needs to take the initiative. For a parent who has little or no musical ability, the idea of becoming involved in their child's musical education is frightening and intimidating.

While it probably is not realistic for every teacher to embrace the Suzuki method's approach to parental involvement, there are things that can be done by a musically uneducated parent to make sure that a musically-friendly environment exists at home. This includes educating oneself about music and being open to going to a variety of concerts. The burden of increasing parental support should not sit entirely on the teacher, but rather the parent should work with the teacher to come up with appropriate activities.

As Fan & Chen (2001) discussed in their article, the extent of influence that parental involvement has on a student is still unknown and unmeasurable. While people might believe intuitively that parental involvement is inherently beneficial, this study, like many other quantitative studies, shows that exactly what is beneficial is extremely hard to define or measure. Not actively encouraging parental involvement is not necessarily a detriment to the student's musical experience-- there appears to be no large correlation for all students, but instead teachers should look at each student on a case-by-case basis.

Future Research

In future studies, students who have discontinued taking piano lessons should be included to see if there are significant differences in levels or aspects of parental involvement between students who continue to take lessons and those who quit. Additionally, a higher number of students participating in the study would increase

reliability of the results.

A more thorough testing of the student's abilities by the teacher would create a more valid achievement score. This could involve breaking down an overall achievement score into multiple dimensions, i.e. technical ability, expressive ability, improvisational ability, etc. This would give a better picture of a student's true musical ability.

Finally, a more comprehensive parent survey would benefit future studies. As Steinberg et al. (1992) defined particular types of parenting that help teenagers in academic settings, perhaps particular types of parenting would assist teenagers in a musical setting. This could also correlate Fan & Chen's (2001) study that showed parent activities to have little effect on their children, while internalized expectations had a stronger influence. The overall attitude within the family towards music has great potential to influence a child's perception about music. Investigating the influence that a family's culture has on child rearing, as well as surveying the parent about their musical education could be very enlightening.

While studies like this strive to find a connection between parental involvement and student actions or attitudes, trying to define parental involvement and student enjoyment at the piano in a statistical manner is difficult to do. Certain activities have statistically significant correlations to student actions, even if they are negative relationships, such as student satisfaction and parental reminders to practice. What might be more beneficial is for a family to create an atmosphere in the home that embraces music. One student wrote in the margins of her survey how her grandmother's piano playing had influenced her father, and through him, her. This multi-generational appreciation of music has made music an essential element in her life: something every piano teacher would love to hear from their students. "Quitting piano lessons would

jeopardize my ability to express my feelings without words because that is what music is.

It is the communication of emotion in its purist [sic] form.”

APPENDIX A

Survey For Current Piano Students

Thank you for your time in completing this short survey. Circle your answers to the following questions about the parent that is more involved in your music lessons. Please answer all questions honestly. All answers will be kept anonymous.

Student #

1. Does your parent provide transportation to and from your lessons?

Always Frequently Sometimes Rarely Never

2. Does your parent observe your lessons?

Always Frequently Sometimes Rarely Never

3. Does your parent come to piano recitals?

Always Frequently Sometimes Rarely Never

4. Does your parent listen to you practice?

Always Frequently Sometimes Rarely Never

5. Does your parent remind you to practice?

Always Frequently Sometimes Rarely Never

6. Does your parent make helpful comments to you about your practicing?

Always Frequently Sometimes Rarely Never

7. Does your parent interact with you in other musical activities? (ie., Listen to music together, go to concerts together, talk about music, etc.)

Always Frequently Sometimes Rarely Never

8. Do you enjoy going to your lessons?

Always Frequently Sometimes Rarely Never

9. Do you enjoy practicing?

Always	Frequently	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
--------	------------	-----------	--------	-------

10. Do you ever think about quitting piano lessons?

Always	Frequently	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
--------	------------	-----------	--------	-------

11. Do you enjoy performing? (Either in concerts or for your friends)

Always	Frequently	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
--------	------------	-----------	--------	-------

12. Do you play music besides your assigned repertoire?

Always	Frequently	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
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13. How old are you?

APPENDIX B

Survey For Parent of Current Piano Students

Thank you for your time in completing this short survey. This survey is for the parent that is more involved in the child's piano studies. Please circle your answers to the following questions and answer all questions honestly. Your answers will be kept anonymous.

Student #

1. Do you provide transportation for your child to their lesson?

Always Frequently Sometimes Rarely Never

2. Do you observe your child's lesson?

Always Frequently Sometimes Rarely Never

3. Do you go to your child's piano recitals?

Always Frequently Sometimes Rarely Never

4. Do you listen to your child practice?

Always Frequently Sometimes Rarely Never

5. Do you remind your child to practice?

Always Frequently Sometimes Rarely Never

6. Do you give comments to your child about their practicing?

Always Frequently Sometimes Rarely Never

7. Do you interact with your child during other musical activities? (ie., Go to concerts together, listen to music together)

Always Frequently Sometimes Rarely Never

8. How many years has your child taken piano lessons? (include years with other teachers, too)

APPENDIX C

Survey for Teachers of Current Piano Students

Thank you for your time in completing this short survey. Please fill out one survey for each student who participates in the study. Circle your answers to the following questions. Please be honest about your answers, as they will be anonymous and must reflect real results.

Student #

1. Does the parent provide transportation for the student to and from lessons?

Always Frequently Sometimes Rarely Never

2. Does the parent observe the student's lessons?

Always Frequently Sometimes Rarely Never

3. Does the parent come to piano recitals?

Always Frequently Sometimes Rarely Never

4. How would you rate your student's achievement level?

Top 10% Top 25% Average Bottom 25% Bottom 10%

APPENDIX D

June 13, 2008

Dear Piano Teacher,

My name is Amanda Harris, and I am a Masters student in Piano Pedagogy at Michigan State University. As part of my thesis research, you are being asked to participate in my study of the influence of parental involvement on teenage piano students.

Past studies have returned conflicting information as to the extent that certain parental activities actually influence student achievement. I am looking to narrow down certain activities that might have a cause and effect relationship.

For each participating student (students who are between the ages of 13 and 18), you will be given a one-page survey to fill out about that student. In total, the surveys should take you approximately three minutes per student.

Your privacy will be protected to the maximum extent of the law. All data will be confidential and will be destroyed ten years after collection. At no time will you be referred to by name during data analysis or in the report of the study results. There are no known risks associated with participation in this study. At any time, you may decide to withdraw from this study with no negative consequences.

I understand that this is a busy time of the year, but I would appreciate it if you could return the surveys in the enclosed envelope within two weeks.

I hope that you will consent to participate. The information that is gained from this study and others like it can result in better music teaching and in important information about the relationship between parental involvement and piano instruction for teenagers.

If you have any questions or wish to discuss this study with me, please feel free to call me, Amanda Harris, at (517) 353-0942, or e-mail me at harri714@msu.edu. You can also contact my advisor, Michigan State University pedagogy professor Dr. Derek Polischuk (polischu@msu.edu). If you have any questions regarding your role and rights as a study participant, or would like to register a complaint about this study, you may contact, anonymously, if you wish, Dr. Peter Vasilenko, Director of Human Research Protection Programs, at (517) 355-2180 (ext. 239), FAX: (517) 432-4503, email: irb@msu.edu, or regular mail: HRPP, 202 Olds Hall, East Lansing, MI 48824.

Thank you very much,

Amanda Harris

Consent Form:
Parental Involvement and Adolescent Piano Students

Your signature below indicates voluntary permission to participate in this study of parental involvement in private piano lessons of adolescent students.

Teacher's Name (Please Print)

Teacher's Signature

APPENDIX E

June 13, 2008

Dear Parent or Guardian,

My name is Amanda Harris, and I am a Masters student in Piano Pedagogy at Michigan State University. As part of my thesis research, you and your child are being asked to participate in my study of the influence of parental involvement on teenage piano students.

Past studies have returned conflicting information as to the extent that certain parental activities actually influence student achievement. I am looking to narrow down certain activities that might have a cause and effect relationship.

In this study, your child will be given a short, two page survey to fill out asking them about their perceived amount of parental involvement in their piano education, as well as their practicing habits and enjoyment of piano playing. This should take your child no more than five minutes to complete. Additionally, you will be given a one page survey asking about your participation in your child's musical life. Your survey should take less than five minutes to complete.

You and your child's privacy will be protected to the maximum extent of the law. All data will be kept confidential and will be destroyed ten years after collection. At no time will any person be referred to by name during data analysis or in the report of the study results. There are no known risks associated with participation in this study. At any time, you can withdraw your permission for your child to participate in this study, as well as your own consent, with no negative consequences.

I hope that you will consent to participate in my study, as well as allow your child to participate in my study. The information that is gained from this study and others like it can result in better music teaching and in important information about the relationship between parental involvement and piano instruction for teenagers.

I understand that this is a busy time of the year, but I would appreciate it if you could return the survey in the enclosed envelope within two weeks.

If you have any questions or wish to discuss this study with me, please feel free to call me, Amanda Harris, at (517) 353-0942, or e-mail me at harri714@msu.edu. You can also contact my advisor, Michigan State University pedagogy professor Dr. Derek Polischuk (polischu@msu.edu). If you have any questions regarding your role and rights as a study participant, or would like to register a complaint about this study, you may contact, anonymously, if you wish, Dr. Peter Vasilenko, Director of Human Research Protection Programs, at (517) 355-2180 (ext. 239), FAX: (517) 432-4503, email: irb@msu.edu, or regular mail: HRPP, 202 Olds Hall, East Lansing, MI 48824.

Thank you very much,

Amanda Harris

Consent Form:
Parental Involvement and Adolescent Piano Students

Your signature below indicates voluntary permission for your child to participate in this study of the effect of parental involvement on adolescent piano students. Your child will be given a short (less than five minute) survey to complete.

Child's Name (Please Print)

Parent or Guardian's Name (Please Print)

Parent or Guardian's Signature

Your signature below indicates voluntary permission for you to participate in this study of parental involvement on adolescent piano students. You will be given a short (less than five minute) survey to complete.

Parent or Guardian's Signature

APPENDIX F

June 13, 2008

Dear Student,

My name is Amanda Harris, and I am a Masters student in Piano Pedagogy at Michigan State University. As part of my thesis research, you are being asked to participate in my study of the influence of parental involvement on teenage piano students.

Past studies have returned conflicting information as to the extent that certain parental activities actually influence student achievement. I am looking to narrow down certain activities that might have a cause and effect relationship.

In this study, you will be given a short, two page survey to fill out with questions about the amount of parental involvement in your piano education, as well as your practicing habits and enjoyment of piano playing. The survey should take less than five minutes to complete.

Your privacy will be protected to the maximum extent of the law. All data will be kept confidential and will be destroyed ten years after collection. At no time will you be referred to by name during data analysis or in the report of the study results. There are no known risks associated with participation in this study. At any time, you may decide to withdraw from this study with no negative consequences.

I hope that you will consent to participate in my study. The information that is gained from this study and others like it can result in better music teaching and in important information about the relationship between parental involvement and piano instruction for teenagers.

I understand that this is a busy time of the year, but I would appreciate it if you could return the surveys in the enclosed envelope within two weeks.

If you have any questions or wish to discuss this study with me, please feel free to call me, Amanda Harris, at (517) 353-0942, or e-mail me at harri714@msu.edu. You can also contact my advisor, Michigan State University pedagogy professor Dr. Derek Polischuk (polischu@msu.edu). If you have any questions regarding your role and rights as a study participant, or would like to register a complaint about this study, you may contact, anonymously, if you wish, Dr. Peter Vasilenko, Director of Human Research Protection Programs, at (517) 355-2180 (ext. 239), FAX: (517) 432-4503, email: irb@msu.edu, or regular mail: HRPP, 202 Olds Hall, East Lansing, MI 48824.

Thank you very much,

Amanda Harris

Consent Form:
Parental Involvement and Adolescent Piano Students

Your signature and initials below indicate voluntary permission to participate in this study of the effect of parental involvement on adolescent piano students. You will be given a short (less than five minute) survey to complete.

Student's Name (Please Print)

Student's Signature

APPENDIX G

Reminder Postcard

Hello,

In the last few weeks, you received a short survey from me asking about your or your child's piano lessons. Hopefully, you'll have time to sit down and fill out this survey and send it back to me. It's very important that I receive as many surveys back, as soon as possible. Without *your* help, my study wouldn't be possible!

If you don't feel comfortable filling out the survey, I will respect your wish for privacy. If you've lost the survey, or never received it, please let me know, and I can easily send you another one. However, if it simply slipped your mind, or slipped to the bottom of the mail pile, I would be very grateful if you would take a few minutes, fill it out, and return it to me.

Thanks,
Amanda Harris
517.353.0942
harri714@msu.edu

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