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Impact of family process and status variables on student academic achievement

Jennifer L. Meyer

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Abstract

Numerous studies have underscored the strong contributions families make to their children's academic achievement (e.g., Christenson & Buerkle, 1999; Conoley, 1987; Henderson & Berla, 1994). The purpose of the study was to examine the influence of parental involvement and the relationship between family-process and status variables and their impact on student academic achievement. Results indicated when parents and schools establish collaborations and work in conjunction to encourage learning, student academic achievement is enhanced. Furthermore, non-cognitive behavior such as attitudes about school, maturation, self-concept, and behavior are enhanced when parents/families are more involved. Other benefits of close family and school collaboration include increased student attendance, improved discipline practices, and lower dropout, delinquency, and teen pregnancy rates.

IMPACT OF FAMILY PROCESS AND STATUS VARIABLES ON STUDENT

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

An Abstract of a Master's Paper

Submitted

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

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ABSTRACT

Numerous studies have underscored the strong contributions families make to their children's academic achievement (e.g., Christenson & Buerkle, 1999; Conoley, 1987; Henderson & Berla, 1994). The purpose of the study was to examine the influence of parental involvement and the relationship between family-process and status variables and their impact on student academic achievement. Results indicated when parents and schools establish collaborations and work in conjunction to encourage learning, student academic achievement is enhanced. Furthermore, non-cognitive behavior such as attitudes about school, maturation, self-concept, and behavior are enhanced when parents/families are more involved. Other benefits of close family and school collaboration include increased student attendance, improved discipline practices, and lower dropout, delinquency, and teen pregnancy rates.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Numerous studies have underscored the strong contributions families make to
their children's academic achievement (e.g., Christenson & Buerkle, 1999; Conoley,
1987; Henderson & Berla, 1994). More specifically, research findings show that when
parents and schools establish collaborations and work in conjunction to encourage
learning, student academic achievement is enhanced (e.g., Carter & Wojtkiewicz, 2000;
Christenson & Conley, 1992; Comer, Haynes, Joyner, & Ben-Aive, 1996; Eccles &
Harold, 1996; Epstein, 1990; Griffith, 1996; Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994; Henderson,
1989; Henderson & Berla, 1994; Keith & Lichtman, 1994; Muller, 1998; Paulson, 1994;
Rich, 1988; Shumow, Vandell, & Kang, 1996; Swap, 1993; Trusty, 1999; Winters, 1993).
Yet, despite compelling findings, parents and school personnel have struggled to develop
and build partnerships (Ammon, Chrispeels, Safran, Dear, & Reyes, 1998; Christenson,
1995; Eccles & Harold, 1993; Kellaghan, Sloan, Alverez, & Bloom, 1993; Swap, 1993).
Many parents, all too often, are not involved in schools, and schools implement principles
and procedures based on assumptions about students and their families that may or may
not be accurate (Davies, 1988; Swap, 1993). Thus, parents and school personnel
repeatedly fall short of accomplishing the jointly desired goal of academic success for
children. The central purpose of this paper is two-fold: (a) examine the influence of
parental involvement; and (b) examine the relationship between family-process and status
variables and student academic achievement.

<u>Statement of the Problem</u>

Traditionally, parental involvement only included the "traditional family" and consisted of activities that were unidirectional in nature (Swap, 1993). Today, the definition of parental involvement has changed from a "deficit view" of parents to an extended view that focuses on "shared responsibility" for learning (Christenson, Rounds, Gourney, 1992; Davies, 1991). Newer concepts focus on involving all families, recognizing diverse types of family involvement, and establishing mutual partnerships (Christenson et al., 1992; Ferhmann, Keith, & Reimer, 1987). Therefore, there has been a progression from the narrowly defined notion of "parent involvement" into a broader conception of "family involvement," the latter referring to all family members, including extended family. All members contribute to children's learning and school improvement; thus, families, not just children, warrant involvement in educational issues (Christenson & Conoley, 1992).

In addition, the roles and responsibilities of schools and parents have changed over the years. Historically, schools and homes were divergent entities; they had quite different functions (Epstein, 1986). Parents primarily socialized and cared for children, while school personnel taught children. School staff also prepared students for the transition from school into the work force or secondary education. According to Epstein (1986), school staff and parents were not aware that "learning occurs in the context of social relationships" (p. 30).

Today, schools, in and of themselves, fail to fulfill children's needs (Christenson et al., 1992). Although families and schools have a common goal, they find themselves

in disagreement recurrently. For the most part, schools these days lack associations with parents. Henderson (1987) noted that school personnel shun reaching out to parents. When interactions occur between parents and teachers, they are typically due to dissatisfaction, frustration, or anger on the part of parents or teachers (Henderson, 1987). The power struggle between parents and schools is "wasteful of energy, destructive of positive motivation, and ineffective in supporting children's growth" (Swapp, 1993. p. 21).

Significance of the Problem

The rapidly changing demographics of American society necessitate collaboration between home and school. The roles and definitions of families and school have drastically changed. For example, from 1996 to 1998, Iowa ranked the highest out of all 50 states (83.2 %) in the average percent of school aged children identified with both parents working outside the home (Iowa Department of Education, 1999). Moreover, the number of single parent families has also increased during this period (Iowa Department of Education, 1999). Societal issues are increasingly complex; growing numbers of children enter the school setting not ready to learn, and, thus, their academic success is adversely affected. Societal concerns are multifaceted; therefore, it is critical that researchers examine family-process and status variables and their impact on student academic success (Swap, 1993).

Further, children learn, mature, and develop both at home and at school (Christenson et al., 1992). A clear-cut boundary between home and school does not exist. Educating students is neither the sole responsibility of the teacher nor the school (Iowa

Department of Education, 1999). In the words of Fantini (1983), "An educative community is produced when learning environments of the home, school, and community are linked together and carefully coordinated to serve the developmental needs of individuals" (p. 45).

Collaborative relationships between home and school result in positive consequences for students, families, and schools alike. For example, students succeed academically, parents/families are more involved, and schools have increased student attendance, improved discipline practices, and lowered dropout, delinquency, and teen pregnancy rates (Rutherford & Billig, 1995). In 1994, United States Secretary of Education, Richard Riley, stated, "Thirty years of research tells us that the starting point of putting children on the road to excellence is parental involvement in their children's education" (United States Department Of Education, 1994). Educational experts concur that parental involvement in helping children succeed academically in school is critical (e.g., Christenson, 1995; Christenson et al., 1992; Conoley, 1987; Epstein, 1988; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995; Jones, White, Benson, & Aeby, 1995). The establishment of relationships among parents, schools, and communities make certain that this will come about; students can succeed academically when partnerships are developed.

Definition of Terms

This study uses several commonly acknowledged terms within the fields of school psychology and education. The following definitions may provide clarity and comprehension of how these terms are used in this paper.

Family-Status Variables

Family-status variables depict and characterize families. Examples of family-status variables include family configuration, socioeconomic status, employment of the mother, and educational status of parents (Christenson & Conoley, 1992).

Family-Process Variables

Family-process variables refer to processes families engage in to enhance or inhibit their children's learning. Examples of family-process variables include parental expectations, parental attributions, and style of parenting (Christenson & Conoley, 1992).

Home-School Collaboration

Home-school collaboration refers to the relationship between the school and the home and how they work jointly to promote the social and academic growth of children. The two systems work in conjunction so that students can achieve more than either system could accomplish independently (Christenson et al., 1992).

Parents and Families

Parents and families will be used synonymously throughout this paper. Parent refers to the primary care giver or individual in the child's home who serves as the school contact and partner.

Parental Involvement

Parental involvement is a reciprocal relationship between parents and school personnel in which parents participate in the educational process at home and/or in school (Chavkin & Williams, 1985). The term parental involvement refers to varying types of involvement for parents, such as providing information about their child, volunteering at

school, reading aloud to their child, communicating with their child, and advocating for their child.

Schooling

Schooling is the educational development a student engages in which results in academic learning.

Purpose and Organization of This Paper

This study will examine the influence of parental involvement and family-school collaboration on student academic success, as well as family characteristics of successful students. More specifically, the intent of this paper is to identify the relationship between family-status and process variables and their impact on student academic achievement.

In addition to this chapter, are two other chapters. Chapter Two presents a review of the literature on family involvement. Chapter Three provides the conclusion and implications of this study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter provides a review of the related literature on family involvement. The chapter includes a review of related literature in the following areas: (a) impact of parental involvement, (b) the relationship between family process and status variables and student academic achievement, and (c) family characteristics of successful students.

Impact of Family Involvement

The impact of family involvement has been the subject of research for over thirty years (United States Department of Education, 1994). This research has shown that collaborative home-school partnerships are advantageous for students (Ammon et al., 1998; Christenson et al., 1992; Henderson & Berla, 1994). Family involvement has evolved as a primary educational goal because of solid evidence that family contributions positively impact student achievement and school quality. "The evidence is now beyond dispute: when schools and families work together to support learning, children will succeed not just in school, but also throughout life" (Henderson & Berla, 1994, p. 1).

Several reports have recognized family roles in shaping children's cognitive growth and achievement. Parental involvement, in spite of the type of involvement, enhances students' levels of achievement (Henderson, 1981; Moles, 1982; Zerchykov, 1984). According to Henderson (1987), "The form of parental involvement does not seem to be as important as that it is reasonably well-planned, comprehensive, and long-lasting" (p. 2).

Parental involvement is a noteworthy indicator of the academic achievement of children. Becher (1984) found "substantial evidence indicating that children have significantly increased their academic achievement and cognitive development" as a result of parental involvement (p. 19). Henderson's (1987) analysis of 49 studies on home-school participation identified the following effects of family participation in education: (a) the family provides the primary educational environment; (b) parental involvement in their child's formal education improves student achievement; (c) parental involvement is most effective when it is comprehensive, long lasting, and well-planned; (d) the benefits of parental involvement are not confined to early childhood or the elementary level – there are strong effects from involved parents continuously throughout high school; (e) parental involvement is needed beyond the home environment; (f) children from low-income and minority families have the most to gain when schools involve parents; (g) the school and the home interconnect with each other and with the world at large. To ensure the quality of schools as institutions serving the community, parents must be involved in all levels of the school.

Similarly, Christenson et al. (1992) evaluated literature reviews by Henderson (1989), Kagan (1984), and Sattes (1985) and found that when parents are actively involved with their children, their children benefit in many ways. For example, students have higher grades, test scores, and long-term academic achievement. Student achievement is greater with meaningful and higher levels of involvement. In addition, achievement gains are most significant and long lasting when parental involvement begins at an early age. There is an improvement in non-cognitive behavior such as

student attendance, attitudes about school, maturation, self-concept, and behavior. Thus, it is critical that educators, parents, and students work together so students can achieve greater academic growth and non-cognitive behavior.

These positive effects of parental involvement can be prioritized and analyzed at a theoretical level. The central theoretical system of parental involvement in schools was developed by Epstein (1988). Initially, she theorized five different types of involvement, with basic needs at the initial levels and higher-order needs at the higher levels. Higher levels of parental involvement cannot be met if the lower needs are not sufficiently fulfilled. Epstein added a sixth type of parental involvement after conducting additional research focusing on relationships between home and school. The six types of involvement that Epstein delineated are discussed below.

Type 1: The basic obligations of parents

The basic obligations of parents are associated with childrearing. They include providing for the child's health and safety, disciplining, preparing the child for school, ensuring home conditions support school learning (e.g., ensuring attendance), and identifying medical or social services in the community as needed (Cervone & O'Leary, 1982; Epstein, 1992).

Type 2: The basic obligations of schools

The basic obligations of schools refers to communication between the school and the home. Illustrations of communication include sharing information regarding the school's program and the student's progress. Contact can be made via standardized forms of communication (e.g., report cards, newsletters, notices, open-house programs),

as well as through individualized forms (e.g., notes, telephone calls, e-mail messages, parent-teacher conferences). Parents should be encouraged to provide information that may assist the teacher in better understanding the child (e.g., child's learning style, special strengths, crises) (Epstein, 1992; Hester, 1989).

Type 3: Parental involvement in school

Parents are physically present in the schools in type three. They may be volunteering in tutorial programs, assisting as library aides, managing sporting events or other activities for fund-raising, or attending workshops and seminars (Cervone & O'Leary, 1982; Epstein, 1992; Hester, 1989).

Type 4: Parental involvement in learning activities at home

Parental involvement in learning activities at home refers to parent participation in schoolwork the child may bring home or in supplementary activities, such as having the child read-aloud. It may involve answering questions, quizzing a child for an upcoming test, or assisting a child with an activity (Cervone & O'Leary, 1982; Epstein, 1992; Williams & Chavkin, 1989).

Type 5: Parental involvement in decision-making, governance, and advocacy

Parental involvement in decision-making, governance, and advocacy involves parental leadership in Chapter 1 programs, PTA/PTO organizations, advisory councils, and policy/governance groups (Ammon et al., 1998; Epstein, 1992; Hester, 1989; Williams & Chavkin, 1989; Winton, 2000).

Type 6: Collaboration and exchange with community organizations

Partnerships between community organizations (e.g., health, welfare, social) and schools meet the comprehensive needs of children (Kagan, 1989). For example, a reform initiative by the business community and state legislature in Chicago resulted in the local community council, which is primarily composed of parents, governing the schools (Wallace Jr., 1996). The council has the authority to hire the principal, require performance contracts, prepare school budgets, and form and employ policies and practices granting parents more direct involvement in their children's education (Wallace Jr., 1996). Illustrations of linkages between school and the community that help parents to assist their children, as well as themselves, include: GED classes, English-as-a-Second-Language classes, and group trips to cultural activities (Epstein, 1992; Kagan, 1989). Epstein (1992) states that not all types of involvement will result in immediate achievement gains for all students. Home-school partnerships, however, are the most successful.

Family-Status and Process Variables

Research specifies the examination of parental involvement should center on the link among family-status variables (characteristics of families such as SES, family configuration, employment of the mother, parental levels of education) and family-process variables (assessments of the home atmosphere including parental expectations, parental attributions, and styles of parenting) as well as student achievement levels. Family-process variables explain the responsibilities and purposes of parental involvement. Research indicates family-process variables are better predictors of student

scholastic ability in comparison to family-status variables (Christenson et al., 1992; Dornbush & Wood, 1989; Kelleghan, et al., 1993; Walberg, 1984); family-process variables predict up to 60 % of student variance in academic achievement, whereas family-status variables predict up to 25 % of student discrepancy in academic achievement (Kelleghan et al., 1993). Yet, others propose, family-status and process variables work in conjunction with or are mediated by each other (Milne, 1989). Thus, this literature review will investigate family-status and process factors and their relationship and impact on student academic success.

<div align="center">Family-Status Variables</div>

Status variables that are significant indicators of student attainment will be investigated. These family background status variables include: (a) socioeconomic status, (b) family configuration, (c) educational status of parents, and (d) employment of the mother.

Social Economic Status

Social economic status (SES) is the most commonly researched family-status variable (Becher, 1984). Becher (1984) noted SES is extensively examined because time and again it reflects student attainment of higher level education. Students raised in higher SES environments tend to acquire more academic degrees, as well as advanced schooling (Scott-Jones, 1984; Stevenson & Baker, 1987). In particular, students from higher SES homes are found to be 2.5 times more likely to attend college, 6 times more likely to graduate from college, and 9 times more likely to obtain graduate degrees and/or professional training than students from lower SES backgrounds (Baker & Stevenson,

1986). Laureau (1987) proposed students from higher SES quarters have a greater tendency to enter college and graduate from college because their parents have access to more resources. Thereby, the parents are able and more apt to become involved in their child's learning. Thus, students' knowledge is enhanced.

Approximately 18 % of children under the age of five who live in Iowa are below the poverty level; 27 % are eligible for free and reduced meals (U. S. Census Bureau, 1993). Social economic status can be investigated by varying means. Family characteristics such as mother's education, father's education, family income, father's occupational status, and number of major possessions are indicators of a family's SES (Henderson & Berla, 1994). Eagle (1989) concurred the above variables are indicators of a family's SES; students' educational attainment is associated with these five indicators.

Students from families of higher SES tend to have higher achievement rates (Biblarz & Gottainer, 2000; Laureau, 1987; Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler, & Brissie, 1987; Sattes, 1985). In fact, Kellaghan and colleagues (1993) found SES to be predicative of one-fourth of the variance in student achievement levels. Achievement gains for low-income children are more variable than academic improvement for high-income children (Cochran, 1987; Comer, 1980). However, SES is of minimal value without an evaluation of other potential status differences (Scott-Jones, 1987). For example, Phillips, Smith and Witted (1985) have found parental involvement is associated with higher school performance, even when SES backgrounds have been controlled. Social economic status alone does not account for higher achievement.

Sattes (1985) proposed there may be underlying, more complex process variables accounting for the high performance of students from high SES backgrounds. For example, children from high SES homes are likely to be surrounded by various books. Their exposure to these texts may stimulate their intellectual development. On the other hand, children from low SES homes may not have access to books, and, thus, have limited experience with texts. Walberg (1984) contended that the curriculum of the home predicts academic learning twice as well as the SES of the family.

Regardless of SES, parents desire their children to be successful in school (Christenson, Hurley, Sheridan, & Fenstermacher, 1997; Epstein, 1991). Although lower income parents wish for their children to do well in school, they often lack understanding of school policies, procedures, expectations, and knowledge to assist their children in reaching academic achievement (Christenson, 1995). Clark (1983) found varying factors between high and low achievers from low-income homes. Clark (1983) found high-achieving students from low SES environments conversed with their parents regularly, received ample parental encouragement and support for academic endeavors, monitored how they spent their time, established well-defined boundaries, and interacted with others in a warm and nurturing manner. Marjoribanks (1988) conducted a ten-year study on youth from differing SES groups. Results from her research indicated a compassionate family learning atmosphere can reconcile SES differences in educational attainment (Marjoribanks, 1988).

According to Davies (1988), teachers often perceive low income status families as deficient. In addition, teachers conclude establishing relationships with parents

experiencing economic disadvantages are the most trying to develop (Moles, 1993).

Christenson and colleagues (1992) noted that efforts by teachers and schools to involve

parents are more influential on actual parental involvement than parents' income levels.

Parental involvement is advantageous to children's academic attainment; a positive

relationship between home and school is critical for students whose families are

disadvantaged (Comer & Haynes, 1991; Dauber & Epstein, 1993; McCaleb, 1994;

Moles, 1993).

The manner in which teachers and schools involve parents is a better indicator of

levels of parental involvement than parents' income levels (Epstein & Dauber, 1991).

Christenson and colleagues (1992) stated that "although families living with economic

stress may have more difficulty creating a positive home atmosphere, SES is not

considered the sole determinant of the child's home learning" (p. 181). According to

Scott-Jones (1984), SES may only become an influential predictor of student academic

achievement due to attitudes, behaviors, values, and living conditions related to families

of differing SES levels. Supplementary investigation of status variables, especially SES,

is clearly necessary.

Family Configuration

An extensive review of family configuration (i.e., traditional, single-parent,

blended) yields mixed findings. While some researchers propose a family's

configuration has little to no impact on student academic attainment, others state the

family configuration significantly influences student academic success. Researchers

(e.g., Ford, 1993; Marsh, 1990; Kinard & Reinherz, 1986) contend that the family form

does not significantly influence student academic achievement. In particular, Ford (1993) noted that family variables contribute little to student academic achievement. More specifically, Marsh stated (1990) family arrangement outcomes are minimal and significantly less universal than commonly implied. According to Kinard and Reinherz (1986), the disorder of the family design may account for lower levels of academic achievement, rather than the configuration of the family.

While Dornbusch, Ritter, and Steinberg (1991) contend that a positive relationship exists between grades, parents' education, and two-parent homes for European-American students, this relationship was not found among African-American students. Research findings also reveal varying results on standardized test scores and grade point averages as measurements of achievement. According to Kaye (1989), divorce negatively impacts students' standardized achievement scores, but divorce does not impinge on students' grades.

On the other hand, other researchers note that the family arrangement does impact students' academic attainment. For example, Marotz-Baden, Adams, Bueche, Munro, and Munro (1979) asserted that, "Variations in the nuclear family will produce undesirable variations in children's school success. Similarly, Lee (1993) stated that "the average student in a traditional family scores above average on any non-traditional family on standardized test scores, grades, and behaviors." In addition, Lee (1993) noted that, "Thus, it appears that the non-traditional family structure exerts a significantly negative influence on student performance and behavior" (p. 65). Further research by Emry, Hetherington, and Dilalla (1984), Evans, Kelley, Borgers, Dronkers, & Grullenberg

(1995), and Zill (1983) found that children in single-parent families did not score as high as peers in two-parent families on multiple academic indicators. In fact, males from divorced families repeatedly displayed larger academic discrepancies than females (Emry et al., 1984). Researchers propose the characteristics of single adults are not critical factors impacting students' academic success; rather, family stressors such as financial resources and a lack of time influence students' academic achievement (Belle, 1989; Cross, 1990; Gunnarsson & Cochran, 1990; Kamerman, 1985). These research findings clearly show that family arrangement does influence, directly or indirectly, students' academic success.

Educational Status of the Parents

Another family-status variable that is associated with student achievement and parental involvement is the educational status of the parents. Stevenson and Baker (1987) noted that, "The educational level of parents predicts more of the variance in student achievement than do other family background variables" (p. 1349). The differing levels of student achievement are primarily attributed to the fact that parents with higher levels of education are more involved in school events and rely upon complex thought processes and speech when interacting with their children (Stevenson & Baker, 1987).

The educational status of the parents is affiliated with the child's learning and disposition to function in school. More specifically, the mother's educational level influences the child. Schiaumburg and Chun (1986) concluded that the higher the mother's educational level, the more successful the child will be. Educated mothers tend to have obtained increased knowledge about the school their children attend. In all

likelihood, educated mothers will successfully advocate for their children at school if the need should arise. In addition, Baker and Stevenson (1986) found that educated mothers are more likely to supervise and guide their children's progress, as well as assist children in selecting a course of study in the direction of future university courses.

The educational level of the parents, and in particular, the educational level of the mother, becomes powerful in regards to children's academic attainment only when the parents are active participants in the education of their children. Parents who have received higher levels of education are more involved in their children's education at school and at home (Dauber & Epstein, 1993; Eccles & Harold, 1996). However, teacher and school practices involving parents are more predictive of parental involvement levels than are parents' educational levels (Christenson 1995; Christenson et al., 1992; Epstein & Dauber, 1991). When parents feel welcome in the school setting, their level of education is of minimal to no concern. Parental involvement, in and of itself, mediates the influence of parents' education on children's academic performance (Stevenson & Baker, 1987).

Many individuals have proposed parents' level of education impacts their decision to become involved in their children's education. However, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) pointed out that status variables, while not unimportant, do not clarify parents' decisions to become involved, their type of involvement, or the impact of the involvement on children. Furthermore, McCaleb's (1994) work on home-school collaboration showed that parents have much to offer children regardless of their educational status. McCaleb (1994) aptly crystallized her position on this issue by saying

to parents, "You graduated from the university of life and, as such, have much to teach to your children" (p. 34).

Working Mothers

The impact of the mother working outside the home on student achievement has also been examined because of the increase in the number of employed mothers with young children in the last twenty years (Bureau of Census, 1994). In 1970, 42 % of mothers with children 18 years of age and under were working (Waldman & Grover, 1972). In 1980, the number of mothers working had increased to 56.6 % (Hayghe, 1997). Single mothers working in 1970 and 1980, respectively, was 59 % and 62.7 % (Hayghe, 1997; Waldman & Grover, 1972). In Iowa, approximately 28% of children lived in a single-parent home (Lugaila, 1998). In 1990, there were 10 million female-headed households (no husband was present), which accounts for 20 % of all United States households, and there were only 2.4 million single male households (Johnston, 1990). Virtually all of the children raised by single parents are raised by females (Johnston, 1990), many of whom are employed.

The impact of maternal employment on children has been researched. The original hypothesis was that maternal employment would have a negative consequence on children, particularly on academic success. However, research has indicated that children from lower-class families profit when their mothers are working (Belsky, 1988, 1990; Harvey, 1999; Hoffman, 1961, 1974, 1979, 1980; Hoffman & Nye, 1974; Milne, 1989). Additional studies noted that girls from middle-class families benefit when their mothers are employed, but the effects of maternal employment have been shown to be

potentially harmful for boys in middle-class families (Hoffman, 1974, 1979, 1980; Hoffman & Nye, 1974).

The negative effects of living in a one-parent family with a working mother are mediated by other variables (Milne, Myers, Rosenthal, & Ginsburg, 1986). A review of literature demonstrates maternal employment may affect student achievement, but maternal employment operates in union or is mediated by other family background factors such as parental educational achievement or income (Milne et al., 1986). Other variables to take into account include family configuration, student age, and student sex.

Because of the assimilation of status variables, it is difficult to pinpoint the specific effect of maternal employment. Milne and colleagues (1986) contended that inconsistencies in results are due in part to inadequate use of appropriate control and intervening variables. Nonetheless, family background variables are major indicators of students' academic success. According to Irvine (1979), "Any negative effects of family status variables can be mitigated by parental involvement regardless of the child's family status variables" (p. 12). More research is needed particularly in the area of identifying clear forms of maternal participation in their children's academic arena and charting out courses of action that might impact children's academic attainment.

<div align="center">Family-Process Variables</div>

Researchers (e.g., Dornbusch & Wood, 1989) realized school personnel could do little to positively impact status variables of families and redirected their efforts to identifying explicit family-process variables and interventions associated with students' academic attainment. For example, Dornbusch, Ritter, Leiderman, Roberts, & Fraleigh

(1987) identified the following five family processes, which can be successfully used in conjunction with interventions to enhance student achievement: (a) parental expectations for achievement; (b) parental attributions about the child; (c) positive, affective parent-child relationships; (d) verbal interaction between the mother and child; and (e) discipline and control strategies. Christenson and colleagues (1992) recognized that changes in parental expectations and attributions, structures for learning, affective home environment, discipline, and type of parent involvement can result in improved student academic success. For purposes of this study, parental expectations, attributions, and styles of parenting will be examined in further detail.

Expectations and Attributions

Expectations refer to future aspirations or prospects (Christenson et al., 1992). Researchers have found parental aspirations for students' education significantly impacts students' academic success. For example, researchers (e.g., Reynolds, Mavrogenes, Hagemann, & Mezuczko, 1993; Singh, Bickley, Trivette, Keith, Keith, & Anderson, 1995; Trusty, 1999) have found 8th grade students' academic achievement, as well as academic success of low-income, minority children in 6th grade, was influenced by parental expectations (Singh, et al., 1995). Attributions, how an individual interprets and explains the causes of behaviors and events, provide cognitive insight as to why the behaviors/events occurred. Attributional styles are typically separated into four dichotomous classifications: internal or external, stable or unstable, controllable or uncontrollable, and global or specific (Earn & Sobol, 1990; Nelson & Cooper, 1997; Weiner, 1998). If an individual attributes actions to internal factors, such as effort and

ability, they believe they are personally responsible for the way the situation turned out (McGlun & Merrell, 1998). On the other hand, if an individual is external in nature, they think the environment or a situation is responsible for outcomes (McGlun & Merrell, 1998). Externalists believe reinforcements are outside of their control. Examples of external factors include fate, luck, other individuals, and the weather (Crick & Ladd, 1993; Glasglow, Dornbusch, Troyer, Skinberg, & Ritter, 1997).

Events are classified as stable when they are unfailing and expected and unstable when situations are inconsistent and unpredictable. Stable and unstable views can impact future expectations in similar situations. According to Weiner (1986), stability is most closely associated with future expectations for success. Successful attributions about successful situations are positive, while it is not advantageous to view attributions about unsuccessful situations as stable (Weiner, 1986).

A situation is described as controllable when a person has the ability to alter or impact the result and uncontrollable when the individual has little to no control over the ending. It is believed that uncontrollable events are predetermined. Efforts to change the circumstance will not be effective if the condition is uncontrollable. Children consider successful outcomes as more controllable than unsuccessful attempts (Earn & Sobol, 1990).

Global refers to a generalization of the outcome of the situation to multiple individuals. An individual with a global view of success would generalize positive results for other situations. Specific situations are unique to the individual in that

environment. The circumstances surrounding the situation are one-of-a-kind and could only occur again if the exact circumstances were replicated.

It is not known if parents' attributions affect children's achievement or whether children's academic attainment affects parents' attributions. Christenson and colleagues (1992) believe a reciprocal relationship exists between academic success and parents' attributions. Children's perceptions of high parental expectations are consistently correlated with academic achievement (Cohen, 1987; Gigliotti & Brookover, 1975; Marjoribanks, 1988; Okagake & French, 1998; Scott-Jones, 1984; Seginer, 1983, 1986; Thompson, Alexander, & Entwiste, 1988). Parents' expectations clearly have a direct effect on students' academic performances. In addition, parents' expectations may impact students' academic achievement indirectly; parents with high expectations may communicate with school staff and positively reinforce students' schoolwork and performances (Seginer, 1986).

The degree to which parents hold expectations and attributions and how they communicate these expectations and attributions vary as a function of ethnicity, SES, and gender. For example, American mothers tend to attribute achievement to children's abilities, which are internal and stable attributions (Stevenson & Lee, 1990). Seginer (1986) noted that SES is associated with mothers' expectations for their sons' academic performances, which in turn may influence their academic achievement. White-collar parents influence their children's attainment via expectations and modeling, while blue-collar parents influence their children's achievement solely through expectations (Cohen, 1987).

Mixed results have been found in regards to the relationship between gender and parental attributions. According to Dunton, McDevitt, and Hess (1988), Parsons, Adler, Karzala, and Meece (1982), and Tartar and Horenczyk (2000), mothers attribute their sons' success to ability and their daughters' success to effort, while they attribute their sons' failures to lack of effort and their daughters' failures to lack of ability. Holloway (1986) noted that mothers associated their daughters' success to their work habits and abilities and their sons' success to overall training and to teachers. Lack of effort and poor work habits were cited as reasons for their daughters' and sons' failures (Holloway, 1986). Research shows that although parental attributions may differ in regards to gender, realistic, high expectations for children's school performance is associated with positive academic performance.

Parents who not only exhibit high prospects but also have positive attitudes toward school influence the academic success of their children. Sattes (1985) found that positive parental attitudes were the most frequently associated with students' achievements, as the following passage illustrates.

> When parents show a strong interest in their children's schooling, they
> promote the development of attitudes that are key to achievement,
> attitudes that more a product of how the family interacts than of its social
> class or income. If schools treat parents as powerless or unimportant, or
> if they discourage parents from taking an interest, they promote the
> development of attitudes in parents and consequently their children, that
> inhibit achievement (Henderson, 1981, p. 10).

A healthy, strong home environment includes positive attitudes and high expectations toward schooling. Parents, who hold high expectations for their children, encourage viewpoints that are vital for academic success.

Parenting Styles

According to Aunola, Stattin, and Nurmi (2000), parenting styles consist of the following dimensions: "Demandingness refers to the extent to which parents show control, maturity demands, and supervision in their parenting; responsiveness refers to the extent to which parents show affective warmth, acceptance, and involvement" (p. 206). Based upon these two dimensions, parenting styles have been categorized into a four-field classification: authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and uninvolved (Baumrind, 1991; Durbin, Darling, Steinberg, & Brown, 1993; Shucksmith, Hendry, & Glenidinnng, 1995). Parents generally do not willingly disclose that they lack warmth, control, or involvement in their children's lives; thus, only authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive styles of parenting will be examined. There is a well-established association between parenting styles and children's academic achievement (Baumrind, 1991; Deater-Deckard, Dodge, Bates, & Petit, 1996; Eagle, 1989; Grolnick & Ryan, 1989; Hess & Holloway, 1984; Kochanska, Murray, & Coy, 1997; Lamborn, Mounts, Steinberg, & Dornbush, 1991; Larearu, 1987; Paulson, 1994).

Authoritative parents are supportive of their children and involved in their children's lives (Aunola et al., 2000; Lam, 1997; Paulson, 1994). They tend to encourage sovereignty and self-rule while also creating and enforcing firm regulations and boundaries. According to Steinberg (1990), three distinct features characterize authoritative parenting: (a) high degree of acceptance; (b) high degree of behavioral control; and (c) high degree of psychological autonomy. Authoritative parents tend to create a pleasant and cultivating environment while holding high expectations for their

children. A clear balance exists between demanding, replying, and scrutinizing in authoritative parenting (Baumrind, 1978). Baumrind (1991) described authoritative parenting as the most beneficial style.

The authoritative parenting style is positively associated with academic success (Hein & Lewko, 1994; Lam, 1997; Salmon, 1996; Shucksmith et al., 1995; Steinberg, Lamborn, Darling, Mounts, & Dornbusch, 1994; Steinberg, Mounts, Lamborn, & Dornbusch, 1991; Weiss & Schwartz, 1996). Academic achievement is directly related to the parental discipline and control of the authoritative style (Grolnick & Ryan, 1989; Marjoribanks, 1980). Children's academic achievement has been shown to be influenced by numerous family factors associated with authoritative parenting. For example, warm parent-child relationships of the authoritative style are related to academic achievement (Hess, Shipman, Brophy, & Bear, 1969). As early as the preschool level, children have higher cognitive competence if parents are authoritative (Baumrind 1967, 1971). According to Dornbusch and colleagues (1987), the authoritative style of parenting is a more powerful indicator of students' academic attainment than are family status variables. The authoritative parenting style is clearly related to academic success.

Authoritarian parents attempt to shape and control the behaviors and attitudes of their children (Barber, 1996; Baumrind, 1978; Leung & Kwan, 1998). Authoritarian parents establish clear standards and demand obedience, respect for authority, work, tradition, and the preservation of order (Lam, 1997; Dornbush et al., 1987). These homes have a combination of manipulation and an absence of affection (Baumrind, 1978).

Authoritarian parents direct their children to well-rounded peer groups and away from deviant peer groups (Durbin et al., 1993). For instance, authoritarian parents may encourage their children to be involved in academic organizations. Children raised by authoritarian parents generally do not partake in independent activities (Maccoby & Martin, 1983). In addition, children from authoritarian environments tend to lack self self-confidence. They perceive that what occurs in their lives is due to the situation; they feel they have no power over these situations. In regards to students' academic achievement, being raised in an authoritarian environment is more likely to result in poorer grades in school (Ginsburg & Bronstein, 1993; Lamborn et al., 1991; Okagaki & Sternberg, 1993).

The permissive style of parenting is a non-traditional approach which does not require mature behavior from children (Lam, 1997). Parents of this style are highly involved in their children's lives; however, they place few limits on their children regarding their behavioral activities. Children are accountable for supervising their own actions and making choices on their own (Baumrind, 1978). Parents of the permissive style do not believe they modify, or have an effect on, their children's deeds; they are merely a resource agent (Baumrind, 1966, 1978). Permissive parents rarely punish or restrict their children. These homes are characterized by love and independence, which allows children to be innovative.

Permissive parenting has more negative than positive effects. A follow-up study of middle school aged-children found that children of permissive parents lacked social and cognitive competence (Baumrind, 1989; Lam, 1997). Permissive parenting was also

shown to be negatively associated with children's academic achievement (Onatsu-Arvilommi & Nurmi, 1997). Parents of the permissive style are typically uninvolved (Baumrind, 1991; Maccoby & Martin, 1983).

<div align="center">Family Characteristics of Successful Students</div>

Research regarding causal factors linked with explicit levels of students' academic attainment is minimal; however, markers of family characteristics which enhance student achievement are accessible. For example, Henderson and Berla (1994) found family characteristics of academically successful students include: (a) family supervision of non school actions; (b) family adage of high, yet realistic, academic expectations; (c) family support of children's achievements in school; (d) family exhibition of self-discipline, hard work, and value of learning; (e) reading, writing, and interaction among family members; (f) established family routines and schedules; and (g) reliance upon community resources as needed.

Walberg (1984) also identified the following activities, which when carried out in the home, predicted academic learning: interacting on a daily basis; representing feelings of compassion and love; establishing high reading expectations with discussions of texts; setting goals with deferred satisfaction; monitoring and viewing television programs together; providing a kind atmosphere for personal and academic development.

Clark's research (1983) also concluded that certain family characteristics and behaviors predict academic learning. Clark (1983) acknowledged home practices common to families of high-achieving minority and high-risk children: (a) frequent school contact initiated by the parent; (b) child has stimulating, supportive school

teachers; (c) parents are emotionally and psychologically calm with their child, and conversely, students are emotionally and psychologically calm with their parents; (d) parents expect to play a major role in the child's schooling; (e) parents expect the child to play a major role in their schooling; (f) parents expect their child to get post-secondary training; (g) parents have explicit achievement-centered rules and norms; (h) students show long-term acceptance of norms as legitimate; (i) parents establish clear, specific role boundaries and status structures with the parent as dominant authority; (j) siblings interact as an organized subgroup; (k) conflict between family members is infrequent; (l) parents frequently engage in deliberate achievement-training activities; (m) parents frequently engage in implicit achievement-training activities; (n) parents exercise firm, consistent monitoring and rules enforcement; (o) parents provide liberal nurturance and support; and (p) parents defer to child's knowledge in intellectual matters. Common indicators of academic learning, in the research findings of Clark (1983), Henderson and Berla (1994), and Walberg (1984), include interacting with family members, establishing high, yet realistic, expectations, and reading and discussing texts.

Conclusion

Parents perform a central responsibility both in the home and at school (Becher, 1984); therefore, it is essential schools establish partnerships with families to support education in spite of their educational level, socioeconomic status, family configuration, or maternal employment. School personnel can intercede effectively to create home-school partnerships. Successful parental involvement results in improved student learning.

Summary

As schools progress, they are initiating programs and policies centered on home-school partnerships, resulting in increased student learning. The focal point for upcoming research should recognize what is necessary for parents, what they identify as obstacles to successful home-school partnerships, and how they perceive their roles and responsibilities in the education of their children. As stated previously, the research decisively illustrates that when parents and schools establish partnerships and work jointly to support learning, students can succeed (Comer et al., 1996).

CHAPTER THREE

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION

<u>Conclusion</u>

Based on a review of literature, a strong, consistent relationship exists between family involvement and student achievement. According to Henderson and Burla (1994), the review results of sixty-six studies of how students succeed in school when parents become involved in children's education at school and in the community revealed one or more of the following: higher grades and test scores; better attendance and regularly completed homework; fewer placements in special education or remedial classes; more positive attitudes and behavior in school; higher graduation rates; and greater enrollment in post secondary education. Experts agree that parental involvement in helping children succeed in school is critical (e.g., Christenson, 1995; Christenson et al., 1992; Conoley, 1987; Epstein, 1986; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995; Jones et al., 1995).

Despite the fact that parents contribute a vital role both at home and school (Becher, 1984), parents and school personnel often fail to establish partnerships amongst themselves. Increasingly, over the past decade or so, both parents must work outside the home to increase family income. Moreover, the number of single parent families has steadily escalated. These families tend to be poor, and often the female head of the household must hold two jobs just to make ends meet. All of these factors work against involvement of the parent in the child's education. It is critical that schools establish collaborations with parents regardless of their educational levels, social economic status,

family configuration, or employment status and work collectively toward the shared goal of enhancing students' academic learning.

According to Christenson and colleagues (1992) and Epstein (1986), parents generally want their children to be successful in school; however, they need information on how to advance their own children's learning as well as the education of all children. Parents elect to become involved in their children's education for various reasons. These include: (a) their parental responsibility; (b) their personal sense of efficacy for supporting their children to be successful; and (c) their response to the possibilities and demand characteristics presented by both their children and their children's schools (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995). Parental involvement is enhanced when there are clear, shared goals and mutually agreed-upon roles (Christenson & Conoley, 1992). Schools can be a dominant influence for empowering parents to support children in education.

Implications for Research

The primary intent of this literature review was to examine the impact of family involvement. In addition, attention was devoted to examining the relationship between family-status and process variables in regard to student academic achievement and family characteristics of successful students.

The focal point of future research should be collecting data concentrating on what parents equate as their roles and responsibilities as well as what parents believe are barriers to successful collaboration. This research would assist educators in promoting effective home-school partnerships. Future research on family configuration is

undoubtedly needed. In addition to varied findings, methodological shortcomings confound research results regarding family involvement. Kurdak and Sinclair (1988a, 1988b) addressed common methodological deficiencies of research on family forms. These included: (a) inadequate attention to process variables that may arbitrate the effects of family configuration and how such process variables are affected by changes in family relationships; (b) failure to assess representative samples prior to alterations in family patterns; and (c) lack of a model paradigm to guide researchers. Based on the current literature, it is hard to determine whether differences are preexisting or caused by changes in family configuration (Marsh, 1990). There is a lack of consistency among research findings regarding students' academic success and their family arrangement, and a number of methodological issues remain to be resolved.

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