8. Discussion

8.1 Introduction
In this thesis we described a study on the influence of community schools on child behaviour and education at home. In this final chapter we will summarise and discuss the results of this study. Section 8.2 will summarise the research results. Section 8.3 discusses the results of this study's research questions. Those research questions were formulated as follows: "which activities concerning child behaviour and education at home are offered by community schools", "are parents and children involved in community school activities", "do community schools influence the behaviour of community school children", and "do community schools influence the educational situation at home of community school children". Besides summarising and discussing the research results, this chapter will go into the limitations of this study, such as the lack of a control group, the use of questionnaires to assess child behaviour and the limitations with concern to the research group used in this study (section 8.4). We will conclude with the implications of this study in section 8.5, which will go into the implications for future research (section 8.5.1) as well as the implications for Groningen community schools (section 8.5.2).

8.2 Summary of the results and conclusions
In this study we formulated four research questions, each divided into a number of sub-questions. To answer these questions, we used the annual planning documents and the annual reports of the Groningen community schools. Furthermore, 74 parents were annually interviewed between 1998 and 2000. Those interviews included questionnaires about participation in community school activities, child behaviour (CBCL and HIB) and education at home (HOME-inventory). Kindergarten and first grade teachers annually completed a questionnaire about their pupils' socio-emotional behaviour (pupil's profile) in the three school years included in this study. Pupil's profiles of 180 pupils were used in the data analyses of this study. These 180 pupils were assessed by their teachers in all three measurements.

The first research question concerns the activities organised by community schools. The results concerning this question (chapter 5) showed that eighteen Groningen institutions participated in at least one of the four community schools in this study. Eleven of these institutions participated in all four community schools. It concerns educational, social, health and recreational institutions. These institutions jointly organised between nine and
seventeen activities per school year per community school, categorised into recreational, educational and parental activities. Most activities were organised in the category educational activities. Between five and eleven activities per community school recurred in all three school years, other activities were organised only once or twice. So, approximately half of the activities recurred in all three school years. Concerning differences in activities organised by the four community schools (question 1.2), the number and kind of activities organised slightly differed, as well as the variation in the number of activities that were organised per school year. Concluding, the community schools in this study organised several recreational, educational and parental activities. Several activities recurred in each school year, so the community schools at least partly succeeded in the organisation of a continuing coherent whole of activities.

The second research question goes into families' involvement in community schools. It focuses on parents' opinions about the community school and on families' participation in community school activities (chapter 6). With concern to the former aspect, half of the parents in this study say they feel involved in the community school. Three quarters say they have a clear concept of what a community school is, and that they receive sufficient information about the community school in their neighbourhood. No differences in parents' opinions were found for parents with a different socio-economic or ethnic status, or for parents from a different neighbourhood.

With regard to participation in community school activities, almost all families in this study participated in at least one activity between 1998 and 2000. Per school year, approximately 70% participated in at least one activity. Between 11% and 23% of the families participated in three or more activities per school year. Most participation was registered in the category parental activities. Differential effects (chapter 7) related to socio-economic or ethnic status were only found for participation in educational activities; ethnic minority families participated in more educational activities than other families. With concern to neighbourhood, families in SPT and Vinkhuizen participated in more activities than families in Hoogkerk and Oosterpark. Concluding with concern to research question 2, approximately half of the parents in this study say they feel involved in the community school in their neighbourhood. Furthermore, per school year approximately three-quarters of the families in this study participated in at least one community school activity. So most families are at least partly involved in the community school in their neighbourhood.

Research question 3 concerns community school's influence on the behaviour of children. With concern to the actual situation of behaviour of children, we found that most children in this study did not show a lot of behavioural problems, according to their parents (chapter 6). The problem
scores on the instruments we used to measure child behaviour problems (CBCL and HIB) are all relatively low. Furthermore, less than 10% of the children had clinical or borderline behavioural problems (see chapter 4 for an explanation of clinical and borderline problems). Teachers on average perceived low to moderate socio-emotional behavioural problems in their pupils. Notably, the number of pupils with clinical behavioural problems increased, according to teachers’ assessments. Correlations between parents' and teachers' ratings of child behaviour were moderate, and most of the parents’ scores were lower than the ones of teachers. Parents thus perceive fewer behavioural problems than teachers do.

In the parents’ assessments of child behaviour, few differential effects with regard to socio-economic or ethnic status were found (chapter 7). We did find some differences between neighbourhoods, however, especially between Hoogkerk and Oosterpark. Parents in Hoogkerk perceived fewer child behaviour problems, on average, than parents in Oosterpark. Concerning teachers’ assessment of child behaviour, several differences related to socio-economic or ethnic status were found, as well as differences related to neighbourhood. In general, teachers in Vinkhuizen and Oosterpark perceived more problems in child behaviour than teachers in Hoogkerk and SPT. Furthermore, pupil’s with a middle or high socio-economic status had fewer behavioural problems than pupils with a low socio-economic status and ethnic minority pupils, according to teachers.

The relation between child behaviour and participation in community school activities remains somewhat unclear (chapter 7). Several behavioural problems decreased significantly, but we only found few differences between families who did and families did not participate in community school activities. Besides, only some of those decreases showed significant correlations with participation in activities. Concluding with concern to research question 3, we did find a significant decrease of some child behaviour problems, but we could not find a clear and stable relationship with participation in community school activities.

Research question 4 focuses on community schools’ influence on education at home. The HOME subscales used to measure this educational situation at home showed a significant increase between the first and the final measurement of this study (chapter 6). So education at home improved between 1998 and 2000. Furthermore, the number of families with borderline or clinical educational problems decreased on almost all of the HOME subscales. So, the number of families with severe problems concerning education at home diminished between measurements. Hardly any differences in HOME subscale and change scores related to socio-economic or ethnic status and neighbourhood were found (chapter 7). Besides, we only found few differences in the HOME subscale scores of families who did and
families who did not participate in community school activities. The improvement of education at home showed some significant correlations with participation in activities. These correlations are not stable however, and we did not find correlations for all subscales. So, although education at home did improve, we did not find a clear relation with participation in community school activities.

8.3 Discussion of the results
The former section summarised the results of this study. In this section we will discuss those results. Section 8.3.1 will discuss the activities organised by community schools, and section 8.3.2 goes into families’ participation in those activities. Sections 8.3.3 and 8.3.4 will discuss the results concerning child behaviour and education at home, respectively.

8.3.1 Community school activities
Section 8.2 showed that the four community schools in this study organised several recreational, educational and parental activities. Those activities differ to some extent in number and kind per community school. This section discusses some notable aspects regarding the activities, such as the institutions involved in organising community school activities and the extent to which activities could lead to achievement of the objectives.

The first issue to be discussed concerns the institutions that co-operate within Groningen community schools. One could wonder whether they are the appropriate institutions to reach the community school objectives. Several institutions involved in education and (health) care are involved in the four community schools in this study. These institutions already focused on issues related to child behaviour and education at home before they participated in community schools, and they should therefore be capable of organising activities that lead to an improvement of child behaviour and education at home. Another issue with regard to the participating institutions concerns the fact that relatively many institutions participate in all four community schools. This raises the question to what extent community schools are appropriate reflections of the neighbourhoods concerned. As has been stated in section 2.4.1, community school plans should be made by institutions that work and people that live in the community school neighbourhood, because in that case, community schools are most responsive to the needs of community members. Each Groningen community school actually includes several specific institutions from the neighbourhood involved, such as pre-school and primary school, playground associations and community centres. Especially those community institutions could secure the interests of the neighbourhood involved.
Whether the institutions that are involved in community schools are capable of reaching the community school objectives and of answering to the specific needs of the neighbourhood largely depends on the activities they organise. When we interpret the Groningen community school objectives in the broadest sense, most activities organised by Groningen community schools are more or less related to the objectives concerning child behaviour and education at home. Children who would otherwise feel bored after school hours and might therefore engage in mischief can now participate in recreational activities, which gives them the opportunity to actively spend their leisure time. Research showed that this actively spending of leisure time could positively influence children’s social development and academic achievement (Hofferth & Jankuniene, 2001; McLaughlin, 2000; Eccles & Barber, 1999). Veugelers (2001), however, warns that it is also important for children to learn to sensibly use their leisure time without participating in organised activities. Children’s autonomous play can be a very good preparation for a safe and independent adolescence and adulthood.

Community schools’ recreational activities are not only meant for children who do not know how to actively spend time after school hours. Children that are perfectly well able to individually spend their leisure time usefully can also participate in recreational activities. For recreational activities to lead to an improvement of child behaviour especially the former group of children should participate in those activities.

Next to recreational activities, several educational activities have been organised. Some of those activities could help parents with educational problems, other activities could help children with behavioural problems. Early educational compensatory programmes, remedial services, socio-emotional training and courses child rearing are among them. The duration of some of these activities, however, is rather short. To achieve a stable improvement of child behaviour problems, it might be useful to offer longer term programmes that focus on the specific aspects to be changed (see also Gerris et al, 1998; van As, 1999). Groningen community schools offer few of those programmes. However, it is not useful to offer such programmes if no severe child behaviour problems exist. Whether or not those programmes should be offered by Groningen community schools depends on whether these community schools want to focus on the entire population in a neighbourhood, or specifically on those children and families with severe problems. In general, community school activities could have influence on child behaviour and education at home, although some improvements could be made to be more certain of reaching the behavioural and educational objectives.

The activities organised by Groningen community schools slightly differ from the ones mentioned in the general community school model. These differences are partly caused by differences between the American and Dutch
school system (e.g. citizenship and civics education are not specific issues in the Dutch educational system), and partly by the fact that Groningen community schools explicitly decided not to engage in issues that are the primary responsibilities of schools (such as the use of curricula and educational systems and the academic achievement of pupils).

The behavioural and educational objectives formulated by Groningen community schools are rather broad. This makes it difficult to decide whether the objectives have in fact been achieved. Research by Slavenburg and van der Vegt (1999) shows that this problem also exists in other Dutch community schools. American literature (see chapters 2 and 5 for an overview), however, shows more detailed community school objectives. This discrepancy in formulation of objectives might be caused by the fact that American schools have a history of organising extra-curricular activities, whereas organising activities after school hours is relatively new in the Dutch situation. Dutch community schools have to get used to the new situation and they might need more time to decide which objectives to specify and to follow.

Furthermore, the broadness of the objectives makes it difficult to decide which activities could best be used to reach the objectives. This also becomes clear from the Groningen community school planning documents and annual reports, which do not clearly mention and explain which activities are related to which objectives. Next to community school objectives, several guidelines for activities have been formulated by the Groningen community school project board. These guidelines should lead to reaching the objectives; they are not objectives themselves. The community school planning documents and annual reports sometimes give the impression, however, that these guidelines are used as if they were objectives. This might easily lead to the misconception that the community school objectives are reached when the guidelines have been properly followed. When in fact following the guidelines is just a first step towards reaching the objectives.

As has been mentioned before, not all community schools organise the same activities, although quite some activities are organised by all community schools. One of the main principles of the community school, however, is that every neighbourhood should decide what is needed in this specific neighbourhood. Hence, differences between community schools are not only logical, but, since the four neighbourhoods differ, differences with concern to activities organised might even be desirable. As has been mentioned with concern to the participating institutions, the similarity in activities organised raises the question to what extent Groningen community schools meet the needs of the neighbourhoods involved.
8.3.2 Families' participation in community schools

The former section discussed the activities organised by Groningen community schools. We mentioned some conditions for those activities to lead to an improvement of child behaviour and education at home. Two important conditions have not been mentioned yet, however. The first one is that families should feel involved in the community school in their neighbourhood. If families feel involved in the community school, think of the community school as an improvement, and are familiar with the underlying concept and the activities organised, they might be more inclined to actively participate in the community school. Since a feeling of involvement is an important factor in participating in community school activities, the percentages found in this study are rather low. Approximately half of the parents in this study feel involved in the community school in their neighbourhood, and half of them think the community school is an improvement compared to the situation before. Parents who feel involved more often think of the community school as an improvement, they more often consider the community school concept to be clear, and they more often think they receive sufficient information. To make sure that the community school can act upon the needs of the community members and reach the objectives, more people should feel involved in that community school. On the other hand, community schools could never satisfy the needs of all families in the neighbourhood (Epstein, 1995).

A second condition for community schools to reach their objectives concerns families' participation in activities; an improvement of child behaviour and education at home can best be achieved when parents and children participate in community school activities related to those objectives. Chapter 6 showed that most families participated in at least one of the community school activities during the three years of this study. Approximately 70% participated in at least one community school activity per school year. The percentages of families that participated in recreational, educational or parental activities run from 24% to 41% per school year. Most of the percentages of participation in community school activities found in this study correspond to the ones found by Walrecht (2001) concerning the entire population of the Groningen community schools included in this study.

The maximum number of activities families participated in is nine, during three years time. All of the community schools offered far more than nine activities during this period, however. Several reasons could explain this discrepancy between the number of activities organised and the number of activities families in this study participated in. A first reason is that not all activities are suitable for children of all ages; for example, many recreational activities are meant for children older than six. Besides, only few parents feel that they need support in educating their children. So the educational activities
offered do not apply to the situation of all families. Still another reason is that most activities only allow a limited number of participants. Not all parents or children interested in a certain activity can in fact participate. However, participation in one activity in three years time, or even per school year, seems insufficient to establish a decrease of child behaviour problems and an improvement of education at home, especially when it concerns participation in other activities than the educational ones. To achieve considerable changes in child behaviour and education at home, more families should participate in more community school activities.

Another community school aspect concerns the provision of (health) care services. The extent to which those institutions were used did not change very much during this study. This suggests that community schools did not succeed in making (health) care institutions easily accessible. An alternative explanation could very well be that, despite the improved accessibility, parents just do not feel the need to consult these institutions.

The results of this study showed that few differences exist between families with a different socio-economic or ethnic background concerning participation in community school activities. The only difference found concerns the participation of ethnic minorities in educational activities. They participated significantly more in those activities than families with a low socio-economic status in 1998 and than both families with a low and a middle or high socio-economic status in 1999. This might be the case because families from ethnic minority groups are often actively approached by community school workers to participate in activities like early educational compensatory programmes and courses child rearing.

Furthermore, we did not find any differences concerning the kind nor the number of (health) care institutions visited by families with a different socio-economic or ethnic status, even though literature (Chang, 1993; Dupper & Poertner, 1997) states that families with a low socio-economic status often do not adequately use those services. This could mean that both families with a low and a middle or high socio-economic status do not adequately use (health) care services, or, on the contrary, that both use those services adequately. An alternative explanation could be that families with a low socio-economic status have more problems that need the help of services than families with a middle- or high socio-economic status do, in which case families with a low socio-economic status should make more use of the services available. The results in this study, however, showed little differences between the behavioural problems of children with a different socio-economic or ethnic status and between the educational behaviour of parents with a different socio-economic or ethnic status. The next sections will further discuss the results concerning child behaviour and education at home.
8.3.3 Child behaviour problems

Child behaviour according to parents
One of the Groningen community school objectives is to decrease child behaviour problems. To see whether this objective has been achieved, we first assessed the actual situation of child behaviour. Parents' assessments of child behaviour showed few behavioural problems, on average. This could have been expected, however, since the families that participated in this study were not selected from a clinical group of families. In fact, the CBCL problem scores of the families in this study are comparable to the ones of the normgroup used by Verhulst, van der Ende and Koot (1996).

Secondly, we checked whether child behaviour problems decreased between the measurements of this study. Notable in this respect is the decrease of aggressive behaviour between 1998 and 2000. Subsequently, the broad band scale externalising showed a decrease of problems. Furthermore, also the number of children with borderline and clinical aggressive or externalising problems diminished between 1998 and 2000. However, research by Verhulst, van der Ende and Koot (1996) also shows fewer aggressive and externalising problems for older children than for younger children. The decrease of aggressive and externalising problems found in this study might thus be caused by the fact that children are two years older in the final measurement than in the first measurement.

Next to the CBCL, which focuses on rather serious child behaviour problems, we used the HIB to obtain information about normal behavioural problems. These normal behavioural problems decreased between the measurements. Notable is the decrease of safety problems. Apparently, children learnt to decide for themselves what is safe to do and what is not. The age of the children might play a part in this change, but educational activities like courses in child rearing and early educational compensatory programmes also focus on safety issues.

Only few differences were found between the behaviour of children with a different socio-economic or ethnic status, even though it was expected that children with a lower socio-economic status would have more behavioural problems than children with a middle or high socio-economic status (Verhulst, van der Ende & Koot, 1996). The fact that few differences related to socio-economic or ethnic status were found in this study, might have to do with the relatively small research group. An alternative explanation can be found in the fact that families with a middle or high socio-economic status were over-represented in this study. More differences were found with concern to neighbourhood, especially between Hoogkerk and Oosterpark. Hoogkerk has lower problem scores than Oosterpark, while Oosterpark organised more
community school activities than Hoogkerk. This difference in child behaviour problems can not be explained by differences in socio-economic or ethnic status, since the differences between neighbourhoods were corrected for differences in socio-economic status of the participants in this study.

Child behaviour according to teachers
The results of teachers' assessments of child behaviour showed that teachers experience moderate problems concerning the socio-emotional behaviour of their children. The mean pupil's profile scores in this study are more or less comparable to the ones found by Driessen et al (1998) with the same instrument. With concern to children's self-confidence, attitude towards schoolwork and school pleasure, teachers experience significantly more problems than parents. This might be caused by the fact that those kinds of behaviour are less important at home than at school (see also van Liere, 1990). The problems concerning self-confidence, attitude towards schoolwork and school pleasure, however, decreased between 1998 and 2000, according to teachers. The decrease of self-confidence problems might be connected to the fact that children had to get used to school in 1998, and feel more certain in the 2000 measurement. The subscale special educational measurements showed an increase, which seems logical because of the before mentioned remove from kindergarten to first grade. Notable is the decrease of problems concerning attitude towards schoolwork, since the pupils were in kindergarten in 1998 and 1999 and in first grade in 2000. Attitude towards schoolwork seems to be more important in first grade than in kindergarten, because of which we assumed this subscale would show an increase between measurements.

With concern to the clinical and borderline scores, the increase of pupils with clinical problems in 2000 is notable. Obviously, more children have more severe problems in 2000 than in 1998, even though most mean subscale scores do not increase significantly. Most likely, some of those increases are related to the removal from kindergarten to first grade.

Several differential effects in teachers' assessments were found for socio-economic or ethnic status. In general, pupils with a low socio-economic status have higher problem scores than pupils with a middle or high socio-economic status. In this respect the decrease of special educational measurements for pupils with a low socio-economic status between 1999 and 2000 is rather striking. Pupils with a low socio-economic status have significantly higher problem scores than pupils from ethnic minority groups and pupils with a middle or high socio-economic status, and still there is a decrease in measures taken for pupils with a low socio-economic status, while the measurements taken for the other pupils increased.
With concern to neighbourhood quite some differences were found. As was the case in the parent measurements, Hoogkerk often has the lowest problem scores, and Oosterpark scores relatively high. Unlike the parents' scores, however, Vinkhuizen also has relatively high scores, and SPT has relatively low problem scores in teachers' assessments. On top of that, SPT showed decreases of several problems between measurements.

Relation with participation

The sections above discussed child behaviour as assessed by parents and by teachers. On average the children in this study do not have severe behavioural problems. This could for example have been caused by the fact that the research population has not been derived from a clinical group. Furthermore the age of the children in this study could also play a part in explaining some of the results. Obviously the neighbourhoods in this study are not extremely problematic with regard to the behaviour of young children, on average. However, some of the children do suffer from more severe problems, and could therefore cause trouble in the neighbourhood. Furthermore, the four neighbourhoods in this study are not equal concerning the extent to which child behaviour problems exits. Especially Oosterpark has to deal with relatively many child behaviour problems. This section will go into the relation between child behaviour and the community school.

The low average problem scores and the decreases of problem behaviour found in this study might be related to the activities organised by community schools. However, we only found few differences between families who did and families who did not participate in community school activities. Furthermore, only few significant correlations between participation in community school activities and changes in child behaviour were found, and those correlations are not stable. Negative as well as positive correlations have been found for participation in educational and recreational activities and child behaviour problems. Normally, we would expect that participation in activities could lead to a decrease of behavioural problems (negative correlations), depending on the intensity and quality of the activities, the seriousness of the behavioural problem and the child's or parent's capability to change. However, positive correlations are not necessarily illogical. Participation in educational activities can make parents conscious of certain problems, which could lead to an increase of problem behaviour as assessed by parents. Furthermore, parents and/or children who experience an increase of problematic child behaviour might participate more in educational activities than others, because they hope to learn how to deal with those problems.

The correlations mentioned above concern the participation in separate activities. Even if families participate in more than one activity, it is hard to study whether a combined effect exists of this number of activities.
Community schools, however, expect that co-operation between institutions, the joint offering of activities and the increased attention for child behaviour problems might lead to a decrease of those problems. The decreases found in this study might partly be caused by these co-operation effects. Because of the few correlations, and the reasons mentioned in section 8.3.1, it remains questionable, however, to what extent community schools did indeed cause the decrease in child behavioural problems. Furthermore, several other factors and policies that are active in those neighbourhoods could also be related to child behaviour, such as a policy for academic achievement of pupils with a low socio-economic status and pupils from ethnic minority groups that is used separate from the community school policy (Gemeente Groningen, 1999).

8.3.4 Education at home
The results presented in chapter 6 made clear that most parents in this study educationally stimulate their children rather much. Furthermore, parents' stimulation of their children improved between the measurements and the number of families with clinical or borderline problems concerning education at home showed a decrease. Differential effects with concern to socio-economic or ethnic status were found for the subscale learning materials. Families with a middle and high socio-economic status own more learning materials than other families. A possible reason might be that families with a middle and high socio-economic status have more money to spend on these kinds of materials. However, the difference no longer exists in the 2000 measurement. Another reason for the initial difference could be that parents with a middle and high socio-economic status are higher educated and provide their children with learning materials in an earlier phase than parents with a low socio-economic status do.

The improvement of education at home that was found in this study could partly be associated with the educational activities organised by community schools. Some of the child rearing courses and early educational compensatory programmes explicitly focus on aspects measured by the HOME-inventory. However, we did not find many significant correlations between participation in activities and the HOME subscales. Almost all significant correlations were positive, however, which means that an increase of participation in community school activities is associated with an improvement of education at home. One possible reason for this association is that parents that participate in community school activities learn how to adequately stimulate their children. On the other hand, parents who take the initiative to participate in community school activities, might also take more initiative in stimulating their children.
8.4 Limitations of this study

The sections above discussed the results found in this study. However, the way this study was conducted could also have (partly) influenced the results. This section will discuss the limitations concerning the design of this study, the instruments and the research group the results are based on.

Research design

In this study, we compared families who did and families who did not participate in community school activities. We only found few differences concerning child behaviour and education at home between families who participated in a different number of activities. The design of this study could have been improved by using a control group (see Cook & Campbell, 1979). The use of a control group makes it easier to attribute changes in child behaviour and education at home to community schools. A control group, however, should be comparable to the population in the four neighbourhoods included in this study. Besides, it should concern neighbourhoods without a community school. It is difficult to find such a control group in the city of Groningen, since all comparable neighbourhoods develop community schools of their own. The same holds for other Dutch cities, since the 1998 local educational priority policy act obliges the biggest Dutch cities (over 100,000 inhabitants) to develop community-based initiatives. This makes neighbourhoods in other Dutch cities unfit to serve as a control group. In addition, the population of the neighbourhoods in this study is difficult to compare to populations in other Dutch neighbourhoods. In comparison to other comparable or bigger Dutch cities, the neighbourhoods in this study have relatively many families with a low socio-economic status and relatively few inhabitants from ethnic minority groups. Furthermore, some more practical reasons for not using a control group existed. Some cities that could have functioned as a control group were not prepared to participate in this study. Besides, the study would have become too extensive to be carried out in the available amount of time, and it would have exceeded the financial means available.

Instruments

In this study we used questionnaires to measure child behaviour and education at home. We chose to use questionnaires because we were interested in parents' and teachers' assessment of child behaviour, since, as has been mentioned in chapter 3, child behaviour becomes problematic if others (e.g. parents or teachers) perceive it as problematic. The CBCL and the pupil's profile are often used to measure parents' and teachers' assessment of child behaviour respectively, and are both considered to be
valid as well as reliable. The HIB is only used in particular situations, and although it might have validity, it is not very reliable.

We did not interview children themselves, because the children in this study were too young to measure their behaviour reliably through questionnaires. Observations could have been used to measure child behaviour. However, observations are time consuming, they only give information about a particular moment, and the observer's presence could very well influence the child's behaviour.

The same holds for the measurement of education at home. We asked parents whether they stimulated their children with concern to several aspects, with use of the HOME-inventory. It is almost impossible to reliably observe parental educational behaviour, because such an observation would create an artificial situation in which parents most likely would show socially desirable behaviour. On the other hand, parents could as well give social desirable answers to the items asked in this study.

The CBCL as well as the HOME-inventory were originally developed in the United States and tested on American children accordingly. One could wonder to what extent the results found concerning the instruments are also applicable in the Netherlands. Both instruments have been used in quite some Dutch studies, however. Furthermore, the CBCL is validated for a Dutch population by Verhulst, van der Ende and Koot (1996), the HOME-inventory by Vedder and Eldering (1996).

When Groningen community schools just started, one of the main objectives was to decrease child behaviour problems. After several years of community school development it still is, but the focus slightly changed from severe child behaviour problems that needed specific attention to normal behavioural problems. The activities organised by Groningen community schools therefore seem to be better connected with normal behavioural problems than with more severe child behaviour problems. The CBCL mostly focuses on this last category of problem behaviour, however. Concluding by hindsight, this instrument might focus too much on severe child behaviour problems to be properly used in a study concerning the influence of Groningen community schools on child behaviour.

Research group
This study included 74 families that were annually interviewed. Those 74 families make up 22% of the total number of families approached for this study, and an even smaller part of the total number of Groningen community school children. Concerning socio-economic or ethnic status, families with a middle or high socio-economic status are over-represented. With concern to neighbourhood, relatively more families from Hoogkerk and Vinkhuizen participated in this study than families from SPT and Oosterpark. Thus, the
research group used in this study is not entirely representative for the entire population of the neighbourhoods involved, which makes it difficult to generalise the research results beyond the families that participated in this study. Furthermore, because of the relatively small number of 74 families, the number of families per group after division into socio-economic or ethnic status or neighbourhood is very small in some occasions. Therefore, we did not divide families into socio-economic groups per neighbourhood.

Teachers of all primary schools in the four Groningen community school neighbourhoods participated in this study. Not all pupils were included in each measurement, however. Of the pupils that were assessed by their teachers, 180 were included in all three measurements. Those 180 pupils are comparable to all pupils assessed by teachers with concern to socio-economic and ethnic status and neighbourhood.

8.5 Implications
The former sections of this chapter discussed the research results and the limitations of this study. Several implications can be derived from this discussion and those limitations. It concerns implications for further research (8.5.1) as well as implications for Groningen community schools (8.5.2).

8.5.1 Implications for future research
In this thesis we studied the influence of community schools on child behaviour and education at home. The community schools included in this study only recently started, which makes it difficult to assess to what extent the objectives have already been achieved. Furthermore, several limitations of this study (see section 8.4) made it difficult to draw meaningful conclusions with concern to community schools' influence on behaviour and education. This section will indicate the implications for future research in this field.

Firstly, we only gave a rough description of the activities organised by Groningen community schools. We based this description on the annual reports and planning documents produced by the Groningen community schools. Future research should more specifically focus on the contents of the activities involved. This could be done by interviewing the community school professionals responsible for the actual organisation of the activities, and by studying the materials used during the activities. By studying the community school activities in this manner, it might become easier to make a connection between the community school activities and objectives. It furthermore becomes clearer what could be expected from which activities. Rankings of activities could be made with concern to activities' estimated contribution to the community school objectives. These rankings could be included in the data analyses.
Besides, we only included separate activities in this study. We did not investigate the co-operation between the participating institutions, nor the effect of offering a rather large number of activities at the same time and by the same organisation (i.e. the community school). As has been mentioned in chapter 5, institutions’ co-operation and joint offer of activities might have an effect on behaviour and education. Future research should investigate whether this is indeed the case.

The results of this study showed that most families do not suffer from severe child behaviour problems or problems concerning education at home. It is worth investigating to what extent child behaviour problems and educational problems do exist in community school neighbourhoods, since improvement of education and child behaviour is included in the objectives of most community schools, in Groningen as well as other cities. To get a clear insight into child behaviour and education at home over a longer period of time, studies into these aspects should be longitudinal. Besides, longitudinal studies provide information about children at a younger as well as an older age, which makes it easier to decide whether possible changes are related to maturity of the child (Neale and Liebert, 1986).

As has been mentioned above, Groningen community schools are in an early stage, and are still developing. A follow-up study could give more insight into community schools’ influence on child behaviour and education at home. More attention should then be paid to the contents of the activities involved, and to the combination of activities. In future research, however, it will remain difficult to find a suitable control group in studies concerning community schools. To be able to attribute possible improvements of child behaviour and education at home, matching procedures might be used (Cook & Campbell, 1979).

Another issue concerns the questionnaires we used. In future research, a more reliable instrument than the HIB to measure normal behavioural problems should be developed. Furthermore, it should be checked to what extent the instruments used fit the community school objectives, assuming that those objectives will be specified more clearly in the near future. Finally, research results could be better interpreted when a representative research group is used. The research group should furthermore be large enough to be divided into several neighbourhood groups as well as socio-economic or ethnic groups. Future research should thus try to make use of a bigger, more representative research group.

**8.5.2 Implications for Groningen community schools**

Groningen community schools aim for several objectives related to child behaviour and education at home. Chapter 5 showed that those objectives remain rather vague, which makes it hard to decide whether the objectives
have been reached and which activities could best fit the objectives. Besides, it is not always clear to what extent the objectives actually reflect the needs of the neighbourhood involved. Groningen Community schools should therefore reconsider the objectives that have been formulated up to now. Some of the objectives might have to be revised, others should be more accurately specified. Subsequently, it should be examined to what extent the community school activities fit the revised objectives, and whether other activities should be included in the community school programme. If, for example, Groningen community schools decide that they want to further decrease child behaviour problems and improve problematic situations regarding education at home, they should offer specific long-term behavioural or educational programmes, because those programmes could lead to a stable change of child behaviour or education at home. As has been mentioned before, whether or not Groningen community schools should indeed offer those programmes depends on whether these community schools choose to focus on the entire population in a neighbourhood, or specifically on those children and families with severe problems.

When specifying the community school objectives, community schools could decide to specify different objectives for different target groups. In most cases those target groups will concern families with a low socio-economic status, families from ethnic minority groups or families with specific problems related to child behaviour and education at home. The results of the parent interviews in this study did not show many differences for families with a different socio-economic or ethnic status. So before formulating specific objectives for specific target groups, community schools should find out what those target groups really need, en which problems exist with concern to those target groups.

As has been mentioned before, community schools should act upon the needs of the community involved. However, Groningen community schools sometimes seem to offer activities without verifying whether community members need or want those activities. Research could be used to find out which activities community members need and want to participate in. As long as community schools do not know those needs, it is questionable to what extent community schools are proper reflections of their neighbourhoods. The same holds for the institutions that co-operate within community schools. Since most of the institutions mentioned in chapter 5 participate in all four community schools in this study, one could wonder whether the community schools are actually representative for the neighbourhood. Per neighbourhood, Groningen community schools should check whether the participating institutions reflect the neighbourhood, or know enough of the neighbourhood to handle in the best interest of that
neighbourhood. A possible way to be informed about the neighbourhood's needs is to actively involve parents in the community school development.

For the community schools to reach their objectives, parents should not only be involved in the community school's development, they should also participate in community school activities. The results of this study showed that most families participated in at least one community school activity. However, it seems unrealistic to expect that participation in one or two community school activities could lead to an improvement of child behaviour or education at home. Community schools should therefore adequately inform families about the activities that are organised, in such a way that families find these activities attractive enough to participate (Kruiter, 2001). However, community schools should also organise a sufficient number of activities. Up to now, the number of people that can participate in an activity often is limited, or linked to a certain age group. In reality, Groningen community schools do not organise activities for all inhabitants of the neighbourhood, yet. The organisation of activities for all inhabitants might be too complicated to be realised in this phase of the Groningen community school development. However, to improve child behaviour and education at home, it is important that more families get the opportunity to participate in more activities than is the case at present. Furthermore, when activities are organised for specific target groups, community schools should make sure that members of those target groups do in fact participate, instead of mainly other community members. When others than target group members join activities meant for specific groups, possible differences between the target groups and others will only become bigger.

This study focused on those aspects of community schools that are related to child behaviour and education at home. The results made clear that, on average, most families do not experience severe problems concerning those issues. However, some families do suffer from problems that might be solved by community schools. This could concern rather severe problems, as well as normal problems. Community schools might want to make an inventory of the number of families that might be helped by specific community school activities, and then decide which problems could in fact be solved by this specific community school. Future research might give insight into the extent to which these problems have indeed been diminished.