

approximately 90% of the variation in involvement was within schools rather than between schools. The distribution was relatively uniform across schools. When the four parental involvement factors are taken together it was difficult to identify schools with particularly high or low levels of parental involvement. This suggests that relatively few schools had a strong influence on the learning climate in the home or on levels of parental involvement generally.

- 2.12.6 The data were then analysed to investigate the relationship between the forms of parental involvement and the social class of the families. In confirmation of previous research there was a strong relationship between social class and parental involvement. The higher the social class, the more parental involvement was evident.
- 2.12.7 Achievement in both maths and reading was also significantly related to family social class. The researchers used statistical techniques to factor out this effect and then examined the residual impact of parental involvement factors. They concluded that, 'parental involvement made a significant unique contribution to explaining the variation in children's academic achievement over and above the effects associated with family background' (p.138). To be precise, the most significant factor was 'home discussion'. Regardless of social class, the more parents and children conversed with each other in the home, the more the pupils achieved in school.
- 2.12.8 It is worth pausing to underline the trend of these results. First, a great deal of the variation in students' achievement is outside of the schools' influence. Family social class, for example, accounts for about one third of such variance. Second, parental involvement in the form of home discussion has, nonetheless, a major impact on achievement. Other forms of involvement have insignificant effects. Unlike social class, this form of parental involvement might be open to the educative impact of schools. That being said, it seems that the schools in this sample had very little impact on home discussion as a form of parental involvement.
- 2.12.9 Since this study reveals home discussion to be a significant force on student achievement it is worth noting some of the factors associated with this form of parental involvement. First there is a strong gender effect. Females report considerably more home discussion than males. Second, children with behavioural problems get less home discussion but significantly more school communication. Third, there are ethnic differences in the degree of home discussion. Asian and Pacific Island families engage significantly less than white families in home discussion.
- 2.13 A comparison of the NCDS of Britain in the 70s with the NELS study of the US in the 90s shows some remarkable correspondences. First, achievement is shaped to a major degree by forces outside the control of schools. Social class factors play a large role. That being said, parental