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## Impact of family involvement on student academic achievement

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IMPACT OF FAMILY INVOLVEMENT ON STUDENT ACADEMIC  
ACHIEVEMENT

An Abstract of a Thesis  
Submitted  
In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Specialist in Education

Jennifer L. Meyer  
University of Northern Iowa  
May 2002

## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate beliefs, barriers, and current levels of parental involvement in the education of their child. There were three research questions:

1. Is there a relationship between differing parenting styles, social economic status, and family configurations and beliefs about parental involvement in the education of their child?

2. What prevents parents of differing parenting styles, social economic status, and family configurations from being involved in their child's education?

3. Is there a relationship between differing parenting styles, social economic status, and family configurations and current involvement in their child's education?

Seventy-five parents of sixth grade students filled out and returned the questionnaire used in this study. Percentages were calculated for the different components of the questionnaire to answer the three research questions of this study.

The results indicated parents of different parenting styles and social economic status held different beliefs about parental participation in the education of their child. Also, parents with differing parenting styles, social economic status, and family configurations were involved in different aspects of their child's schooling. The data showed that time constraints were the primary barrier limiting parents' involvement in their child's education. Based on the findings of the study, implications for school psychologists are drawn and suggestions for future research are offered.

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Specialist in Education

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This Study by: Jennifer L. Meyer

Entitled: Impact of Family Involvement on Student Academic Achievement

has been approved as meeting the thesis requirement for the

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I dreamed I stood in a studio  
And watched two sculptors there,  
The clay they used was a young child's mind  
And they fashioned it with care.

One was a teacher; the tools she used  
Were books, music and art.  
One, a parent who worked with a guiding hand  
And a gentle, loving heart.

Day after day the teacher toiled  
With touch that was deft and sure,  
While the parent labored by her side  
And polished and smoothed it o'er.

And when at last their task was done,  
They were proud of what they had wrought;  
For the things they had molded into the child  
Could neither be sold nor brought.

And each agreed he would have failed  
If he worked alone,  
The parent and the school,  
The teacher and the home.

Author Unknown (in Salisbury, 1992).

Mom and Dad, I am forever grateful for all of the lessons you have taught me, the love you have showered me with, and the joy you have given me. You provided the early inspiration to continue learning and to pursue my dreams. You graciously supported me along the way. Thank you.

David and Julie, your spontaneity, light-heartedness, and enjoyment of life inspired me throughout my journey and reminded me of the need for a healthy balance in life.

I would also like to extend thanks to Brad, who was instrumental in this project. Your love and understanding have fostered my growth. Most importantly, thank you for praying for me.

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To the parents of the sixth grade students and the school--thank you. You helped me help students.

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## 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 & Conoley, 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 et al., 1998; Christenson, 1995; Eccles & Harold, 1993; Kellaghan, Sloane, Alvarez, & 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.

#### Purpose of the Study

The central purpose of this paper is two-fold: (a) to examine the influence of parental involvement; and (b) to examine the relationship between family-process and status variables and student academic achievement.

### Statement of the Problem

Traditionally, parental involvement only included the “traditional family” (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. Davies (1996) and Henderson (1987) noted that school personnel often 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. The power struggle between parents and schools is “wasteful of energy, destructive of positive motivation, and ineffective in supporting children’s growth” (Swap, 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 lead to positive results 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.” 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.

### Research Questions

This study will examine parental views concerning their level of involvement in their child’s schooling and how parents and schools can establish relationships to effectively support student learning. In particular, the study will investigate parental perspectives to three main questions:

1. Is there a relationship between differing parenting styles, social economic status, and family configurations and beliefs about parental involvement in the education of their child?

2. What prevents parents of differing parenting styles, social economic status, and family configurations from being involved in their child's education?

3. Is there a relationship between differing parenting styles, social economic status, and family configurations and current involvement in their child's education?

### Definition of Terms

This study will use 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

Chapter I includes the introduction, statement of the problem, significance of the problem, questions that were used to guide the study, and definition of terms. Chapter II presents a review of the literature on family involvement. The influence of parental involvement and family-school collaboration on student academic success, family characteristics of successful students, and the relationship between family-status and

process variables and their impact on student academic achievement are presented.

Chapter III describes the methodology that will be used in the study. Chapter IV provides an analysis of the data gathered from the questionnaires. Chapter V provides an interpretation of the results reported in Chapter IV and offers implications and recommendations for practice and for future research.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter provides a review of the related literature on family involvement. More specifically, the chapter includes a review of 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 reliable 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) stated 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 (e.g., Swap, 1993) 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; Dornbusch & 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, Milne (1989) proposed, family-status and process variables work in conjunction with or are mediated by each other. Thus, this literature review will focus on family-status and process factors and their relationship and impact on student academic success.

### Family-Status Variables

Status variables that are significant indicators of student attainment will be examined. 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 Witte (1985) found parental involvement to be 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. Specifically, Clark 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) shows 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; Kinard & Reinherz, 1986; Marsh, 1990) 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 (1990) stated that family arrangement outcomes are minimal and significantly less universal than commonly implied. According to Kinard and Reinherz (1986), the family arrangement may account for lower levels of academic achievement.

While Dornbusch, Ritter, and Steinberg (1991) contended 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" (p. 65). In addition, Lee (1993) noted that, "It appears that the non-traditional family structure exerts a significantly negative influence on student performance and behavior" (p. 65). Further research by Emery, Hetherington, and Dilalla (1984), Evans, Kelley, Borgers, Dronkers, and 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 (Emery 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 the 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 extensively 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 integration 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.

#### Family-Process Variables

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, and 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, & Mezruczko, 1993; Singh et al., 1995; Trusty, 1999) have found 8<sup>th</sup> grade students' academic achievement, as well as academic success of low-income, minority children in 6<sup>th</sup> 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, Steinberg, & Ritter, 1997).

Events are classified as stable when they are unailing 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; Okagaki & French, 1998; Scott-Jones, 1984; Seginer, 1983, 1986; Thompson, Alexander, & Entwisle, 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, & Glendinning, 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. In the research literature, there is a well-established association between parenting styles and children’s academic achievement (e.g., Baumrind, 1991; Deater-Deckard, Dodge, Bates, & Petit, 1996; Eagle, 1989; Grolnick & Ryan, 1989; Hess & Holloway, 1984; Kochanska, Murray, & Coy, 1997; Lamborn, Mounts, Steinberg, & Dornbusch, 1991; Laureau, 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.

Authoritative parents engage in give-and-take conversations with their children and are willing to compromise within limits (Maccoby & Martin, 1983). Authoritative parents are generally affectionate and tolerant of others and have children who are socially dependable and socially successfully (Putallaz & Heflin, 1990). Children raised in authoritative homes tend to employ independent styles of thinking when interacting with their peers. In respect to students' academic attainment, being raised in an authoritative home is positively associated with academic success (Baumrind 1967; Baumrind 1971; Grolnick & Ryan, 1989; Hein & Lewko, 1994; Hess, Shipman, Brophy, & Bear, 1969; Lam, 1997; Marjoribanks, 1980; Salmon, 1996; Schucksmith et al., 1995; Steinberg, Lamborn, Darling, Mounts, & Dornbusch, 1994; Steinberg, Mounts, Lamborn, & Dornbusch, 1991; Weiss & Schwartz, 1996).

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-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).

### Family Characteristics of Successful Students

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. In the research findings of Clark (1983), Henderson and Berla (1994), and Walberg (1984), common indicators of academic learning 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

Based on a review of literature, a strong, consistent relationship exists between family involvement and student achievement. According to Henderson and Berla (1994),

the review results of 66 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 play 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 purpose 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.

Despite the beneficial effects of parental involvement on student academic achievement, parental participation steadily declines through elementary years (Carnegie Council on Adolescence Development, 1995). In fact, by the middle school years parental involvement is, all too often, nonexistent (Carnegie Council on Adolescence Development, 1995). The call for additional research on parental involvement with their children's middle school homework was highlighted in the National Education Goals Report (1995), which found that 65% of parents reported assisting their first-grade child with homework, but the percentage fell to 14% by eighth grade.

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) suggested that younger children's homework assignments are often well within the range of many parents' abilities and

involvement strategies. However, as children enter the middle school, their interest in parental involvement as well as parents' ability to comprehend homework concepts and choose suitable involvement strategies tends to decline.

The transition to middle school, in particular, can be challenging due to the new school structure. Middle school is often characterized by a move to a larger, more complex environment (Eccles & Midgley, 1989; Simmons & Blyth, 1987). Eccles and Midgley (1989) and Simmons and Blyth (1987) noted that students receive less emotional support from teachers, and there is less contact between students and teachers and among students and their peers. In addition, students enter a new environment that is distinguished by increased rigor in grading, social comparison, and competition (Eccles & Midgley, 1989). Further, communication between the home and school is often negative in nature during middle school.

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.

The focal point of this study will be collecting data concentrating on what parents of different parenting styles, family configurations, and social economic status believe about their involvement in their child's education as well as what parents consider to be barriers to successful collaboration. Based on a review of literature, it is unclear what parents contemplate about involvement in their child's education and what they consider to be barriers to successful home-school partnerships. This research needs to be addressed because it would assist educators in promoting effective home-school relationships that support the goal of academic success for children. Future research on family involvement is undoubtedly needed.

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

#### Research Questions

This study investigated parental perspectives to three main questions:

1. Is there a relationship between differing parenting styles, social economic status, and family configurations and beliefs about parental involvement in the education of their child?
2. What prevents parents of differing parenting styles, social economic status, and family configurations from being involved in their child's education?
3. Is there a relationship between differing parenting styles, social economic status, and family configurations and current involvement in their child's education?

The central purpose of this study was to examine what parents of different parenting styles, social economic status, and family configurations believed about their involvement in their child's education, what they considered to be barriers to successful collaboration, and parent's current levels of involvement; hence, educators can more effectively involve parents in home-school partnerships which support the goal of academic achievement for children. Self-reported parental perspectives about involvement, barriers to successful home-school partnerships, parenting styles, social economic status, and family configurations were obtained via questionnaires and transformed into quantitative data.

### Participants

The research was conducted with volunteer parents of sixth grade students in an urban school located in North Eastern Iowa. There are approximately 270 students attending the school representing grade six.

The purpose of selecting a sample of sixth grade parents was to examine their beliefs about involvement, their current levels of involvement, as well as what they believed were barriers to successful collaboration because parental involvement drastically declines through the years and is, all too often, nonexistent by the middle school years (e.g., Carneige Council on Adolescence Development, 1995; National Education Goals Report, 1995). The participating school has approximately 270 sixth grade students. This was a sufficient sample size to examine variations among groups (e.g., lower family income vs. higher family income). In addition, the school is located in a diverse community; thereby, prospective parental participants are likely to be of wide-ranging parenting styles, social economic status, and family configurations.

### Instruments

#### Parental Authority Questionnaire (Appendix B)

The purpose of using the Parental Authority Questionnaire (Appendix B, Buri, 1991), a 30-item instrument, was to evaluate parenting styles. Styles of parenting were examined to determine if parents of different parenting styles held different beliefs about parental involvement and barriers to effective home-school partnerships and were involved differently in their child's education. Answers to the items were made on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Scores ranged from

10 to 50, with higher scores signifying greater agreement with the parental prototype measured. Originally, 48 questions were created based upon Baumrind's descriptions of authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive prototypes. Professionals ( $N = 21$ ) in the fields of psychology, education, sociology, and social work evaluated the items and 36 met the criterion of 95% agreement among professionals. From the 36 items, 10 authoritative, 10 authoritarian, and 10 permissive were selected to consist of the Parental Authority Questionnaire (Appendix B). An example for permissive attitudes reads as follows, "I do not feel my children need to obey rules and regulations of behavior simply because someone in authority established them." Buri (1991) reported the Parental Authority Questionnaire (Appendix B) maintains good construct validity and test-retest reliability of 0.77 and 0.92. Other process variables, parental expectations and attributions, were not examined in further detail in this study to control for participant fatigue and practice.

#### Parental Involvement Questionnaire (Appendix C)

The purpose of the Parental Involvement Questionnaire (Appendix C), a 20-item instrument, was to examine how important parents believed their involvement was in supporting the schooling of their children, what they considered to be barriers to successful collaboration, and parent's current levels of involvement. This information was used to examine what parents of different parenting styles, social economic status, and family configurations believed about their involvement in their child's education, what barriers limited their involvement, and their current levels of involvement. An extensive search was made to seek out quantitative instruments measuring parental



perspectives about their involvement in their children's education; however, quantitative measures assessing this were not found. Based on a review of home-school partnership literature (Carter & Wojtkiewicz, 2000; Eccles & Harold, 1996; Henderson & Berla, 1994; Muller, 1998; Swap, 1993; Trusty, 1999), the Parental Involvement Questionnaire (Appendix C) was developed.

Responses to parental beliefs were made on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Participants were instructed to indicate items limiting their involvement. Replies to current levels of involvement were made on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from never to always.

#### Parental Demographic Information (Appendix D)

Parental Demographic information (Appendix D) included items addressing the role of the participant in the family, the ethnicity of the participant, maternal and paternal ages, gender of the child, family configuration, hours of maternal and paternal employment outside of the home per week, level of maternal and paternal education, and annual family income.

#### Pilot Instrument

The Parental Involvement Questionnaire (Appendix C) was developed and piloted during the summer of 2001. Graduate students ( $N = 12$ ) enrolled at the University of Northern Iowa completed the Parental Involvement Questionnaire (Appendix C) at the end of the class period.

### Procedures

Research was conducted following approval from the Human Subjects Committee at the University of Northern Iowa. All participants were volunteers, and the identity of individual respondents was concealed throughout the study.

Research was conducted following introductory meetings with the principal and sixth grade teaching staff during which the researcher introduced herself, informed them of the study, scheduled a time to meet with sixth grade students, and answered questions they had regarding the study. The following week, the researcher went from classroom to classroom and introduced herself to the students, discussed the study briefly, asked the students for their participation (e.g., students were asked to take the following information home to prospective parental participants and to return completed materials: a consent form (Appendix A), the Parent Authority Questionnaire (Appendix B), the Parental Involvement Questionnaire (Appendix C), Parental Demographic information (Appendix D), and an introductory letter (Appendix E) explaining the purpose of the research), and notified students that if they participated in the study, their name would be placed in a drawing for two gift certificates in the amount of \$20.

### Data Analysis

Comparisons of parental beliefs about involvement and barriers to successful collaborations as well as current levels of involvement were made within the following three variables: parenting styles (authoritative vs. authoritarian vs. permissive), social economic status by annual family income (0-40,000 vs. 40,001 and over), and family configurations (intact vs. non intact). Comparisons among these variables were made to

find out if parental beliefs about their involvement in their child's education varied and to examine to which their beliefs about barriers to successful home-school partnerships differed. A correlation was conducted to test the significance among the groups (e.g., intact, non intact) about their beliefs about parental involvement and barriers to effective home-school partnerships, as well as their current levels of involvement in their child's education.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to examine what parents of different parenting styles, social economic status, and family configurations believed about their involvement in their child's education and considered to be barriers to successful collaboration. The study also sought to examine parent's current levels of involvement. The study explored parental perspectives to three questions (i.e., Is there a relationship between differing parenting styles, social economic status, and family configurations and beliefs about parental involvement in the education of their child?; What prevents parents of differing parenting styles, social economic status, and family configurations from being involved in their child's education?; Is there a relationship between differing parenting styles, social economic status, and family configurations and current involvement in their child's education?) The study was designed to investigate beliefs, barriers, and current levels of parental involvement through parental reports.

#### Characteristics of Participants

Tables 1 and 2 reflect the family characteristics included in the sample parent population and the number and percentage of parents representing each characteristic. It should be noted that if students resided in two-parent households, a request was made for either parent to participate.

Table 1 represents the annual family income of respondents. The greatest number of respondents, 50 (66.70%) had annual incomes from 0-40,000 dollars.

Table 1

Annual Family Incomes of Sixth Grade Parents

<u>Annual Family Income</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
\$0-40,000	50	66.7%
\$40,001 and over	25	33.3%

Table 2 represents the family configuration. An intact family consists of a husband, wife, and their biological and/or adopted children.

Table 2

Family Configurations of Sixth Grade Parents

<u>Family Configuration</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Intact	37	49.3%
Non Intact	38	50.7%

Parenting Styles of the Participants

The distribution of raw scores from the 30 items, 10 permissive, 10 authoritarian, and 10 authoritative, on the Parental Authority Questionnaire (Appendix B) were converted to z-scores and comparisons among these three distributions were made to

categorize authority prototypes. The number and percentage of parenting styles in the sample are illustrated in Table 3.

Table 3

Parenting Styles of Sixth Grade Parents

Parenting Style	Number	Percent
Permissive	26	34.7%
Authoritarian	20	26.7%
Authoritative	29	38.7%

Parental Beliefs about Involvement

Is there a relationship between differing parenting styles, social economic status, and family configurations and beliefs about parental involvement in the education of their child? There were no significant relationships found with the following exceptions:

1. There was a negative correlation between the permissive parenting style and parental beliefs about supporting children's learning ( $r = -.30, p < .05$ ).
2. There was a negative correlation between the permissive parenting style and parental beliefs about organizing school related community action ( $r = -.25, p < .05$ ).
3. There was a positive correlation between the authoritative parenting style and parental beliefs about assisting children with schoolwork ( $r = .24, p < .05$ ).

4. There was a positive correlation between the authoritative parenting style and parental beliefs about supporting children's learning ( $r = .24, p < .05$ ).

5. There was a positive correlation between social economic status and parental beliefs about assisting with fund-raising ( $r = .27, p < .05$ ).

#### Parental Beliefs about Barriers to Effective Home-School Partnerships

Findings showed that the number one barrier for parents is lack of time (see Table 4). The lowest barrier to effective home-school partnerships is feeling unwelcome in the school. Table 4 provides numbers and percentages for other barriers such as lack of communication between the home and school, feeling unqualified to assist child, lack of financial resources, child lacks interest, school does not encourage participation, transportation issues, past negative experiences, and feeling unwelcome in the school.

Table 4

Barriers to Effective Home-School Partnerships

<u>Barrier</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Time Constraints	36	100.0%
Communication	7	19.4%
Feel Unqualified	7	19.4%
Financial	7	19.4%
Child Lacks Interest	6	16.7%
School Does Not Encourage Participation	3	8.3%
Transportation	2	5.6%
Past Negative Experiences	2	5.6%
Feel Unwelcome in the School	1	2.8%

Parental Beliefs about Barriers per Parenting Style

With regards to Research Question 2 – (What prevents parents of differing parenting styles, social economic status, and family configurations from being involved in their child’s education?) – findings are reported in Tables 5, 6, and 7. Not all parents reported barriers to home-school partnerships. Of the parents reporting barriers, the primary hindrance for the permissive ( $n = 9$ ), authoritarian ( $n = 7$ ), and authoritative ( $n = 20$ ) parenting styles is time constraints (see Table 5). Parents of the permissive parenting style reported the school, transportation issues, past experiences, and feeling unwelcome



were not barriers to their involvement. Transportation and past experiences were not limitations for parents of the authoritarian parenting style and authoritative parents replied that feeling unwelcome did not hinder their participation in their child's schooling.

Table 5

Percentage of Parents of Three Parenting Styles Reporting Specific Barriers to Participation in School

Barrier	Permissive (N = 9)	Authoritarian (N = 7)	Authoritative (N = 20)
Time	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Communication	33.0%	42.9%	5.0%
Unqualified	22.2%	42.9%	10.0%
Financial	11.1%	14.3%	25.0%
Child	11.1%	14.3%	20.0%
School	0.0%	14.3%	10.0%
Transportation	0.0%	0.0%	10.0%
Past	0.0%	0.0%	10.0%
Unwelcome	0.0%	14.3%	0.0%

Parental Beliefs about Barriers per Annual Family Income in Dollars

Table 6 represents responses according to annual family income. In the list of barriers, the top barrier for parents with annual incomes of 0-40,000 dollars was time constraints ( $\underline{n} = 22$ ) followed by lack of financial resources ( $\underline{n} = 7$ ) and the low barrier was feeling unwelcome in the school ( $\underline{n} = 1$ ). Time constraints ( $\underline{n} = 14$ ) were the top barrier; while, financial issues, transportation, past experiences, and feeling unwelcome were not reported as barriers for parents with annual family incomes exceeding 40,000.

Table 6

Percentages of Parents by Income Levels Reporting Specific Barriers to Participation in School

Barrier	0-40,000 (N = 22)	40,001 over (N = 14)
Time	100.0%	100.0%
Communication	27.3%	7.1%
Unqualified	22.7%	14.2%
Financial	31.8%	0.0%
Child	18.2%	14.2%
School	9.1%	7.1%
Transportation	9.1%	0.0%
Past	9.1%	0.0%
Unwelcome	4.6%	0.0%

Parental Beliefs about Barriers per Family Configuration

Table 7 shows the different barriers for family configurations. In the intact and non intact families, time constraints were reported as the primary barrier to parent's involvement. Parents responded that transportation and feeling unwelcome were not barriers for intact and non intact families respectively.

Table 7

Percentages of Parents by Family Configurations Reporting Specific Barriers to Participation in School

Barrier	Intact (N = 16)	Non Intact (N = 20)
Time	100.0%	100.0%
Communication	18.8%	20.0%
Unqualified	31.3%	10.0%
Financial	25.0%	15.0%
Child	25.0%	10.0%
School	6.3%	10.0%
Transportation	0.0%	10.0%
Past	6.3%	5.0%
Unwelcome	6.3%	0.0%

### Current Involvement

This study specifically examined this question: "Is there a relationship between differing parenting styles, social economic status, and family configurations and current involvement in their child's education?" There were no significant relationships found with the following exceptions:

1. There was a positive correlation between the permissive parenting style and attending workshops ( $r = .28, p < .05$ ).
2. There was a positive correlation between the permissive parenting style and leading development of programs ( $r = .30, p < .05$ ).
3. There was a positive correlation between the permissive parenting style and taking classes to further education ( $r = .25, p < .05$ ).
4. There was a positive correlation between the authoritative parenting style and making certain children attend school ( $r = .30, p < .05$ ).
5. There was a positive correlation between the authoritative parenting style and quizzing child for upcoming tests ( $r = .24, p < .05$ ).
6. There was a positive correlation between the authoritative parenting style and supporting group trips to cultural events in the neighborhood ( $r = .27, p < .05$ ).
7. There was a positive correlation between family configurations and taking classes to further education ( $r = .27, p < .05$ ).
8. There was a positive correlation between social economic status and assisting with fund-raising ( $r = .28, p < .05$ ).

In summary, results from this study supported the conclusion parental beliefs of the authoritative parenting style were conducive to parental involvement. Contrarily, parental beliefs of the permissive parenting style were not related to high involvement. Parental beliefs of families of higher incomes were related to higher participation. Significant relationships between parental beliefs about involvement and family configurations were not found. Parents with diverse parenting styles, social economic status, and family configurations were involved in their child's education; however, they were active in different aspects of their child's schooling. Permissive parents were involved in linkages between the school and the community, while authoritative parents aided their child with schoolwork. No significant relationship between the authoritarian parenting style and current involvement were found. Parents of higher family incomes and intact families reported they were more involved in their child's education, assisting with fund-raising and seeking additional education, respectively, than parents of lower family incomes and non intact families. Parents of the permissive, authoritarian, and authoritative parenting styles stated their top barrier was time constraints. Additionally, parents with annual family incomes below 40,000 as well as parents with family incomes exceeding 40,000 reported time constraints as their number one barrier. Limited time was also the main obstacle for intact and non intact families. Chapter five will provide a discussion of the findings.

### Limitations

As in all studies, this study had a few limitations. For one, only sixth-grade parents were used in the study. The other limitation is that correlations were small.

Thus, given that the .05 level of significance was chosen and the fact that multiple correlations were made, relationships could have occurred by chance.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to investigate what parents of different parenting styles, social economic status, and family configurations believed about their involvement and what limits their participation in their child's education. The study also examined parent's current levels of involvement in their child's education. To better understand parent's involvement, a quantitative research study was conducted. Questionnaires were distributed to 270 prospective sixth-grade parents. Respondent questionnaire data were reviewed and analyzed in an effort to gain an understanding of the barriers, current participation, and beliefs that parents have regarding the education of their child. In this chapter, the findings are discussed, implications of these findings are explored, and suggestions for further research are offered.

#### Discussion of Findings

##### Parental Beliefs about Involvement

This study specifically examined this question: "What is the relationship between parenting styles and parental beliefs about involvement in their child's education?" As was reported in chapter four, most parents reported they believed it was important that they were involved in some form of their child's education. Parents of the permissive parenting style reported they did not believe their involvement in the education of their child was important. Permissive parents may be operating under the assumption that by not being involved in their child's education they are not interfering with their child's learning; thereby, they are supporting their child's need and/or desire for autonomy. It

seems permissive parents believe learning occurs when students discover meaning and build understanding for themselves. They believe the excitement and joy of learning for the student is in the chase, the discovery. Unsuccessful past efforts to become partners in education may also discourage permissive parents from taking part in their child's schooling.

The findings of the study were aligned with the literature as parents of the authoritative parenting style tended to believe it was important for them to support their child's learning. It seems parents of the authoritative parenting style desire to be partners in the educational process of their child. Parents of the authoritative parenting style are apt to involve students in the learning process and inspire active contribution while maintaining structure. They are cognitive coaches who scaffold students' learning and thinking to higher skills. Their child's ability to connect new concepts to existing knowledge is, perhaps, a reflection of their success as a partner in education. It is likely they had models (e.g., parents, teachers) that encouraged meaningful learning.

No significant relationships between the authoritarian parenting style and beliefs about children's schooling were found. It is likely parents of the authoritarian parenting style are either more concerned with controlling their child's behaviors and attitudes or they view the school as the authority figure in their child's schooling; hence, it is not probable that the home and the school will work together upon the child's behalf.

This study also investigated, What is the relationship between social economic status and parental beliefs about their involvement in their child's education? Laureau (1987) proposed students from homes with higher social economic status have a greater



likelihood of parents believing in the importance of involvement. The findings of the study were that the higher the annual family income was, the greater was the importance placed upon participation in children's schooling. Perhaps parents with higher family incomes encourage and/or expect their child will seek additional schooling; hence, the curriculum of their home supports learning. Additionally, parents with higher family incomes are able to financially provide supplemental educational materials for their child (e.g., texts, games, colors) that parents of lower family incomes may be unable to supply. Parents who are financially secure may be able to become involved in their child's education without encountering additional stressors such as not being able to afford daycare and time away from work. Lower income parents might have to take on additional jobs to be able to provide for their families. This does not leave them much time to be actively involved in their child's schooling. The social stigmatization (e.g., feelings of inadequacy) may also deter lower income parents from becoming involved in their child's schooling.

Furthermore, this study explored, What is the relationship between family configurations and parent's beliefs about their involvement in their child's education? There were no significant findings related to parental beliefs and their family form. It seems that the family form does not impact parents' beliefs about the significance of their participation. Regardless of the family configuration, parents felt a personal responsibility to work with the school for students' success.

For the most part, parents reported that they believed in the importance of being involved in their child's education. However, parents held varying perspectives

according to their parenting styles, social economic status, and family configurations as evidenced by their questionnaire responses, regarding the involvement essential to support student learning.

The responses of parents have several implications. School personnel must establish a partnership with families despite parenting styles, social economic status, or family form and work toward the joint goal of enhancing students' learning. It is critical that educators do not perceive low income status families as deficient. Rather, school personnel must involve parents of differing income levels in the schooling of their children (Epstein & Dauber, 1991). Schools need to be innovative and flexible to accommodate parents in various manners that compliment parents' schedules and utilize their skills and expertise. School personnel also need to be cognizant of stressors families face and provide modifications according to parents' needs and desires (e.g., providing day care services so parents of all family forms and income levels can be involved). It is essential that the school intercede so parents are partners in students' learning.

### Barriers to Involvement

What prevents parents from being involved in the education of their child? Most parents want to be involved in their child's education, but a number of barriers prevent their participation. For one, parents overwhelmingly identified limited time as the chief barrier limiting them in their child's education. Parents of the permissive, authoritative, and the authoritarian parenting styles, as well as parents in intact and non intact families and parents with annual family incomes below and exceeding 40,000 reported time

constraints as the top barrier to their involvement in their child's education. Many families do not have sufficient time to participate in school partnerships. This directly relates to the research that recognizes that the interrelatedness of demands and responsibilities families face prevents them from becoming more involved (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995). Noting dual-employed families and single parent households, parents replied that their layers of responsibilities limit their participation in their child's learning. Parents reported that the fast-paced life style of the modern-day family also limits their time to support learning.

Parents identified a lack of clear and/or negative communication as another main barrier to their involvement. Many school personnel today are still in the business of transmitting information to the home rather than working to achieve a systematic two-way communication loop. This becomes problematic, as much of the research clearly identifies communication as the basis for building relationships between home and school (e.g., Dornbusch et al., 1987; Swap, 1993; Ziegler, 1987). It is clear that the current communication system in school is not meeting the needs of parents and students. Communication at the middle school level, in particular, is critical as the students convey less information to their parents and the parents spend less time at the school.

Based on the findings of this study, communication must flow two ways – from the family to school personnel and from school personnel to the family. Teachers should initiate communication with parents in a positive manner, thereby improving parent-teacher relations. Information that is communicated in a number of ways (e.g., notes, telephone calls, e-mails, newsletters, conferences) reaches more parents and insures

students' success. It is critical that parents are given the opportunity to express their input and school personnel take their concerns seriously. Open lines of communication between the home and school are essential to the success of all children.

There are differing factors that hindered parent's involvement in supporting learning. Parents identified time constraints and poor communication as their top barriers to successful home-school collaboration.

### Current Parental Involvement

How are parents of different parenting styles, social economic status, and family configurations currently involved in their child's education? This question was raised to assess the degree of consistency between parents' perceptions and their actual involvement in their child's education. Parents of the permissive parenting style were more apt to be involved in linkages between the school and the community that helped parents to assist children, as well as themselves (i.e., attending workshops, taking classes to further education). Perhaps parents of the permissive parenting style are interested in linkages that meet individual needs, as permissive parents do not believe they directly impact their child. However, knowledge gained from workshops and classes may be implemented in parenting practices. No significant relationships between the authoritarian parenting style and current participation in children's schooling were found. Parents of the authoritative parenting style replied they were making certain their child attended school, quizzing their child for upcoming tests, and assisting with fund-raising activities. The higher the annual family income, the more likely the parents were to be involved in fund-raising activities at the school. Perhaps parents with higher family

incomes have more time than parents who earn less to take part in fund-raising. Parents of intact families responded that they were more apt to seek additional education. It seems that parents of intact families would have more time at their hands than single parents who have the sole responsibility of caring for their families.

A partnership between home and school can be an effective way to enhance the child's educational experience. The relationship between the home and the school has a direct impact on students' achievement. The fundamental issue in successful learning, according to the research, is not home or school – teacher or student – but the relationship between them. In view of that, learning occurs where there is a prolific learning connection (Seely, 1985).

#### Implications for Schools and Parents

Based on the findings of this study, the following implications were drawn. Parents and school personnel must work together as partners. This supports the research that suggests the most successful practice of parental involvement find parents and school personnel allocating the responsibility for the academic success of children (e.g., Carter & Wojtkiewicz, 2000; Eccles & Harold, 1996; Swap, 1993; Trusty, 1999). School personnel must continue to support parents in establishing conditions that aid student learning. School personnel must also implement programming, being mindful that parents reported they have limited time and capacity (e.g., offer to meet at convenient times such as in the evenings or early mornings, provide day care during school activities like conferences and problem solving meetings, assist parents in becoming involved without creating additional stress, offer additional services such as tutoring and before-

and after- school programs, plan activities in advance to accommodate busy schedules, use an electronic bulletin board to communicate with one another).

At the heart of effective parent school relationships is open communication between parent and school. In this study, parents identified communication as one of the top barriers to an effective home-school partnership. One of the first steps school psychologists and school personnel can take to increase parental involvement is to communicate with parents. Communication must flow in both directions – from the school to the home and from the home to the school. Additionally, communication must occur throughout the school year. There are many ways of initiating this relationship. For example, the following activities may aid in establishing relationships: a personal telephone call, an e-mail message, beginning-of-the-year social events, a welcoming letter, an invitation to visit the classroom, a questionnaire assessing how parents would like to be involved, their interests, and time schedules, and want ads to encourage sharing experiences and expertise.

#### Summary of Discussion

Schools that fail to take action to support home-school partnerships may well face challenges supporting learning for all students. Parents will continue to be discouraged, thus negatively influencing student learning. The research specifies that when parents and school personnel establish partnerships and work together to facilitate learning, all students can succeed (Comer et al., 1996). Only through the building of relationships, can parents, school personnel, and communities ensure all students will experience success.

### Future Directions

Additional research addressing the drastic decline in parental involvement between the elementary grades and the middle school years is undoubtedly needed. A longitudinal study could be conducted with the same participants following implementation of interventions that endorse home-school collaboration. In addition, a qualitative study, from the perspective of students, may provide insight into ways that promote parental involvement in their child's schooling over the years while granting students autonomy. Future research could also examine individual needs of students and their families, reflecting particular status and process variables, and how the school and the home can work in conjunction to best meet families' needs.

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APPENDIX A  
INFORMED CONSENT FORM

## INFORMED CONSENT FORM

The present questionnaires are designed to examine parental prototypes and parental views concerning their involvement in their children's schooling and barriers to effective home school partnerships. If you agree to participate, I will ask that you complete the attached questionnaires. There are no right or wrong answers to any questions. All information that you provide will remain confidential. Your identity will be concealed by using a number (code) in place of your name. Your consent forms will be separated from the data, so please be as honest and accurate as possible. If you have any questions about this study, please contact me at (319) 266-1798 or via e-mail at meyerj3780@uni.edu.

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Jennifer Meyer, MAE  
UNI Graduate Student

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Date

Radhi Al-Mabuk  
UNI Research Supervisor  
(319) 273-2609

David Walker  
Human Subjects Coordinator  
(319) 273-2748

I am fully aware of the nature and extent of my participation in this study as stated above and any possible risks arising from it. I hereby agree to participate in this project.

---

Signature of Participant

---

Date

---

Printed Name of Participant

---

Printed Name of Child

APPENDIX B  
PARENTAL AUTHORITY QUESTIONNAIRE



## Parental Authority Questionnaire

For each of the following statements, circle the letter(s) on the 5-item scale that best describes how that statement applies to your parenting attitudes. (**SD = Strongly Disagree, D = Disagree, N = Neither disagree nor agree, A = Agree, SA = Strongly Agree**) Try to read and think about each statement as it applies to your parenting attitudes while raising your children today and within the last five years. There are no right or wrong answers, so don't spend a lot of time on any one item. We are looking for your overall impression regarding each statement. Be sure not to omit any items.

1. In a well-run home the children should have their way in the family as often as the parents do. SD D N A SA
  
2. Even if my children don't agree with me, I feel it is for their own good if I force them to conform to what I think is right. SD D N A SA
  
3. I expect my children to do things immediately upon being told, without asking any questions. SD D N A SA
  
4. I discuss the reasoning behind family policy, which is established, with my children. SD D N A SA
  
5. I encourage verbal give-and-take whenever I feel family rules and restrictions are unreasonable. SD D N A SA
  
6. I feel children need to be free to make up their own minds and to do what they want to do, even if this does not agree with what I might want. SD D N A SA
  
7. I do not allow my children to question any decisions I have made. SD D N A SA
  
8. I direct activities and decisions for my children by using reasoning and discipline. SD D N A SA
  
9. I feel force should be used in order to get my children to behave the way they are suppose to. SD D N A SA
  
10. I do not feel my children need to obey rules and regulations of behavior simply because someone in authority established them. SD D N A SA

11. I let my children know what is expected of them, but I want my children to feel free to discuss these expectations with me if they appear to be unreasonable. SD D N A SA
12. I feel wise parents teach their children early who is the boss in the family. SD D N A SA
13. I seldom give my children expectations and guidelines for their behavior. SD D N A SA
14. I want the children in the family to be present when family decisions are being made. SD D N A SA
15. I consistently give direction and guidance to my children in rational and objective ways. SD D N A SA
16. I get very upset when my children try to disagree with me. SD D N A SA
17. I feel that most problems in society would be solved if parents would not restrict their children's activities, decisions, and desires as they are growing up. SD D N A SA
18. I let my children know what behaviors are expected of them, and if they do not meet those expectations, they are punished. SD D N A SA
19. I try to allow my children to decide most things for themselves, without a lot of direction from me. SD D N A SA
20. I take my children's opinions into consideration when making family decisions, but I would not have decided for something simply because my children want it. SD D N A SA
21. I do not feel responsible for directing and guiding my child's behavior when they are growing up. SD D N A SA
22. I have clear standards for children in my house while they are growing up, but I am willing to adjust these standards to the needs of each of the individual children in my family. SD D N A SA
23. I give direction for my children's behavior while they are growing up and I expect them to follow these directions, but I am always willing to listen to concerns and to discuss these directions with my children. SD D N A SA

24. I allowed my children to form their own view points on family matters and I generally allow them to decide for themselves what they are going to do. SD D N A SA
25. I feel that most problems in society would be solved if we could get parents to strictly and forcibly deal with their children when they don't do what they are supposed to as they are growing up. SD D N A SA
26. I often tell my children exactly what to do and how I expect them to do it. SD D N A SA
27. I gave clear direction about my children's behaviors and activities, but I am also understanding when my children disagree with me. SD D N A SA
28. I do not direct the behaviors, activities, and desires of the children in my family. SD D N A SA
29. I let my children know what is expected of them in the family and I insist they conform to those expectations simply out of respect for my authority. SD D N A SA
30. If I make a decision about the family that hurts my children, I will discuss that decision with them, and admit it if I made a mistake. SD D N A SA

APPENDIX C  
PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

### Parental Involvement Questionnaire

Try to read and think about each statement as it applies to your parental involvement while raising your sixth grade child today. There are no right or wrong answers. I am looking for your overall impression regarding each statement. Be sure not to omit any items.

**First, rate the item according to your current level of involvement;** (N = Never, R = Rarely, S = Sometimes, F = Frequently, A = Always).

**Second, rate the item according to how strongly you disagree or agree that parents should perform the activity listed;** (SD = Strongly Disagree, D = Disagree, N = Neither Disagree nor Agree, A = Agree, SA = Strongly Agree).

**Third, indicate what limits your current involvement;** (e.g., time constraints, transportation issues, lack of clear communication or negative communication between the school and home, feel unqualified to assist child, child lacks interest, past negative experiences, feel unwelcome in the school, school does not encourage participation, lack of financial resources, etc.).

**N = Never, R = Rarely, S = Sometimes, F = Frequently, A = Always**  
**SD = Strongly Disagree, D = Disagree, N = Neither Disagree nor Agree, A = Agree,**  
**SA = Strongly Agree**

	Current Involvement	Belief
<b>Disciplining child</b> Limiting: _____	N R S F A	SD D N A SA
<b>Assisting child in getting ready for school</b> Limiting: _____	N R S F A	SD D N A SA
<b>Making certain child attends school</b> Limiting: _____	N R S F A	SD D N A SA
<b>Supporting child's learning</b> Limiting: _____	N R S F A	SD D N A SA
<b>Attending workshops in school</b> Limiting: _____	N R S F A	SD D N A SA
<b>Assisting as a volunteer</b> Limiting: _____	N R S F A	SD D N A SA
<b>Assisting in school programs</b> Limiting: _____	N R S F A	SD D N A SA
<b>Assisting with fund-raising</b> Limiting: _____	N R S F A	SD D N A SA
<b>Having child read-aloud as a young child</b> Limiting: _____	N R S F A	SD D N A SA
<b>Assisting child with schoolwork</b> Limiting: _____	N R S F A	SD D N A SA

N = Never, R = Rarely, S = Sometimes, F = Frequently, A = Always  
 SD = Strongly Disagree, D = Disagree, N = Neither Disagree nor Agree, A = Agree,  
 SA = Strongly Agree

	Current Involvement	Belief
<b>Quizzing child for upcoming tests</b> Limiting: _____	N R S F A	SD D N A SA
<b>Playing educational games with child</b> Limiting: _____	N R S F A	SD D N A SA
<b>Leading development of programs</b> Limiting: _____	N R S F A	SD D N A SA
<b>Making decisions in PTA/PTO meetings</b> Limiting: _____	N R S F A	SD D N A SA
<b>Organizing school related community action that benefits the school and children</b> Limiting: _____	N R S F A	SD D N A SA
<b>Participating in developing the school's mission and goals</b> Limiting: _____	N R S F A	SD D N A SA
<b>Attending cultural activities in the community</b> Limiting: _____	N R S F A	SD D N A SA
<b>Taking classes to further education</b> Limiting: _____	N R S F A	SD D N A SA
<b>Employing community policies and practices granting parents more direct involvement in their child's education</b> Limiting: _____	N R S F A	SD D N A SA
<b>Supporting group trips to cultural events in the neighborhood</b> Limiting: _____	N R S F A	SD D N A SA

APPENDIX D  
PARENTAL DEMOGRAPHICS

**Your Role in the Family**

Father  Mother  Step-father  Step-mother  
 Other (PLEASE DESCRIBE) \_\_\_\_\_

**Your Ethnicity**

African-American  Asian  Bosnian  Caucasian  Hispanic  
 Native American  Other (PLEASE DESCRIBE) \_\_\_\_\_

**Gender of Child**

Male  Female

**Maternal Age**

20-30  31-40  41-50  51-60  Other (PLEASE DESCRIBE) \_\_\_\_\_

**Paternal Age**

20-30  31-40  41-50  51-60  Other (PLEASE DESCRIBE) \_\_\_\_\_

**Family Configuration**

Describe the adults living in your home (e.g., father, mother, step-parent, grandparent, etc.) \_\_\_\_\_

**Hours of Mother's Employment Outside of the Home Per Week**

Unemployed  0-10  11-20  21-30  31-40  41-50  51-60  
 61 and over

**Hours of Father's Employment Outside of the Home Per Week**

Unemployed  0-10  11-20  21-30  31-40  41-50  51-60  
 61 and over

**Highest Degree of Mother's Education**

High School  Associate's  Bachelor's  Graduate  
 Other (PLEASE DESCRIBE) \_\_\_\_\_

**Highest Degree of Father's Education**

High School  Associate's  Bachelor's  Graduate  
 Other (PLEASE DESCRIBE) \_\_\_\_\_

**Annual Family Income in Dollars**

Below 40,000  Above 40,000

**THANK YOU FOR TAKING TIME TO COMPLETE THIS QUESTIONNAIRE**



APPENDIX E  
INTRODUCTORY LETTER

September 10, 2001

Dear Sixth Grade Parents,

As a graduate student in the School Psychology Program at the University of Northern Iowa, I am examining parental views concerning their involvement in their children's schooling and barriers to effective home school partnerships. I am asking that you complete the attached informed consent form, questionnaires, and demographic information and send them to school with your child by this Thursday, September 13<sup>th</sup>. It will take approximately ten minutes to complete the questionnaires. Your participation will assist me in helping children succeed in school. In appreciation of your time, I will be randomly selecting two student's names for gift certificates in the amount of \$20 to Target, Wal-Mart, or K-Mart.

All information that you disclose will remain confidential. Your identity will be concealed by using a number (code) in place of your name.

Thank you for participating. If you have questions prior to Thursday, you can reach me at (319) 266-1798 or via e-mail at [meyerj3780@uni.edu](mailto:meyerj3780@uni.edu).

Sincerely,

Jennifer Meyer, MAE  
UNI Graduate Student

Radhi Al-Mabuk, Ph. D.  
UNI Research Supervisor

Robert Tyson, MA  
Central Middle School Principal