This is to certify that the

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"OH THE NETWORK WEBS THEY WEAVE,
WHEN PARENTS WANT THEIR CHILDREN
TO SUCCEED"

presented by

Steven Benjamin Sheldon

has been accepted towards fulfillment
of the requirements for

PhD. degree in Philosophy

Kenneth A. Frank
Major professor

Date August 21, 2000

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"OH THE NETWORK WEBS THEY WEAVE, WHEN PARENTS WANT THEIR CHILDREN TO SUCCEED"

By

Steven Benjamin Sheldon

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of Counseling Psychology, Educational Psychology,
and Special Education

2000

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ABSTRACT

"OH THE NETWORK WEBS THEY WEAVE, WHEN PARENTS WANT THEIR CHILDREN TO SUCCEED"

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Steven Benjamin Sheldon

Focusing on the social network processes of social capital and social cohesion, this dissertation explores how a parent's social ties and beliefs influence parent involvement at home and at school. In addition, to network factors, this study examined individual influences on parent involvement including a parent's sense of efficacy to help his or her child with school and the degree to which he or she believes all parents should be involved in their own child's education.

A theoretical framework was created arguing social networks affect parent involvement through the network processes of social cohesion and social capital. In the first case, social cohesion, parents are embedded in a subgroup of other parents where they share and compare their beliefs about parent involvement. Social capital involves a parent's investment of resources into another parent or the school, and was expected to affect parent involvement at home and at school. The investment of resources into one another enable parents to become more involved at home and at school. The investment of resources toward the school, on the other hand, affect parent involvement at school through the development of a sense of obligation.

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Data analyses showed evidence that social cohesion and social capital were influences on parent involvement. The data also indicate that parental beliefs were predictors of parent involvement. Further support for the theoretical framework guiding this dissertation was obtained from interviews with parents. The results of this study suggest that, in addition to parental beliefs, a parent's social network provide her or him with resources which facilitate parent involvement. In the end, this dissertation argues for researchers of parent involvement to look beyond the individual parent and to begin to consider social ties and social networks as important influences on parents' behaviors.

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ACKNOWLEGEMENTS

Having studied the impact of social networks and personal ties, I cannot deny the fact that competing this dissertation was enabled through my connections with many friends, colleagues and mentors. Without love, support, and compassion from these people, I might never have completed graduate school. Perhaps more than any of the previous three qualities, I am most grateful that my family and friends have patience.

Among the people who have supported me and my work while conducting this study, I wish to thank my wife Dr. Brenda Neuman-Sheldon. Despite the fact that she would not write this dissertation for me, even after I asked her to marry me, I continue to love her and look to her for inspiration. Without her love and support, and a lot of proofreading, this dissertation would not have been possible. Her contributions to this project span this entire dissertation, and she will inevitably continue to inspire me for decades to come. I look forward to our future together.

I would also like to thank my family for their help and support with this project. My parents, Beverly and Samuel, have shown me only unconditional love and support and are unquestionably one of the greatest inspirations to my work (their financial support they have shown has been helpful too). My brother, David, also deserves thanks. He too has supported me throughout graduate school, despite his skepticism of academia. It is perhaps David's skepticism that has helped direct me to think about how my own work can have meaning in the "real world." There is no way for me to truly acknowledge just how important the love and support my family has shown has been.

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have had an impact, I would like to thank my dissertation committee for their insight and helpful comments with this endeavor. In particular, Dr. Ken Frank has been among the most influential individuals, teaching me about research methods and the importance of social networks. It is his fault I have become interested in Sociology. I would also like to thank Dr. Carole Ames, who offered me the opportunity to come to MSU and who has supported me and the directions my research interest has taken while in graduate school. Also, I would like to thank Aaron Pallas, whom I greatly respect as a scholar and individuals, and who also encouraged my interest in Sociology. Finally, I would like to thank Dr. Patrica Edwards, one of the first professors I met upon arriving at MSU, and among the greatest influences on my thinking with regard to parent involvement. Each of my committee members has contributed greatly to my dissertation and to the way I approach research in general. They are all deserving of my appreciation.

In addition to faculty, there are fellow students and friends that I have made at MSU who have impacted my life greatly. First, I would like to thank Dr. Susan Wallace-Cowell, whose friendship throughout graduate school has been vital to my mental health and well-being. We were destined to be good friends the first night I showed up with a bowl of raw cookie dough. I am also thankful to Susan for her support of my research and writing, in the dissertation writing group. I would also like to thank Heather Mikkelson-Pleasants, who helped me with my dissertation through the writing group and whose shared interest in parents and parent involvement opened up new issues for me to consider.

In addition to those friends who helped me write this dissertation, there are others who deserve acknowledgment for the role they played in my graduate school

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experiences. First, Dr. Paul Conway has been a good friend and colleague. His enthusiasm for and interest in research has been inspiring to me, and has enabled many interesting conversations. I would also like to thank Cheryl Rau, for her friendship and support while waiting outside of the Dean's office. In addition, Dr. Phil Kelly provided much help in the beginning of my dissertation and has opened my mind to many new areas of interest in education. It is because of him that I know who Amy Guttman is, and what her book says. I would also like to thank Dr. Cindy Brock for our wonderful friendship and for making sure I got into the swimming pool when I didn't want to get off the couch. She is the nicest person I have ever met.

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Next, I would like to thank the secretaries and assistants at Erickson Hall for helping me negotiate my way through this graduate program. In particular, Karen

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Finally, I would like to acknowledge the role of the friends with whom I grew up in the Beverlywood community, of Los Angeles. Having grown up in this tight-knit (cohesive?) community surly added to my interest in the issued studied within my dissertation. Without my experiences in this community, the ideas I set out to study would not have appeared worthwhile in the first place. I know that my friendships with people who I have known since kindergarten are special. I hope to never loss those connection, however sparse they may seem at times. These friendships are the anecdotes which inspire me to continue my work.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

It is a national educational policy tenet that parents are an important resource in the education of children. Goal eight of the National Education Goals states, "By the year 2000, every school will promote partnerships that will increase parental involvement and participation in promoting the social, emotional, and academic growth of children" (National Education Goals Report, U.S. Department of Education, 1995). This goal symbolically commits K-12 schools to working with parents and helping parents take a more active role in the education of their children. Now that the year 2000 has arrived, establishing parent-school partnerships for all families remains a goal to which schools across the United States are committed.

Setting the creation of parent-school partnerships as a national goal in education assumes that schools and teachers know how to generate parent involvement. In particular, the goal assumes we know why some parents are involved in their child's education and others are not. In fact, we know very little about why parents get involved (Grolnick, Benjet, Kurowski, & Apostoleris, 1997). Without more knowledge and research into parent involvement, the national dedication toward family-school partnerships is likely to become nothing more than rhetoric.

Concern over parent involvement in education stems from the widespread belief that the interactions and events a child experiences at school are not the sole determinants of his or her academic achievement. Among others, parents can have a significant effect on their child's academic achievement by providing academic support, as well as by

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socializing attitudes towards school and academic work (Eccles & Harold, 1993). In American schools, the idea that parents should be a partner in their children's education has become so common that the promotion of teacher-parent and parent-child interactions has become an "institutional standard"(Lareau, 1989, p.34). Schools, administrators, and teachers continually work to bring parents into the process of education.

At the local level, schools are reaching out to parents in a variety of ways. Teachers send home notes and newsletters, and some schools have created resource rooms for parents in the hopes that they might take home games or books and work with their children (see publication of *Educational Leadership*, 1998). Other schools are attempting to use modern technology such as the internet to connect with parents (See the publication *Educational Leadership*, April, 1998). The creation of new and innovative techniques for interacting with parents comes as a result of the belief that students will do better in school if their parents are working as partners with teachers and school staff members. Behind the policy and beliefs of educators is a body of research establishing the benefits of parent involvement.

The elevation of parent involvement to a national goal is based on a wide range of research in the social sciences that supports the role of parents in the development of their children. Decades of research in developmental psychology has shown that parents are among the most important influences on their children (Maccoby, 1992), affecting cognitive, social, and emotional development (See Hess & Holloway, 1984; Ladd, Le Sieur, Profilet, 1992; Maccoby & Martin, 1983 for reviews and discussions of this). As a result, the family environment and parent-child interactions are recognized and accepted as having an enormous impact on a wide range of developmental outcomes in children.

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Parents' involvement in their children's education is particularly important with regard to students' academic achievement. Studies investigating the relationship between a variety of types of parent involvement and school achievement have found that a child whose parents are involved in his or her education generally performs better in school than a child whose parents are not involved (Stevenson & Baker, 1986; Muller, 1993; Fehrmann, Keith, & Reimers, 1987). Research has shown that when parents and families hold high academic expectations, and structure their home to support these expectations, even the most poor and disadvantaged students can do well in school (Clark, 1983). This body of research provides the foundation for many programs and initiatives created to encourage a wide range of parent involvement behaviors.

Although parent involvement is widely supported throughout the field of education, efforts to generate more parent involvement are not without their skeptics and critics. Recently, several programs designed to bring more parents into the process of educating their children have been criticized as an attempts to shift the burden for improving schools from educators and the government to parents (Fine, 1993). In addition, Lareau (1989) has argued that in some instances parent involvement can become destructive, rather than productive, to educational achievement. In her research, Lareau describes a "dark side" to parent involvement, where conflicts and frustration arise as some parents pressure their children when they try to help them with schoolwork. Nevertheless, parent involvement continues to be viewed by a majority of educators and policy-makers as a critical factor in the attainment of academic competence among students (Epstein, 1992).

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The way in which parent involvement affects children's learning and development may be influenced by the manner in which parents choose to support their child's schooling. Epstein & Dauber (1991) have suggested that there are at least six different types of parent involvement. Among the types of involvement, parents may become involved at home or at school. Parent involvement at home refers to those instances in which a parent interacts with her or his children in school-related behaviors such as helping with homework, reading, or having discussions about school. In comparison, parent involvement at school encompasses behaviors such as volunteering in the classroom, attending school events, or volunteering at the school in places such as the library. Whether parents construct school-like activities in the home, or choose to put time and energy into the classroom, each type of involvement can be viewed as a different way in which parents invest in their child's education[1].

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parents may bring the home and school closer together (Epstein, 1987; Gronick & Slowiaczek, 1994). In addition, as parents interact with their children they may create opportunities for the socialization of motivational beliefs about school, the role of effort, and children's perceptions of themselves (Grolnick, Ryan, & Deci, 1991). Parent involvement at home, therefore, may affect children's academic performance by influencing the development of children's attitudes about school and learning, as well as providing help on specific homework problems.

Parent involvement at school, on the other hand, affects academic achievement in students though different mechanisms. By volunteering at their child's school, parents may be modeling to their child an interest, concern, and value for education (Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994). In addition, involvement at school allows parents access to knowledge of school activities, which can be a crucial determinant for providing effective help (Stevenson & Baker, 1987). By spending time at the school or in their child's classroom, parents may be sending a message to their child about the importance of school, while also gathering information that may make any help provided at home more effective.

In addition to differences in locale, parent involvement at home and parent involvement at school differ in the extent to which they can be observed by others (such as teachers, administrators, students, and other parents). Parent involvement at school, because of where it occurs, is a more public set of behaviors. In contrast, parent involvement at home takes place in settings where few others are likely to observe the interaction. Teachers, for example, can know how often a parent volunteers in their classroom, but cannot know how often a parent checks his or her child's homework. The

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difference between more and less public types of parent involvement may distinguish why and how the social context of parents' lives, and various other social factors, affect parental behaviors.

Parent involvement, and the role of parents in their children's education, have engendered the interest of researchers from across social science disciplines. Psychologists have focused more on individual characteristics and cognitive factors, such as parental beliefs (See Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). Sociologists, in contrast, have generally focused on how social context affects parents, emphasizing the role of factors such as socioeconomic status and the culture of social institutions (Lareau, 1989; Bourdieu & Passerson, 1977). Each field has contributed to our understanding of why parents get involved, although there is little integration across these two disciplines. Recent theoretical developments, however, suggests that the two perspectives can be integrated.

This study draws on the construct of social capital to examine how social relationships and social networks affect parent involvement. Social capital has been defined as a resource which exists between like-minded people, resulting from relationships between these individuals (Coleman,1988; 1990; Morgan & Sorenson, 1997). Networks and relationships become a resource themselves when they provide access to, and enable the use of, various forms of financial, cultural, or human capital (Bourdieu, 1986; Lin, 1999). The idea that the relationships between people can function as an important resource for the education of children has gained increased attention lately (Coleman, 1988), although much of the research on social capital has focused on the social capital in students' lives (Schnieder & Coleman, 1993; Stanton-Salazar, 1996;

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Stanton-Salazar & Dornbusch, 1995; Valenzuela & Dornbusch, 1994). While this research has provided support for the importance of social capital for students, it has not addressed how social relationships affects parents. Coleman (1988) originally described social capital as a resource affecting student achievement, which operates because of, and at times through, parents' social ties and conversations with other parents. For Coleman, social networks embody social capital when they enable groups and individuals to share information, create and enforce norms, and monitor children's behavior (Coleman, 1987). Parent-child and parent-parent relationships are both expected to contribute to social capital.

Although Coleman was among the first to discuss social capital in relation to educational achievement, parents' social networks had been the discussed by others prior to Coleman. In particular, Cochran & Bassard, (1979) have argued that a parent's social network impacts how she or he raises her or his children. Drawing on Bronfenbrenner's model of Ecological Psychology (1979), parents' friends and social relationships constitute the mesosystem, within which children are embedded and develop. These networks impact parents, affecting children indirectly, in three ways: by impacting how parents develop themselves, by connecting parents to a larger variety of "life possibilities", and by making the role of parent easier or more difficult (Cochran & Brassard, 1979). Despite the rhetoric about how parents' social networks might impact parental behaviors, researchers have yet to examine them as an influence on parents' decisions to become involved in their child's education.

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This study seeks to understand how the social context of parental social networks function to facilitate or constrain parent involvement. In particular, the social context that results from parent-parent relationships may influence parent involvement in two ways: (1) through social cohesion, and (2) through the development of social capital. According to Friedkin (1993) individuals who are in a group composed of dense ties among actors are more likely to be aware of others' opinions and to be influenced by them. The process whereby beliefs are visible and influential is social cohesion. In contrast, Lin (1990) has defined social capital as the mobilization of resources embedded within a social structure. With regard to parent involvement, social capital is the process whereby parents use their social relationships as access to resources in ways that allow them to be active in their child's educational development. Whether and how each of these processes effect parent involvement at home and at school is explored in this study.

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Social cohesion is hypothesized to be related to parent involvement through relationships among parents that maintain norms about parents' behaviors. When subgroups of parents believe that it is their responsibility to be involved in their child's education, for example, discussions among group members may reinforce these ideas and are expected to predict parent involvement at home and at school. Likewise, when groups believe that parents should not get involved in the educational process, or that they cannot help their children with school, they may reinforce one another to stay away from school or not help their children at home. In these ways, subgroup characteristics are expected to predict parental behaviors, illustrating one mechanism through which social context affects parental involvement at home or at school.

The social context, created through networks of parents, operates as social capital when parents draw upon the resources of their subgroup to help accomplish a particular goal or action. Accessing the resources of others is expected to create a sense of obligation and the perception that others expect reciprocation. Within the literature on social capital, social structure has been associated with interpersonal and group dynamics that enable the development of these obligations and norms (Coleman, 1988; Bourdieu, 1986). In this study, the extent to which structural features of a subgroup, as well as parents' perceptions of others, predicts parent involvement at home and at school are taken as indicators of how social capital might facilitate parental behaviors.

This dissertation set out to answer the general question: "How might social context, as parents' network relationships, contribute to the creation or facilitation of parent involvement at home and at school?" In answering this question, social network data was collected, using self-report surveys, from mothers with children in elementary

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In addition to the survey data on parents' beliefs and social network information, data collected from interviews with parents were analyzed to address the question; "How do friendships and acquaintances among parents affect their decisions to become involved in the education of their children?" Through random and purposive sampling of parents, the mechanisms through which social relationships affects parental behavior (social cohesion and social capital) were explored. This analysis, drawing on the survey data and research literature, enabled a discussion of why and how relationships function as social capital.

Finally, concludes with a summary and discussion of the findings reported. Combining the findings from the survey and interview data brings into focus the ways parent-parent relationships constitute a social context in which social cohesion and social capital facilitates parent involvement at home and at school. In addition, the implications this research has for the literature on parent involvement and social capital are discussed. In the end, this study brings together, and builds upon, the literature on parent involvement and social capital. This study argues for the need to study parents as social actors, who are influenced and affected by the friendships and relationships that they maintain. Ultimately this study reinforces the need for more research into how the social context of parents' lives, particularly the social network aspects of it, affect parent involvement at home and at school.

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CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Across the nation, schools and educators are spending time and money to create partnerships with parents and communities toward the education of children. Although the research is mixed, enough evidence has been collected to suggest that schools should devote some of their resources toward increasing parental involvement in the education of children. Research on the effects of various forms of parent involvement has found that it predicts school achievement (Fehrman, Keith, & Reimer, 1987; Stevenson & baker, 1987; Muller, 1993), as well as declines in student drop out and truancy (McNeal, 1998). As the body of research showing the connection between parent involvement and positive student outcomes grows, the importance of involving parents in the education of their children is becoming more readily accepted.

While some research may conclude that parent involvement will not help students achieve in school, there are ample reasons to suggest that these results may be misleading. Studies finding a negative relationship between parent involvement and academic outcomes, or no relationship at all, have generally been cross-sectional, correlational studies. In these cases, the negative relationship (or absence of one) between parent involvement and student outcomes may reflect the fact that many parents become involved in their child's education in *reaction* to their child's poor performance at school (Epstien, 1991). That is, parents may wait until their child is struggling before they take an active role in his or her education. In order to disentangle the effects of proactive and reactive parent involvement, longitudinal evidence must be considered.

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Few studies have examined the effects of parent involvement on student achievement longitudinally. One such study, by Steinberg and his colleagues (Steinberg Lamborn, Dornbusch, & Darling, 1992), examined the effects of parenting styles and parenting practices on children over time. Their analyses found that parent involvement predicted students' grades at time 2, while controlling for grades at time 1, parents' beliefs, and several demographic variables. These results lead the researchers to the conclusion that, "parental involvement actually *leads to* academic success, rather than accompanying it" (Steinberg et al., 1992, p1275).

A second study, by Joyce Epstein (1991), has shown that parent involvement can lead to learning gains in young children. In her study, also longitudinal, the more time parents spent reading with their children, the higher were the children's gains in reading and literacy skills. The association between parent involvement and achievement gains in this study lends further credence to claims about the important role parents can play in the educational development of their children. In the case of Epstein's research the involvement behavior was parents reading with their child. Epstein and Steinberg's research provide convincing evidence that parents should be involved in their children's education, and the schools should encourage parental involvement.

Educators continue to struggle with ways to bring more parents into the process of educating their children. To date, little is known about why parents get involved in their children's education (Grolnick, Benjet, Kurowski, & Apostoleris, 1997). Both parents' beliefs and the social context of parents' lives have been found to predict the extent of parent involvement. In particular, beliefs such as parents' sense of efficacy and the way they view their role as a parent have been suggested as important predictors of parent

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involvement (Ames, DeStefano, Watkins, & Sheldon, 1995; Eccles & Harold, 1993; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). Research on the social context of parents' lives has found that parents' socioeconomic status, marital status, and educational attainment are all variables which predict levels of parent involvement (Lareau, 1989; Muller & Kerbow, 1993). Other contextual factors, however, have not been studied as predictors of parent involvement.

Between the level of the individual and larger societal forces exists other social contexts. Bronfenbrenner, in particular, has argued that between a child's immediate home environment and the larger society exists the mesosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Included in this intermediate system are the social networks of parents, also referred to as parents' personal social networks, which function as channels of communication and information, as well as identification of human and material resources (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Cochran & Brassard, 1979). Although social networks have been shown to be important resources for finding job (Granovetter, 1973) or as support systems (Wellman & Wortley, 1990), this aspect of parents' lives has not been studied in relation to parent involvement.

This study looks at parents' decisions to become involved in their child's education and focuses on how social relationships with other parents might impact these choices. The social group to which parents are members is hypothesized to act as a social context which affects parent involvement. Two processes are expected to affect parent involvement: (1) social cohesion and (2) social capital. Models of social cohesion suggest that pressures toward uniformity between two individuals within the same subgroup make their beliefs influential on one another (Friedkin, 1984). Social capital, in

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contrast, refers to the availability, access, and exchange of resources from others within a network, directed toward a particular goal or outcome (Coleman, 1990; Lin, 1999; Portes, 1998). The relationship between these subgroup phenomena and parent involvement will be the focus of this study.

Defining Parent Involvement

Although the term parent involvement is commonly used, its definition is not uniform. Parent involvement can be defined as parents' investment of resources in their children (Grolnick, et al., 1997) and can refer to a wide range of behaviors. Grolnick and her colleagues (Grolnick & Slowiaczek; 1994; Grolnick et. al., 1997) have argued that parent involvement can be defined as three types of actions; behavioral, intellectual/cognitive, and personal. Epstein (1986a; Epstein & Dauber, 1991) has created a separate framework for examining parent involvement that lists six types of parent involvement (or what she refers to as school-family partnerships); ranging from parents providing a place for their children to do homework to collaboration between community agencies and the school (See Table 1). Although Epstein and Grolnick have conceptualized parent involvement somewhat differently, both researchers recognize parent involvement as a distinct set of behaviors that draws on different resources. Usage of the term "parent involvement" in this study draws primarily on the typology of parent involvement created by Epstein and her colleagues.

Table 1. Epstein's Typology of Parent Involvement

Typology of Parent Involvement	Description	Examples
Basic Obligations of Parents	Behaviors and approaches that parents do which maintain healthy child development and building positive home conditions	developing parenting skills providing for children food, shelter, health and safety
Basic Obligations of Schools	Behaviors that keep schools in communication with students' families	sending memo and notices home

Table 1: Epstein's Typology of Parent Involvement

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Basic Obligations of Parents	Behaviors and approaches that parents do which maintain healthy child development and building positive home conditions	developing parenting skills providing for children food, shelter, health and safety
Basic Obligations of Schools	Behaviors that keep schools in communication with students' families	sending memo and notices home about students' progress and school programs
Parent Involvement at School	Assisting the teachers, administrators, and children in classrooms. Also includes coming to school for sports, performances, or other events.	volunteering in the classroom going to school events attending parent-teacher conferences
Parent Involvement at Home	Parents are assisting their own children on learning activities that are coordinated with class work.	read with child at home discuss and monitor homework help with homework discuss school programs
Parent Involvement in Governance and Advocacy	Parents in participator roles in governance and advocacy groups (at school, district, or state level)	PTA/PTO membership school board member advisory councils memberships on committees or other groups at schools
Collaboration with Community Organizations	access to community and support services and connections with agencies and businesses	after-school care health care services

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Epstein's typology of parent involvement articulates several levels of behavior which bring families and schools into a closer partnership toward the education of children: (1) the obligations of parents, (2) the obligation of schools, (3) parents' involvement at the school, (4) parents' involvement at home, (5) involvement in schools' decision making boards, and (6) collaboration between community services and schools. At the first level of this typology, parent involvement concerns parents' responsibilities to feed, clothe, and bring their child to school. The second type of involvement refers to the schools' basic obligations to parents, where schools are responsible for communicating to families information about school programs, their child's progress, and other news involving the school. The third type of involvement refers to parents working at the school, where parents volunteer to assist teachers in the classroom or other school personnel. The fourth type of involvement refers to parents working with their children at home, assisting them with learning activities, having discussions about school, or engaging in other activities which might encourage learning and school success. The fifth type of involvement refers to the inclusion of parents in the decision making process of schools. This may, for example, occur by getting parents involved with the PTA/PTO or sitting on school boards. Finally, the sixth type of involvement refers to the collaboration between schools and community services or organizations to help families with health care, after-school care, or any other service they might need.

Clearly, the framework developed by Epstein and her colleagues is broad and can encapsulate a large variety of possible behaviors. This dissertation, however, focuses on *parents'* efforts to invest directly in the learning and education of their own child. For this reason, the collaboration between community organizations and schools, as well as

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the basic obligations of school will not be included in the definition of parent involvement. In addition, involvement in the decision-making process of school will not be studied because it refers to parental actions into the governance of educational organizations (See Comer, 1988; Comer & Haynes, 1991 for more on this), and is not viewed as an investment directed toward their own child's learning. Of the remaining three types of parent involvement, only involvement at home and at school will be examined in this study.

Research has shown considerable variation in the types and amount of involvement parents are encouraged to do. Epstein and Dauber (1991), for example, found that elementary schools, in comparison to junior high or middle schools, generally have more comprehensive programs for all types of parent involvement, except for how they communicate to parents. In a study of parents' perceptions of their involvement with their elementary school children, Epstein (1986) reported that almost all parents appeared to fulfill what Epstein refers to as their "basic obligation as parents." In her study, 97% of the respondents reported that they provide their children with school supplies, and over 90% stated that they provide their child with a place to do homework. These results suggest that there is little variation in parent involvement at the level of parent obligations -- almost all parents seem to provide (or at least perceive themselves as providing) their children with school supplies and a place to study at home. In contrast, parent involvement at home and at school continue to be goals for many schools and teachers, precisely because they are less prevalent. The quest for more parent involvement at home or at school, and the degree to which this is valued in our society, is reflected in the large amount of research conducted on the topic.

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Parent Involvement at School

Although parent involvement can benefit teachers by providing them with extra help, it may also produce benefits for parents and students. More specifically, involvement at school benefits parents by providing: (1) access to important information about their child's education and (2) direct opportunities to talk to their child's teacher. In addition, this form of involvement can lead to increases in student achievement as parents are modeling to the child that education is important and valuable (Stevenson & Baker, 1987; Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994). Muller and Kerbow (1993) have argued, "Volunteering may be understood as engagement with the overall experience of the child's education through acquiring first-hand information about the environment of the school, interacting with teachers as they perform their jobs, and observing the interactions of the child with other students (p. 34)." Being at the school and in their child's classroom affords parents the opportunity to collect information about classroom activities, their child's classroom behaviors, and may place parents in a better position to help their children in ways that support school learning.

While involvement at school may provide parents and students with important benefits, this type of involvement is somewhat rare. Reports using data from the National Educational Longitudinal Study 1988 (NELS:88) indicate that between15 - 26% of all mothers say they volunteer at their child's school, depending on the amount of time they work outside of the home (Muller & Kerbow, 1993). Mothers who work full-time outside of the home reported volunteering the least at school, a finding replicated elsewhere (Eccles & Harold, 1996). A second reason why involvement at school is rare may be that parents feel as though their presence is unwanted. Epstein (1986) found that

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as many as 12% of the parents she surveyed reported that they were never asked to become involved in the classroom. Together these studies suggest that the benefits parents gain from being in the classroom or at the school may not be realized because of the socioeconomic factors of parents' lives and/or feelings of alienation. In order to create more involvement at school, schools and teachers must better understand the factors that inhibit and enable this type of involvement.

Parent Involvement at Home

Parent involvement at home differs from involvement at school in that it refers to the investment of parents' resources into their child's education in a more private location than parent involvement at school. Parent involvement at home refers to parent-child interactions over school-related or learning activities (Epstein, 1986; Epstein & Dauber, 1991). This type of involvement, also referred to as "the curriculum of the home" (Walberg, 1984), encompasses behaviors that help children on their schoolwork and which create a context at home that emphasizes the importance of school and obtaining an education. Becker and Epstein (1982) have suggested that teachers' attempts to generate this type of involvement fall into five categories; (1) having parents read to their children, (2) encouraging discussion between parents and children, (3) specifying activities at home to stimulate learning, (4) creating contracts between teachers and parents, and (5) having parents act as tutors to their children. Together these five activities comprise a set of behaviors which may help parents create a home environment that encourages learning and the desire to learn.

Research has shown a positive relationship between parent involvement at home and children's educational outcomes. Home-based parent involvement, such as parent-

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child discussions about school, have been found to predict higher grades in students (Fehrman, Keith, & Reimers, 1987). This relationship continued in later research, controlling for achievement test scores (Muller, 1993). Other studies have found that involvement practices such as reading to children were related to higher reading scores (Epstein, 1991). Together, these studies suggest that home environments which emphasize schooling may contribute to school success through the development of skills needed to do well in school.

Almost all parents may want their child to do well in school, however not all parents are actively involved in their child's education at home. Several studies have found differences across socioeconomic groups in the frequency of parent involvement at home. Parents from higher socioeconomic (SES) groups are generally more involved than parents from lower SES groups (Lareau, 1988; Fehrman, Keith, & Reimers, 1987). In related research, studies have shown that the amount of education parents have completed is an important predictor of parent involvement, as parents with more schooling tend to be more involved in their children's education (Ames, De Stefano, Watkins, & Sheldon, 1995; Muller & Kerbow, 1993). The amount of financial and/or human capital a parent possesses appears related to parent involvement at home.

Although factors such as maternal employment or parent's level of education can help predict which parents are likely to get involved in their child's education, we continue to know very little about why a parent chooses to act as a partner with the school or teachers. Among the possible influences on parent involvement at home and at school are those at the individual level and others which may be more social. At the individual/micro level, research has found relationships between parents' beliefs and the

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frequency and style in which they interact with their children. Research on social/macro influences has examined differences across groups of individuals and how access to various forms of capital may function to influence parent involvement.

Individual/Micro Influences on Parent Involvement

Psychologists interested in parent involvement have generally based their efforts on the idea that the interactions which occur between parent and child are an important context where parents might socialize children to strive toward school success and learning (Eccles & Harold, 1993). Emphasis has been placed on identifying various beliefs of parents (e.g., Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1996), studying the relationship between parents' beliefs and their behaviors (Ames et al., 1995; Hoover-Dempsey, Brissie, & Bassler, 1992; Eccles & Harold, 1996), as well as the relationship between parents' beliefs and children's outcomes (Eccles, Adler, & Kaczala, 1982; Ginsburg & Bronstein, 1993; Gottfried, Fleming, & Gottfired, 1994; Phillips, 1984; Steinberg, Elemen, & Mounts, 1989). Overall, the research that has emerged from this psychological approach to studying parent involvement has shown the importance of parents' beliefs as a predictor of parent involvement, which in turn affects student achievement.

The Influence of Parents on Children

Historically, parents have been considered one of the most important influences on their child's development (Maccoby, 1992). As research emerges showing that parent involvement can affect children's motivation and school achievement (Gottfried, et al., 1994), the parent-child context created through parent involvement becomes of greater

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interest. The field of developmental psychology, in general, has focused on factors such as parenting styles and parents' beliefs as predictors of parent involvement. In both cases, researchers have argued that parents' beliefs influence their interactions with their children, which in turn shape the development of children's beliefs and academic achievement. The review that follows focuses on research into the process whereby parents influence their children's attitudes and education.

One of the most common approaches to studying parents and how they affect the development of their own children, is to examine the general style with which they act as parents. Steinberg and his colleagues (Steinberg, 1996; Steinberg, et al, 1992) have used Baumrind's typology of parenting styles (Baumrind, 1971) to study the effects of parenting and parent involvement on children. Adopting this approach, Steinberg (1996) has argued that each parenting style represents an overall approach to child-rearing, and that differences across each style reflect differences in more specific beliefs and attitudes held by parents. Parenting styles, therefore, are a measure of the affective context and values within a home, and mediate the influence of parents' behaviors on child outcomes (Darling & Steinberg, 1993). Research from this approach has been able to demonstrate that the home context greatly affects the psychological and scholastic development of children.

Over the last several decades, research on parenting styles has shown consistent relationships between authoritative parenting, where parents express control and warmth, and higher levels of school achievement, academic grades, and a more internalized and an intrinsic type of student motivation (Dornbusch, Ritter, Leiderman, Roberts, & Fraleigh, 1987; Grolnick & Ryan, 1989; Grolnick, Ryan, & Deci, 1991). In longitudinal

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studies, parents who were labeled Authoritative were more involved with their children's education, and encouraged them to succeed more, which in turn led to greater student motivation to work (Steinberg, Elmen, Mounts, 1989) and greater student achievement (Steinberg, et al., 1992). Although this approach may help discriminate which parents are more or less involved, it does little to help explain why some parents are more involved in their child's education, either at home or at school.

Researchers have also studied the relationship between parents' beliefs and how they interact with their children, as well as the relationship between parents' beliefs and a variety of child outcomes. Among the beliefs that have been the focus of study are gender-based stereotypes and perceptions of children's competence. Parents make their beliefs public to their children, who then internalize them. The findings from the following studies suggest that the discussions parents have with their children about school and school performance have an influence on how children perceive school and themselves. Parent involvement, it follows, may be a context where these expectations and beliefs are conveyed to children.

Children are exposed to many voices throughout each day and, given the amount of time they spend in school, one might expect the teacher to be the most significant influence on how a child perceives him- or herself. A study by Phillips (1987), however, presented evidence that parents are a greater influence on children than the messages received from school. In a study of high achieving third graders, Phillips found that when parents *inaccurately* rated their child's competence as being low, the children tended to perceive themselves as less competent. This suggests that parents' beliefs

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Parental beliefs may also affect how they perceive school and their own ability with school subjects. Eccles, Adler, and Kaczala (1982) found that parents' stereotypes about the utility and difficulty of mathematics for boys and girls were important predictors of their children's expectations of themselves in math. In addition, this study found that parents' own behaviors around mathematics, (i.e., how often they used it), were not predictive of their children's beliefs. Rather, the authors suggest, parents impact their own children because they are "conveyors of expectancies" (Eccles, et al., 1982, p.320). Through direct interactions with their children, parents communicate their beliefs about school and school performance. Parent involvement at home may be predictive of school achievement because of the fact that these situations communicate the importance of schooling to children.

Although these studies rely on correlational data to make their case, it is important to note that they provide support for a more general theory which suggests that parents act as important mediators between their children and various outside/ecological influences. In the study by Eccles and her colleagues, for example, the findings can be interpreted as evidence that parents were mediating the more general societal attitudes about gender and math performance to their children. In the study by Phillips, parents act as mediators of more local sources of information, namely the school. Together these studies support the hypothesis that the immediate interactions between parents and children provide a context whereby parents represent both personal and/or social attitudes to their children.

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The studies above provide evidence for a connection between parents' beliefs and children's beliefs, albeit without much discussion about how these beliefs are communicated and made public. More than merely words or ideas that are verbally communicated to children, parents' beliefs may also be the basis for how parents interact with their children. Perhaps some of the strongest evidence showing the connection between parents' beliefs and how they interact with their children was collected by Sigel and his colleagues (Laosa & Sigel, 1982; Sigel, 1992). Working within a laboratory setting, parents were asked to teach a variety of skills to their child after completing a questionnaire assessing parents' beliefs about learning and development. Based on observations, parents' teaching strategies were rated on the extent to which parents required their child to use abstract and representational thinking, referred to as "distancing strategies". From these studies, parental beliefs about how children learn were found to predict the way they set out to teach their children the various tasks and skills involved in the study. This relationship between parents' beliefs and the way they interact with their child remained even after controlling for demographic variables such as family size and socioeconomic status (McGillicuddy-DeLisi, 1982)[2]. Additionally, supporting McGillicuddy-DeLisi's findings, Sigel (1992) reported that parents who believed that children learn through direct instruction were more likely than other parents to propose the use of didactic and authoritative instructional strategies. Although Sigel reported that the belief-behavior relationship was weak, the beliefs of parents are related to their interactions with their children. The research conducted by Sigel and his associates show that parents' beliefs are an important factor to consider when studying

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how parents choose to help their children learn. Whether parents' beliefs are an explanation for why parents get involved has been investigated by others.

Parental Factors Affecting Parent Involvement

In studying parent involvement and why parents choose to actively participate in the schooling of their children, researchers have begun to hypothesize a variety of beliefs that appear to be important predictors of this behavior. Parental beliefs such as sense of efficacy, perception of the parental role, perception that help is wanted, and level of comfort with the school have all been suggested as important predictors of parent involvement (Ames et al., 1995; Eccles & Harold, 1993; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1996; 1997). As confirming evidence for some of these relationships grows (Hoover, Bassler, & Brisse, 1992; Sheldon & Ames, 1997), parents' beliefs have come to be accepted as important influences on both parents and children. Among these beliefs, parental role construction and parents' sense of self-efficacy have received the most attention.

Achievement motivation researchers have, for decades, argued that a person is more likely to engage in an activity if he or she believes they can successfully accomplish the task. Bandura (1986;1993) suggested that confidence in oneself is a particularly important determinant of behavior. For parent involvement, this translates into parents' belief that they have the skills and knowledge necessary to help their children (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995). Parents' self-efficacy to help their children achieve in school has been examined in several studies and has been proven to be a powerful predictor of parent involvement (Hoover-Depsey et al., 1992; Ames, et.al., 1995; Sheldon & Ames, 1997). Attempts to understand why parents' choose to participate in the

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In addition to the belief that their actions will have a positive effect on the child, parents must also see involvement behaviors as something they *should* do. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) have suggest that parent involvement is more likely to occur when parents view their own personal involvement in the education of children as part of the responsibilities of being a parent. Parents can vary widely in how they construct their roles, and the extent to which their role includes being actively involved with their child's education. In their study of parents' understanding of their role, Hoover-Dempsey and Jones (1997) found that some parents believed they are responsible for day-to-day involvement in their child's education, others felt as though the school and teachers are almost completely responsible for children's schooling, while a third groups believed that parents and schools are partners in the education of children. To date, however, research has not been conducted showing a connection between parents' beliefs about whether or not they should be involved and their actual involvement

In addition to parental beliefs, researchers have tried to understand why and who gets involved in their child's education by comparing groups of parents. Among the background or demographic characteristics that help predict which parents are more or less likely to become involved are educational attainment and ethnicity. Studies have shown that parents who have more education are more likely to be involved in their child's education than parents with very little education (Delgato-Gaitan, 1992; Lareau, 1988; Sheldon & Ames, 1997; Stevenson & Baker, 1987). In addition, studies have also found that parents from different ethnic backgrounds are more or less likely to get

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involved in their children's education. White parents tend to communicate with their children about school more than any other ethnic group, while Asian parents have been found to hold higher aspirations for their children than other ethnic groups (Keith, Keith, Quirk, Sperduto, Santillo, & Killings, 1998). Together the findings from this study suggest that there are characteristics of parents that can help us predict which parents are more or less likely to be involved in their child's education.

Teacher/School Effects on Parent Involvement

In addition to qualities of individual parents, research has examined how schools and educators might affect the degree to which parents become involved in their children's education. Although a paucity of research examining school factors as predictors of parent involvement exists, both teachers' practices and teachers' beliefs have been found to predict parent involvement. As a social context, schools have been shown to be an important influence on parent-child interactions.

Similar to the research on parents, the efficacy beliefs of teachers have been shown to predict parent involvement. Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler, & Brissie (1987) have argued that efficacious teachers are likely to, "convey a sense that requests for parent help are a complement to the teaching program, not a sign of teacher inadequacy (p. 429)." In their own research of teacher efficacy, the degree to which teachers believe they can teach and help students learn, predicted parent involvement at home and at school. Although no causal evidence exists to suggest that teacher efficacy creates greater parent involvement, evidence such as this suggests that teachers beliefs can impact the behaviors of their students' parents.

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In addition to teachers' beliefs, the efforts of schools and teachers have been shown to affect parent involvement at student outcomes. In one study, when teachers included parents in the development and presentation of art and social studies curriculum, students developed an awareness and appreciation of art and art styles (Epstein & Dauber, 1995). When schools and teachers enable parents to volunteer and help develop curriculum, students learning and educational development appear to be effected in positive ways.

In addition to getting parents involved in the classroom teachers' communications with parents may affect their involvement. In one study Ames and her colleague (Ames et. al., 1993; Ames et al., 1995) asked teachers to increase the frequency and types of communications they sent home to parents. The results of this research are somewhat mixed. Increased school-to-home communication appeared to increase parent involvement for parents with the most education, but had no effect on parents with relatively little education (Sheldon & Ames, 1997). This study suggests that, although teachers' practices can impact parental behaviors, it's effect is dependent on characteristics of parents. It is the context within which parents exist, and within which teachers' practices are received, that requires the attention of researchers. To date, the social context within which parents live has been narrowly defined.

The Portrait of a Parent

What has emerged from decades of research on parents is a portrait of an individual whose interactions are largely confined to his or her child, and perhaps the child's teacher. Cochran and Brassard argued two decades ago that, "While the prominent role played by the parents in [child] development has been a subject much in

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vogue during the past decade, little attempt has been made to place the family in a social context beyond that provided by timeworn and static socioeconomic parameters." (Cochran & Brassard, 1979, p.601). With respect to parent involvement, this criticism is a valid today as it was then. Research on parent involvement has characterized "a parent" as an isolated individual, interacting with his or her child and perhaps a teacher.

Beliefs are often described as individual attributes, absent any social context. However, beliefs are tied to the social contexts within which they operate (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). The construction of roles, for example, is a social process that occurs within the society at large (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Likewise, self-efficacy can be developed through vicarious experiences, such as watching others succeed or fail at tasks (Bandura, 1977; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995). Given that beliefs such as self-efficacy and how parents understand their responsibilities are linked to parents' social interactions with others, research on the relationships between the social context and parents' personal beliefs is warranted.

To date, research pertaining to the origins and influences on parents' beliefs have largely focused on demographic factors or the influence of teachers. Despite a paucity of research in this area, studies have shown that teachers' practices can influence parents' beliefs about themselves and the teacher (Ames, Khoujo, & Watkins, 1993; Epstein, 1986b; Sheldon & Ames, 1997). In addition to the influence of teachers, Lareau (1989) has argued that social class is a more meaningful determinant of parent involvement. In this dissertation, a social context that lays between individual parents and societal forces, parents' friendships with other parents and adults, is explored as a social context which impacts parental beliefs and parent involvement.

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The evidence suggesting that parents' beliefs affect the development of children's beliefs is often portrayed as a rather straightforward process; parents construct the beliefs that guide their actions, and these beliefs and actions then influence the development of their children. Such a conception of parental influence, however, has been criticized for viewing parents' lives out of context and isolated from environments which might affect how they perceive themselves and schooling. Among these critics, Kohn (1984) has argued, "parental values cannot be treated as the beginning of the process, ...but must be seen as intervening in a chain that starts with the social-structural conditions of parents' lives..." (p.5). The beliefs that predict involvement may have their origins, or at least be influenced by factors, outside of the home. If this is the case, it important is to take note of the immediate social context surrounding parents and how it might affect parental beliefs and behaviors.

Social Networks as a Social Context

Parents invest in their children's education in a variety of ways, and factors affecting the amount and types of investments can be found within and outside of the home. While many influences on parent involvement have been studied, as discussed previously, investigation into factors outside of the family have been somewhat limited. For example, despite longtime recognition that families are embedded within networks of relatives, neighbors, and friends (Bott, 1957; Cochran & Brassard, 1979), the impact these networks have on parent involvement have gone largely unexamined. In this study, parents' social networks are recognized as an important and influential social context on parents' decisions to become involved with their child's education at home and at school.

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Despite the paucity of attention parental social networks have received, there are important theoretical reasons why researchers might begin to study them as an influence on parent involvement, and even academic achievement. In The Ecology of Human Development, Urie Bronfenbrenner (1979) suggests that child development is affected by the nested systems in which all individuals exist. Among these systems, Bronfenbrenner describes the Mesosystem; it is the interrelations and social ties among individuals and the connections between settings such as the home, school, or one's neighborhood. For parents and families, these social ties and networks provide indirect channels for desired communication when no direct link is available, they can help identify human or material resources needed, and they serve as channels for transmitting information and attitudes about one setting to another (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). From this, parents' social networks are expected to affect parent involvement to the extent that they serve as a source of information, communication, and attitudes about school. In addition, these ties may provide a means by which parents can identify some of the resources needed in order for their child to succeed in school.

In addition to Bronfenbrenner, Cochran and Brassard (1979) have argued that parents' social networks affect child development indirectly, through their impact on parents. They suggest three ways in which parents' social networks affect how parents interact with their children: (1) networks provide access to emotional and material assistance, (2) networks encourage or discourage patterns of parent-child interactions, and (3) networks provide role models of child-rearing practices. Parents' social networks, therefore, might also affect parent involvement by providing parents access to resources, role models, and reinforcement for these types of behaviors.

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In addition to the theoretical arguments about the role parents' networks can have affecting parent-child interactions, social network approaches to educational research have shown the benefits of examining teachers as social actors. Social network research enables researchers to capture the interactions between individual, institutional, and organizational levels of schooling (Frank 1998). For example, where teachers were once viewed as isolated individuals (Cusick, 1983; Lortie, 1977), social network research has shown a relationship between the interactions among teachers and their orientations to teaching (Frank, 1996). Just as educational research has illustrated the importance of teachers' social networks as a context of influence, a similar approach to research with parents might provide equally important findings about the importance of parents' social networks.

The Influence of Social Networks as Social Context

Sociologists have, for decades, investigated how groups and network ties affect individuals. Merton (1957), for example, distinguishes between "locals" and "cosmopolitans" based on the ways these individuals are perceived and interact with the members of their social networks. Homans (1950) also studied how groups affect human behavior, and suggests that cohesion, the desire to remain in a group, is an important influence on human behavior. Although there is little debate regarding whether or not networks and groups impact human behavior, how these group processes affect parents' behavior and parent-child interactions has received far less attention.

The influence of parents' social networks on parent involvement can occur through a variety of mechanisms. Among these, social network research has discussed two social processes which are of particular interest to this study; social cohesion and

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social capital. Both phenomena can be considered to be processes through which social ties and social networks affect parent involvement at home and at school.

Social Cohesion

As individuals communicate and interact with friends and relatives they often learn new information and share opinions, both of which might influence what they think and feel about different situations. Within the social network literature, cohesion refers to the process whereby close ties and frequent interactions influence actors through the exchange of information and attitudes (Frank, 1998: Friedkin, 1997). This influence is associated with network characteristics such as the presence of strong interpersonal ties and groups, "in which each member is strongly tied to all other members" (Friedkin, 1997, p.83). Early interest in cohesion focused mostly on how groups affect individual behavior and attitudes (Homans, 1950; Festinger, Schachter, & Back, 1950; Mudrack, 1989). More recently, however, researchers have begun to study cohesion as a process among individuals or dyads (Friedkin, 1997). In this dissertation, cohesion is one process expected to affect parent involvement. Parents' behaviors are influenced by their interactions with other parents or parent groups. In particular, the beliefs held by other parents, or groups of parents, are believed to be predictive of parent involvement at home and at school.

Early research into the effect of social interactions and social networks on individuals suggests that group norms and pressures to conform are an important source of influence on individuals' behavior. Festinger, et. al. (1950) found that informal social groups are likely to form among individuals who interact often and, within these groups,

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More recent research on cohesion lends strong support the earlier studies on the subject. Friedkin, for example, found that individuals who are in the same cohesive subgroup are more likely to be aware of each others' opinions, and to find these beliefs salient in forming their own opinions. In addition, members of cohesive groups have been found to come to consensus faster than individuals who not members of a cohesive group (Friedkin, 1983; 1997). These findings suggest that membership within a group or subgroup, in which actors are well connected and talk to one another often, make the beliefs of subgroup members more salient and more of an influence.

As an influence on parent involvement, cohesion functions to the extent that the beliefs of other parents, or the beliefs of one's subgroup, affect parental beliefs or the degree to which a parent gets involved with her or his child's education. As a group phenomenon, cohesion may be represented in the relationship between a parent's subgroup's beliefs and her or his involvement behavior. As a phenomena across individuals, cohesion operates when the beliefs of those with whom a parent talks about education predict that parent's behavior or beliefs. The network ties that enable a parent to gain knowledge of others' beliefs may also function as an influence on that parent.

Social Capital

The term social capital has been used across many fields of study, as researchers begin to study how relationships and social networks affect individual behavior[3]. At its core, social capital is a resource resulting from the presence of social interaction among individuals. Portes (1998) distinguishes social capital from other resources when he

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states, "Whereas economic capital is in people's bank accounts and human capital is inside their heads, social capital inheres in the structure of their relationships" (p.7). More specifically, Bourdieu defines social capital as,

> "...the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition... which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectivity-owned capital,...(Bourdieu, 1986, pp.248-249)."

For Bourdieu, social capital is the collective capital (economic, cultural, and otherwise) available to a person by virtue of his or her social interactions or membership in a group. Through interactions and social ties, individuals gain access to resources such as information, they are able to exchange favors, and they can enforce norms (Coleman, 1990). I will explore how social capital functions within the context of parents' social networks toward the creation of parents' involvement in their children's education.

Social capital is a resource dependent on both the structure and function of social networks and network actors. As researchers have begun to develop the concept of social capital, some have focused on network structure and actors' position within a network (Burt, 1992; Coleman, 1990), while others have dealt mostly with how networks might affect individuals or groups (Portes & Sensenbrenner, 1993; Stanton-Salazar & Dornbush, 1995). Although the two, network structure and network function, cannot be separated in actors' lives, they can be separated theoretically.

Social Capital as Network Structure

Network Size. Perhaps the simplest way to study social networks is by counting the number of social ties that each individual maintains. Bourdieu (1986) has argued that network size is an important indicator of social capital, and argues that individuals with

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larger networks should have more social capital at their disposal. Similarly, Lin (1988) has argued that individuals with larger social networks have access to a wider variety of social resources. As an example of how this aspect functions as capital, De Graaf and Flap (1988) have found a positive relationship between network size and finding employment. Knowing the number of social ties an individual has, however, says nothing about whether or how these ties might provide access to resources. Network size, although useful, might best be considered a measure of the potential social capital to which individuals have access.

Research examining the effects network size has found several connections between network size and various family processes. In one study, Elizabeth Bott (1957) found that couples with larger networks of friends tended to define their roles as husband and wife more traditionally, carrying out their household responsibilities separately. In addition, during leisure time and activities, these couples tended to spend more time away from one another. Bott argued that the size of a couple's social network affected how they viewed their role as a husband or wife, as well as how they viewed one another as a potential friend. Having a large social network of friends, according to Bott's research, is related to the way adults define their roles in relation to family members.

Social Closure. Beyond network size, specific types of network structures have been theorized to create social capital among individuals. According to Coleman (1990), when the parents of two childhood friends know one another, intergenerational closure exists in the social structure. This type of social structure, one that can be diagrammed as a square or rectangle, is a necessary condition for social processes. When parents are friends with one another, they are more likely to monitor the behavior of one another, and

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their children's behavior. Moreover, intergenerational closures has been suggested to enable processes such as the establishment of norms or the exchange of information, allowing these relationships to function as social capital (Coleman, 1988; 1990). This particular structure of interpersonal relationships enables relationships to function as social capital.

Despite the fact that intergenerational closure itself is not social capital, several studies have been conducted where it has served as a direct measure of social capital. Research on the relationship between intergenerational closure and student achievement is still rare and in it's earliest stages. One study (Muller, 1993) found a positive, albeit weak, relationship between intergenerational closure and both students' grades and achievement test scores. Nevertheless, the existence of this specific network structure, where parents are friends with the parents of their children's friends, is predictive of academic achievement.

In addition to student achievement, intergenerational closure has been found to have direct and interaction effects on student drop out. In a recent study, Teachman, Paasch, and Carver (1997) found that parents who have more friends which are the parents of their children's friends (i.e., parents with greater intergenerational closure) have children that are less likely to drop out of high school. Furthermore, the study shows that greater amounts of social capital increase the benefits of financial capital in reducing student drop out, while a lack of social capital makes financial capital less predictive of success in school. Based on the direct and interaction affects of social capital on student drop out, Teachman et al., concluded that social capital sets the context within which factors such as parents' financial and human capital affect children's

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Research on the extent to which intergenerational closure exists across parents suggests that some groups may have a greater amount of social capital at their disposal. In their analyses of the NELS:88 data, Muller & Kerbow (1993) found that Caucasian parents, and parents who were highly educated, knew more of their children's friends' parents than those from other ethnic groups or with less education. Given the findings that intergenerational closure helps predict academic success, social capital may be more prevalent in some communities than others.

Although Coleman focused his examples of social closure around parent-child relationships, the idea can be extended to relationships among parents and schools. Figure 1 illustrates a social structure consisting of parents and their child's school, which might be considered a closed system. In this example, two parents have a social relationships with one another, as well as with the school to which they send their child. Just as the parents in Coleman's example could observe the behaviors of each other, and each others' children, the relationship among parents (and their respective ties to the school) in the new model are expected to enable the observation of parental behaviors such as involvement at the school. This form of inter-institutional closure (families-school ties) may create greater visibility and access to resources that encourage parent involvement in their child's education.

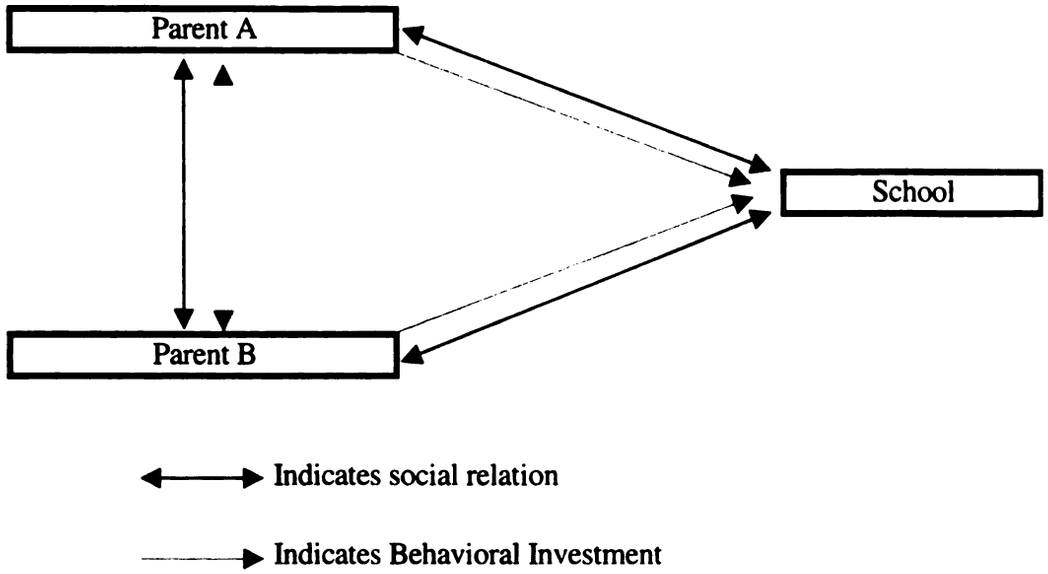

Figure 1: Diagram of Closure Between Schools and Parents

To illustrate the point above, consider two parents who know one another and who volunteer at the school. In the cases of these parents, it is foreseeable that watching one's friend volunteer and invest time into the school may create a sense of obligation to contribute one's own resources to the school. This observation of a friend and creation of obligation is a process of social capital. The relationship is based in social structure, as without a relationship between the two parents a sense of obligation is not likely to emerge. Furthermore, without a relationship between parent A and school, the actions of parent B are more likely to go unnoticed. Without a social relationships through which Parent A learns about the behaviors of other parents (perhaps through a teacher, principle, or school staff member), no sense of obligation can develop. Thus, the triad of relationships between a school and parents is an important structural feature that may result in parent involvement at school.

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Network Position. In addition to network size and the presence of intergenerational closure, an individual's position within a network can also affect his or her behavior. Granovetter (1973), for example, has drawn attention to those individuals within a network who act as bridges between two groups. These bridges, he contends, are particularly important because they provide entrances for new ideas and information into an otherwise isolated groups. Without these "weak ties[4]", group norms become reified, rigid, and out dated. Individuals who act as weak ties, therefore, are significant for the information they convey to others.

Building on Granovetter's work, Burt (1992) has argued that tie strength is less important than the fact that an individual might act as a bridge between otherwise disconnected people or groups. He refers to places where there is no connection as "structural holes" and argues that individuals who fill these "holes" have a great deal of social capital. In competitive systems, Burt argues, these bridging individuals can play the two other parties against one another in order to gain an advantage toward achieving one's own goal. Although parents' networks may not be based on competition, the idea that some parents are especially important because of their ability to bring new information into the network, or to function as a bridge between two distinct groups of parents, makes examination of structural positions an important consideration in studying social capital. Identifying parents who maintain different structural positions and comparing the effect of their ties on others, as well as on themselves, will be one strategy employed in this study.

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Social Capital and Network Functions

Social network research, beyond examining the relation between network structure and behavioral outcomes, has tried to study how networks function in people's lives. Research looking at how social networks affect parenting have found that structural characteristics such as network size may not be the most important aspect of a network. Rather than social structure, others have focused their efforts on the functions social networks serve in people's lives. Cochran, Larner, Riley, Gunnarsson, and Henderson (1990), in particular, have found that parents' personal social network (those with whom they are in direct contact) function in profound ways on parents' behaviors and beliefs. Each function, it can be argued, is an example of how social capital might operate in parents' lives.

Among the ways social networks affect parents is by supporting and sanctioning certain behaviors over others. In a study of how parents' social networks affect the development of children, Riley (1990) found that fathers most often went to their nonkin, male friends for advice on raising their child. In this same study, he also found that the men who were most involved in raising their children had the largest number of people who were supportive of their role in childrearing. In addition, as the proportion of males in a father's network increased, the amount of time they spent playing with their children decreased. Taken as a whole, these results suggest that the membership of parents' social networks can influence parent-child interactions by either encouraging or discouraging the roles parents take in their child's development.

In addition to supporting certain family roles over others, research into the effects of social networks on families also suggests that they may act as a source of information

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and persuasion. Weenig and Midden (1991), for example, investigated the effects of network ties on the dissemination of information and decision-making process in two neighborhoods. Through their analysis, the researchers found that the spread of information among families was related to the number of ties in a community. Furthermore, decisions about which energy/utility program a person chose for their family was related to whether or not they had a close relationship with someone else who favored that program. The findings of this study suggests that networks can act as a source of information and/or persuasion, and that larger networks are likely to provide people with more information. Moreover, knowing a friend who acts in a particular manner is influential on the choices people make for themselves and their family.

Reciprocity. Everyday life demands much of us, and through the help and support of our friends these demands may be dealt with more easily. Social life often operates as a process of give-and-take, where favors, information, and approval are exchanged among individuals (Simmel, 1955). Interactions characterized by these types of exchanges represent one type of social capital, reciprocity transactions (Portes & Sensenbrenner, 1993; Portes, 1998). Underlying this type of social capital is the norm of reciprocity or the felt need to repay another individual or a group. It is important to note that the exchange does not have to be instantaneous or even specified (Portes, 1998). Perhaps more important is the perception induced by the social structure that one is obligated to repay a favor in some way, at some point in time.

With regard to parent involvement, reciprocity transactions may function among parents through the exchange of information and news about teachers, classrooms, and the school. One parent's personal disclosure of information about school events or

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A network's ability to function as a source of information is dependent on the membership of that network. Lareau and Shumar (1996) found the parents who maintain a network which includes ties to educators and other parents regularly exchanged opinions and information about the school and schooling with these people. The authors suggest that that these networks are particularly important because they "provide a basis for helping parents troubleshoot problems and develop plans for their encounters with educators" (p.28), as well as help parents "develop a clear idea of how other parents handled certain aspects of family-school relationships, especially homework" (p.28). These conclusions suggest that some groups of parents use their relationship with one another to talk about future interactions with the school, as well as how they might structure their homes to promote learning.

Lareau and Shumar also found that when a parent's social network was comprised of mostly relatives (often these were working-class parents), their networks did not provide them with the information that appeared to be important to other parents. Unless they too have a child at the school, relatives could not provide information about the reputations of teachers or how to get special services for their child. For these parents

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The research by Lareau and Shumar (1996) suggest that the membership of parents' social network may greatly affect whether or not it acts as social capital. When parents talk to one another about school, a teacher, or even how to structure a homework schedule, they exchange useful information that can affect parental involvement. When parents' social networks include mostly relatives, this exchange is less likely.

Norm Enforcement. A second way in which social relationships function as social capital is through the emergence and enforcement of norms. Coleman (1988) has argued that norms can constitute a powerful form of social capital, constraining and facilitating certain actions. Portes and Sensenbrenner (1993) have suggested that the pressure groups apply to ensure individuals maintain norms is a form of social capital, called enforceable trust. In regard to schooling and education, enforceable trust may involve parents conforming to the norms of the group and expecting benefits in long-term outcomes (e.g., retention of membership in the group may benefit their child's school performance or experience). The types of norms which may exist among parents is important to consider.

A norm of reciprocity, previously discussed, where individuals are expected to repay favors or deeds, is only one possible norm that may operate among individuals. Around parent involvement, for example, a group of parents may believe that it is very important for all parents to be involved at their child's school. In maintaining this norm, parents call one another to help at school functions or to attend open house together, and expect other parents to be to be involved at school to some extent. The presence of this

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norm may be reflected in the shared expectations of behavior held by subgroups of parents (e.g., parents can be expected to get involved at the school), or they may be represented by a consensus in beliefs among a subgroup of parents (e.g., parents agree that it is their responsibility to help teach their children). The relationship between subgroup measures of beliefs and parent involvement, as well as a relationship between individual's perception of others' expectation for involvement and parent involvement are two ways in which social capital can be shown to affect parent involvement.

Parents who are members of a group are expected to be guided by their friends' behaviors. When groups share beliefs or patterns of behavior, social norms exist which influence group members. In addition to shared expectations, norms require the presence of social sanctions (Coleman, 1990; Marini, 1984). One example of a social sanction that might affect parents is gossip. According to Suls (1977), gossip functions to clarify and enforce conformity to group norms . Conversations among parents may reinforce notions about their responsibility to be involved in their child's education, creating agreement around such a belief. Parents who do not share these beliefs should be sanctioned by the group, perhaps by being ostracized. Furthermore, fear of being the focus of gossip may also act as an incentive for parents within a group to act alike. In this sense, parents might reinforce their own beliefs and actions, as well as those of their friends, through their interactions with each other.

A General Theoretical Model

The theoretical model represented in this dissertation draws upon existing research on parent involvement, as well as attempts to introduce unexamined influences on a parent's decision to become involved with her or his child's education. In addition

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to background and organizational effects, Figure 2 shows illustrates how parental beliefs, social cohesion, and social capital all might affect parent involvement.

Research in parent involvement has paid much attention to the role of parental beliefs as a predictor of involvement behaviors. Recently, parental efficacy and parental role construction have been argued to be among the most important beliefs for educators and researchers to consider. How a parent conceives of her or his responsibilities with regard to her or his child's education (parental role construction) and how capable she or he perceives himself or herself to be helping a child with school (parental efficacy) are both included in the theoretical model as direct influences on both types of parent involvement. The influences on these beliefs, as shown in the model, are derived from a parent's own background experiences (i.e., her or his parents, educational attainment, or ethnic/cultural norms), as well as from a parent's interaction with her or his peers. In addition to the unique contribution parental beliefs have predicting parent involvement, they may also interact with the social context.

In this study, in addition to parental beliefs, social networks function as a social context which can affect parent involvement at home and at school through two processes. The first process through which social networks affect parent involvement is social cohesion. Social cohesion, refers to the process where the beliefs of individuals, or those shared by a group, function as an influence on parental beliefs. These beliefs, in turn, predict parent involvement. The second way in which social networks affect parent involvement is when network ties constitute forms of social capital. In these relationships, resources are shared among actors, or within the network system, creating a sense of obligation and/or enabling parents to utilize and mobilize their own personal

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resources. The role of social cohesion, and social capital in parent involvement are represented in Figure 2, and are described more fully in order to illustrate how social networks, as a social context, affect an individual parent's decision to become involved in her or his children's schooling.

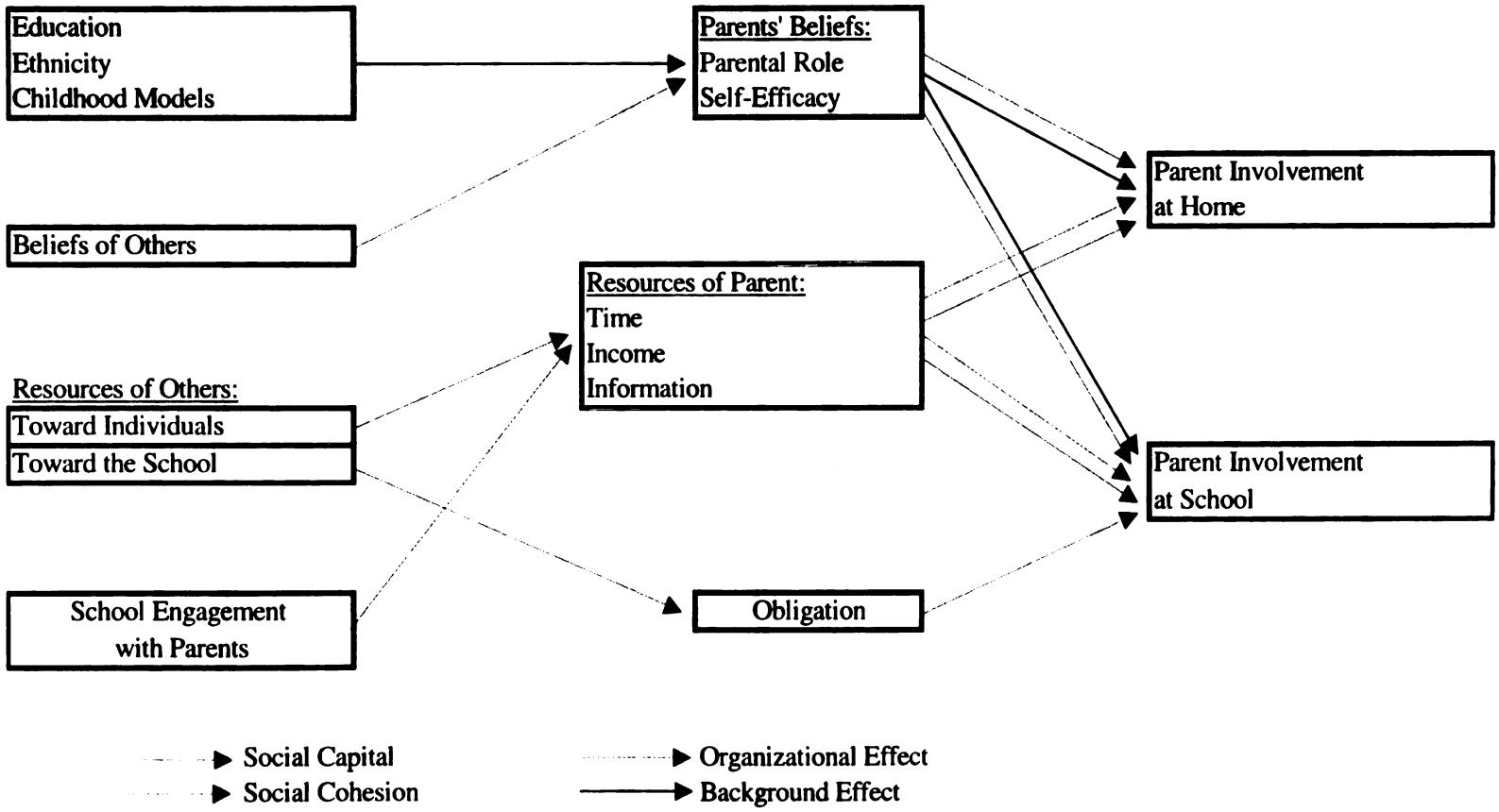

Figure 2: A Theoretical Model of How Social Context Affects Parent Involvement

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As a social context, parents' social networks impact their beliefs about themselves and their responsibilities as a parent through the presence of strong interpersonal ties and shared membership within a cohesive subgroup. Although there has been much confusion regarding the definition of a cohesive group or subgroup (Mudrack, 1989), for this study social cohesion refers to the process of interpersonal influence among parents . In general, the process of social cohesion has been described as the process whereby an individual's social understanding is influenced by conversations and interactions with people about a particular issue or topic (Burt, 1987). Parents' beliefs about themselves, their role helping their children, and the school or its teachers is expected to be influenced by those with whom they have regular contact, and/or who are in the same cohesive subgroup.

Research on cohesive subgroups has demonstrated why close friends or fellow subgroup members might be expected to influence an individual parent. First, research has shown that when individuals are members of the same cohesive subgroup, they are more likely to be aware of each others' beliefs (Friedkin, 1983). This knowledge of others' opinions comes mainly from the fact that members of the same cohesive subgroup are more likely to engage in face-to-face communication (Friedkin, 1993; 1997). When combined with the pressures for uniformity in opinion, which arise as people share and compare beliefs (Festinger et. al., 1950), subgroup members' beliefs, as well as those beliefs shared by the group in general, become an influence on people's beliefs. The result of social cohesion, then, should be that parents' own beliefs about themselves and their roles are related to the beliefs of their friends and the subgroup to which they are

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members. To the extent that there is a connection between parents' beliefs and their involvement, subgroup and friends' beliefs are expected to predict parent involvement.

Given the impact cohesive subgroups might have on parents, identifying these groups and ties is especially important in order to study social cohesion. First, a subgroup is more likely to be cohesive, and to foster social cohesion, when there is a dense set of ties among it's members (Friedkin, 1997). The more interconnected subgroup members are to each other, the more structurally cohesive the subgroup is overall. The density of ties among subgroup members, therefore, can be used as an indicator of subgroup cohesion (Friedkin, 1993; Wasserman & Faust, 1997). The density of ties within subgroups is expected to predict parent involvement.

In contrast to social cohesion, social relationships among parents can also affect parent involvement when these relationships function as social capital. Lin (1999) has defined social capital the "resources in a social structure which are accessed and/or mobilized in purposive action" (p.35). There are two ways in which the social capital among parents affect their involvement at home or at school: (1) when parents create obligations by investing resources into the school and (2) when parents invest their resources in one another. Both forms of investment require access and/or mobilization of resources (e.g., material resources, time, and information). Each form of social capital functions differently toward the creation of parent involvement, however, due to differences in where resources are invested.

The social capital that exists when parents invest in their child's school (e.g., when they get involved at the school) is created because friends and other subgroup members can observe this behavior. When parents are able to observe or learn that others

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are investing their own resources into the school, it is hypothesized to develop a sense of obligation within those who have not been involved. An example of this might be when a parent feels guilty for not being able to visit the school or help with school events every time she or he is asked to help. In order to ease this sense of guilt, the parent agrees to get involved when an opportunity arises, despite the inconvenience it might create in the parents' life. In addition, a sense of obligation may develop as the result of a parent's desire to maintain membership in a subgroup or maintain her connections to other parents. In this way, the development of a relationships between one parent and the school (i.e., an investment toward the school or it's teachers) operates as social capital, creating a sense of obligation in others, and eventually creating parent involvement at school from other parents who are embedded within the network of parents at a school.

The likelihood that a relationship will function as social capital through parents' investments toward the school is dependent upon the social structure that exists among network members (parents) and the school. In his discussion of social capital, Coleman (1990) argues that social closure - where network actors maintain ties and interact with one another - is an important condition under which network ties function as social capital. According to Coleman, when three actors know one another they can monitor each others' actions and enforce norms of behavior more easily. If we consider the school as a social actor, relationships between friends and the school can represent social closure (See figure 1). In cases such as these, the amount of parent A's involvement at the school can be observed and monitored by parent B. Observing others creates a sense of obligation to become involved, and a sense of pressure to become involved or risk being excluded from the closed subgroup of involved parents. In addition, school

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officials can observe and/or discuss the fact that a parent has invested his or her time, money, or other resources into the school and community of children. Membership in a subgroup with social closure, therefore, is expected to predict parent involvement.

The second form of social capital involves the investment of resources from one parent to another. An example of these investments might be when parents perform favors for a friend or because of subgroup membership. Parents who receive favors, as a result, have more resources to invest in their child's education. Another example might be when a parent talks to another parent about how to help a child with homework. The first parent is provided with a resource (information) that enables parent involvement at home. In these cases, parents are afforded resources that enable involvement behaviors. These resources are expected to affect parent involvement at home and at school, depending on the resources invested among parents.

Social networks, as a social context, affect parent involvement to the extent that they facilitate the processes of social cohesion and social capital. Social cohesion affects parent involvement at home and at school, as a parent's beliefs are affect by those with whom he or she interacts. In particular, parents' beliefs about their capacities to help children in and with school are expected to predict parent involvement at home and school. In addition to social cohesion, social networks can affect parent involvement when social relationships constitute social capital. When subgroup members become involved at school, the social structure fosters a sense of obligation in other subgroup members. Likewise, when parents invest in one another, parent involvement at home and at school is more likely, as the receiving parent gains personal resources from which to draw upon and become involved in schooling. Together, social cohesion and social

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capital are mechanisms through which a parent's social networks function to create parent involvement at home and at school by affecting parents' own beliefs, resources, or by creating a sense of obligation.

In addition to parents' social networks, other exogenous factors such as school or teacher efforts to create involvement affect parent involvement (organizational effects). School factors are likely to affect parent involvement to the extent that they are supported by parents' own resources such as time, money, or understanding of the school system (See Lareau, 1989; Sheldon & Ames, 1997). Parents' own background and early childhood experiences are also included in the model as indirect influences on parent involvement (background effects). Unlike school efforts, background characteristics are expected to relate to parents' own beliefs about what they can and should do with respect to their child's education. Neither parents' background nor the schools' efforts to create parent involvement are the focus of this research, although indicators of each are measured and used in the data analyses as controls.

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CHAPTER THREE: DATA AND METHODS

Design

This study examines the relationships between parental beliefs, social capital, social cohesion, and the degree to which parents' are actively involved in their children's education. Survey data were collect to analyze the degree to which parents' beliefs about their role in the education of children and whether or not they believe parent involvement affects a child's schooling predict parent involvement behaviors. In addition, social network data were collected in order to analyze the potential impact of interpersonal ties on parents' involvement at home and at school. Relationships between subgroup characteristics (i.e. subgroup size and/or density of connections) and parent involvement were also investigated in an effort to better understand how subgroup membership might impact a parent's decisions to get involved in her or his child's education. In addition, interviews were conducted to gather more information about the process through which social network processes operate to affect parents' behavior.

Through the collection of cross-sectional survey data, this study focused on network characteristics as predictors of parent involvement. The intent of this study was to explore the role of parents' social networks as a social context, whether and how interpersonal relationships among parents affect their role in the education of their children. As a cross-sectional study, any relationship between networks and parent involvement cannot be taken as causal evidence and statistical relationships may be bi-

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directional. A study designed to assess causal relationships between parents' social networks and parent involvement would require longitudinal research looking at the development of subgroups. Such a design was not chosen for this research project, as the goal of this study was to establish preliminary evidence about parents' social networks as a social context, which affects parent involvement. To date, such evidence does not exist.

In addition to collecting survey data, interviews were conducted to gain more information on some of the interpersonal dynamics that enable relationships to function as social capital. In particular, these interviews sought to provide information regarding the nature of parents' relationships with other parents, the frequency and nature of conversations between parents and other adults (i.e., other parents and relatives), and how friendships and acquaintances might act to encourage or maintain different forms of parent involvement.

Data collection for this study occurred in two phases. The first phase of data collection consisted of sending surveys to children's homes to collect information regarding parents' social networks, beliefs, and behaviors. The second phase of data collection built on phase one, and consisted of interviews with mothers of elementary school students. These interviews enabled collection of information from parents who did not return the surveys and more closely examined some of the processes through which social capital might operate. Each phase is described separately below.

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Phase One: Survey Data

Procedure

In the Spring of 1998, surveys were sent to the homes of all first through fifth grade students at one urban and one suburban elementary school. Accompanying the survey was a cover letter and a self-addressed stamped envelope. The cover letter asked mothers or maternal guardians to complete the survey and return it in the envelope provided, and informed parents about the purposes of the study. Mothers were specifically asked to complete the survey because past research has showed that they tend to be more involved than fathers in the academic and intellectual development of their children (Eccles & Harold, 1996). In addition to information about the study, parents were told that, of the returned surveys, ten randomly chosen families from each school would win one hundred dollars. A phone number for parents to call and ask questions or to complete the survey orally was included in the cover letter. To help ensure an adequate return rate, teachers at both schools were asked to include a reminder for parents to complete the survey in their communications home.

The survey was designed, in part, to obtain social network data and asked mothers to provide their name and address, as well as the names of other parents with whom they interact. In an attempt to allay any concerns about confidentiality, parents were given an assurance that all of the information provided on the surveys would remain confidential and in the care of the researcher. Parents were informed that all names would be assigned identification numbers, which would be used throughout the analyses.

From both schools a list of students and/or their parents was obtained, enabling the researcher to keep track of the families that returned the survey. After one month, a

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second survey was sent to those parents who had not returned the survey. After some parents had expressed concern about the lack of anonymity with the survey, an additional letter was included with the second survey that provided more detail into the process of how each name provided in the surveys would be kept confidential.

Participants

Survey data was collected from the mothers of first through fifth grade, public elementary school students. At two elementary schools, located near a large university in the Mid-West, mothers or maternal guardians were asked to complete surveys and were contacted for interviews. The two schools were chosen because each school represented a different community (one urban, one suburban), and because the researcher had ties that enabled entrance into the schools. The presence of a connection to each school enabled the researcher to engender the support of the school staff for this study. The sample of schools, therefore, constituted both a purposive and convenience sample. Pierce Elementary School is located within an urban setting, in a medium sized city. The reported enrollment at Pierce was 324 students, 54.7% of who receive a free or reduced lunch. The second school, Chief Elementary, is located in a township adjacent to the city in which Pierce is located. This school had 295 students when data were collected, 19% of who participate in the free or reduced lunch program[6]. These figures suggest that, on average, the families associated with Chief Elementary School have a higher level of family income than whose children attend Pierce.

In this study, approximately 48% (n=195) of the surveys sent home to parents were returned either partially or fully completed. Ninety-two surveys (46.9%) were from parents of Chief Elementary School. From Pierce Elementary School, 103 surveys were

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returned (approximately 49.1%)[7]. Of the 195 surveys collected, 16 were returned anonymously and could not be used for the social network grouping and some of the analyses. As a result, the number of respondents used in the analyses of survey data varies depending on the nature of the analysis. Although the return rate is relatively high for a study that asks parents to return a survey via mail, having less than half of the parents across both schools creates limitations in the sample. The low response rate in this study results in less statistical power, making statistical results more conservative and less likely to find relationships that actually exist. In addition, network maps should be taken as partial representations of the social ties within each elementary school.

Despite the limitations of the sample, the returned surveys represent a diverse sample of children. Forty-nine percent of the respondents were parents of boys, and 51% were parents of girls. By student grade level, 26.2% of the surveys were parents of first grade students, 15.9% of second graders, 15.4% of third graders, 19.0% of fourth graders, and 23.6% of the surveys came from parents of fifth grade students.

With regard to the parents themselves, the sample also represents a diverse group. A wide range of educational attainment is represented with the survey data. Twenty-one percent of the parents in this study have a high school diploma or less education, 30.3% of the parents obtained some college education, 26.2% had earned their bachelor's degree, and 21.5% reported to have at least some credits towards a post-bachelor's degree. With respect to the samples' racial composition, 69.7% of the parents considered themselves Caucasian, 9.7% reported being Asian-Americans, 6.7% were African-Americans, and 3.1% were Hispanic. Just over nine percent of the sample (9.2%) considered themselves from an ethnic group other than those mentioned.

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Survey Measures

The survey for this study was designed to collect social network data, demographic information, as well as information on parents' behavior and beliefs (See Appendix A). Due to the nature of collecting social network data, parents were asked to provide their name and the name of their child, as well as the names of other parents (or names of the children of parents) with whom they interacted. Through pilot tests of the survey, it was determined that parents should include their own and their child's name in order to make the data matrices of network ties more accurate. Parents, it was reported, may identify parents through their child, knowing the name of the child and not the name of the parent. For those parents with two children at the school, parents were asked to complete the survey with their oldest child in mind.

Individual Level Variables

Background Information:

Child's grade level - parents were asked to indicate the grade level of their oldest son or daughter

Gender of Child - Parents were asked to indicate whether their child is male or female.

School - The school each child attends was recorded.

Parents' educational attainment - parents were asked to indicate whether they have completed some high school education, a high school degree, some college, a college degree, or a post-graduate degree. These categories were coded as dummy variables for data analyses.

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Ethnicity - Parents were asked to which ethnic group they consider themselves a member of; White/non-Hispanic, African-American, Hispanic, Asia/Pacific Islander, or "Other". Those who checked "Other" were asked to state to which ethnic group they belong. These were coded as dummy variables for data analyses.

Residence - Parents were asked to report the number of years and months they had lived at their current residence.

Parental Beliefs:

Role Construction - This scale measured the extent to which parents believe that it is their responsibility to help the school educate their children. Parents responded to 20 items following the stem, "It is parents' responsibility to..." Using a five-point Likert scale, parents were able to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with items such as, "help their child understand his or her homework" and "contact the teacher before academic problems arise."

Parent Efficacy - This scale assessed the extent to which parents believe that they can help their children succeed in school. Parents responded to twelve items using a 5-point Likert scale, developed by Hoover-Dempsey and her colleagues. For each item, parents rated the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with items such as; "I know how to help my child do well in school" and "A student's motivation to do well in school depends on the parents." When given to parents across four elementary schools, this scale was found to have a reliability coefficient of 0.81 (Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler, & Brissie, 1992).

Sense of Obligation - Parents were asked to rate the extent to which they felt as though other parents expected them to be involved in their child's education. Largely

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exploratory, the level of felt pressure from other parents was assessed with one item that asked parents to rate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the following statement, "Other parents expect me to be involved in my child's education." Responses were based on a 6-point Likert scale.

Involvement:

Involvement at Home - This scale consists of ten questions designed to measure how often parents interact with their child at home on educational activities. Parents reported the extent to which they are involved at home, using a five-point Likert scale ranging from "always" to "never". Items following the stem "How often do you..." include, "talk to your child about his/her schoolwork?", "read with your child?", and "watch television with your child?"

Involvement at School - This scale is comprised of five-items assessing how often parents are at the school or interact with their child's teacher. Items follow the stem, "How often do you..." and are rated on a five-point Likert scale. Sample items include, "attend events that are going on at school?" and "volunteer in the classroom or at the school?"

Parental-School Network:

Parents were asked to provide the first and last names of up to seven other parents, whose children attend the same school as theirs, and with whom they most often discuss issues pertaining to their child's education or school. In the event that the name of a parent was not known, parents were asked to provide the name of that parent's child. For each nomination, the respondent was asked to indicate the frequency with which

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these discussions occur. A five-point scale was provided with possible responses ranging from as often as daily to as infrequent as twice a year.

School-based Ties - This variable is the number of other parents nominated by an individual.

Personal Ties:

Parents were asked to list up to five people, other than parents at school, with whom they talk about their child's education. Rather than reporting the frequency of discussions, parents were asked to indicate whether or not each person is a relative, works in the field of education, or has a child at a different school.

Educators - This variable is the sum of the number of people an individual nominates who work in the field of education.

Subgroup Level Variables:

Group Norms: The existence of norms within a subgroup was determined by examining the mean and variance of the beliefs within each subgroup identified. In subgroups where norms exist, there should be little variation around the mean. The mean represents the degree to which a subgroup endorses a particular perspective, while the variance of a belief represents the extent to which a subgroup shares a belief. In this study, norms are defined as existing when members of a subgroup share common beliefs. Means, variances, and the interaction of the two are needed to represent group norms and to test for subgroup effects.

Role of Parents - a subgroup's mean score on the Role Construction scale.

Parental Efficacy - a subgroup's mean score on the Parent Efficacy scale.

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Group Pressure - A subgroup's mean score on the Obligation scale. This scale is designed to assess the extent to which parents feel pressure from their friends to become involved, at the subgroup level.

Network Factors:

Density - This variable was based on the log of the density of ties within a subgroup. It measures the social structure of subgroups. Density of a subgroup was calculated by dividing the total possible ties within a subgroup by the number of ties reported among subgroup members.

Bridges - The number of ties a subgroup has, by virtue of it's members, to other subgroups.

Social Closure – A dichotomous variable that indicates whether or not a subgroup has social closure among at least three of its members.

Data Analysis

Data analysis began by using social network software to find non-overlapping subgroups of parents. Using this software, subgroups are defined by maximizing conversations within subgroups and minimizing conversations between subgroups, while accounting for the sizes of the subgroups. No individual is placed in more than one subgroup, although communication between subgroups remains possible. Graphic representation of these groups was created through the use of Multidimensional Scaling (MDS), which enables the creation of a graph showing the relative frequency of contact between parents within and between subgroups (See Frank, 1996 for an example of what these maps look like).

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Following subgroup identification, two approaches to the analysis of data were taken. An Egocentric approach was taken at the start of the data analysis. From this approach, individual characteristics are used as predictors of behavior. This analysis relied on Ordinary Least Square (OLS) regression analyses, which treats individuals as independent actors, keeping the level of analysis at the individual.

The second set of data analyses took a Sociocentric approach, where aspects of the network and subgroups are analyzed and used as predictors of individual behaviors. Analyses from this perspective relied on Hierarchical Linear Modeling (HLM). HLM is appropriate for this study due to the fact that several parents were nested within subgroups, making them non-independent observations. Bryk & Raudenbush, (1992), have argued that in cases where observations are not independent, OLS methods of analysis are problematic and may result in an underestimation of effects and incorrect standard errors. Therefore, HLM was used to analyze the two levels of variables; those that can be attributed to individual families or parents (e.g., demographic variables and parents' beliefs) and those variables that are characteristics of the subgroup (e.g., group density of ties or group mean scores). HLM enables an analysis of the relationship between subgroup characteristics and parent involvement, as well as the degree to which the relationship between individual level variables and parent involvement varies across subgroups.

Phase Two: Interview Data

Procedure

Interviews with mothers were conducted in the fall of 1998, after the survey data had been collected and analyses had begun. These interviews were conducted in order to investigate how relationships among parents might act as a potential source of social capital. Six parents from each school were selected and asked to discuss issues related to their social network, relationships with other adults, and parent involvement. Specifically, these interviews attempted to elicit detailed information about; (1) to whom these parents most often talk with about their child's education, (2) the nature of these conversations, (3) who their closest friends are, and (4) if their friendships affect the manner in which the parents interacted with their children and school (See Appendix B).

Based on the network graphs for each school, parents who fit the profiles of specific types of actors, within their schools' social structure, were listed. From each school's list, one parent from each category was contacted and interviewed. These interviews were conducted in order to examine any differences, based on a parent's network position, in the way social networks affect parent involvement. In addition, three parents from each school who did not return the survey were contacted and interviewed. All non-respondents were originally chosen at random in order to obtain data representative of the larger network of parents at each school.

At Chief Elementary School, a list of parents and their phone number was obtained and used to identify non-respondents and establish contact. At Pierce Elementary School, a list of students was used identify respondents and non-respondents. The children of non-respondents were chosen at random, and phone numbers of parents

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were obtained through by looking up individuals with similar last names in phone book. Children whose parents do not have the same last name, whose parents were unlisted, or whose last name was so common that identification was almost impossible were eliminated from the pool of potential interviewees. Three parents from Pierce Elementary School, originally selected to be interviewed, had to be dropped because the parents could not be contacted.

Participants

From each school, six mothers were selected to be interviewed for the second phase of this study. Three Mothers who were identified as occupying particular positions within a schools' were purposely chosen to be interviewed. These positions (Central Actor, Bridging Actor, and Isolate) are described below. The remaining three mothers were randomly selected from a list of parents who did not return the survey (non-respondents). Of the 12 mothers interviewed, therefore, six had returned the survey sent earlier in the calendar year and six represented those parents who had not returned the survey.

The demographic characteristics of the twelve parents interviewed revealed a relatively homogeneous group. Eleven of the twelve parents interviewed were mothers. One father was interviewed instead of his wife because she was not a proficient English speaker. The information gathered throughout this study, in general, reflects mothers' involvement in their children's education. In addition, among the twelve parents interviewed, all but four (75%) indicated that they had at least a college education. The interview data, therefore, is most representative of college educated parents.

Central actors.

According to social capital theory, the number of relationships an individual maintains may correspond to the amount of social capital they have available. In particular, individuals who are at the center of an active and highly connected subgroup may be influenced by these relationships, as well as have influence on others. Wasserman and Faust (1994) suggest that central actors have a high degree of betweenness and may be a channel through which information flows. In this study mothers who were well connected to other parents were believed to have more access to information about the school by virtue of their many contacts. Furthermore, these mothers might be perceived by other parents as an informational resource.

From each school, one interview with a parent who was a central actor was conducted. Central actors were defined as those parents who had several ties to other subgroup members. These individuals had ties to most or all of the other individuals in their subgroup and may have had several ties to other subgroups. If possible, the central actors interviewed were members of a subgroup that had many ties to other subgroups.

Bridging Actor

Within any larger social system, subgroups may exist that operate independently or they may forge bonds and relationships with one another. Granovetter (1973), argues that relationships between subgroups or organization, what he called "weak ties," can serve as bridges that enable new and innovative information to travel across subgroups and throughout a social system. Building on this argument, Morgan and Sorensen (1997) maintain that in addition to preventing the recycling and rehashing of ideas, weak ties function to prevent local norms from becoming too restrictive and overbearing. To

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investigate the function of these inter-subgroup ties, one parent determined to be a "weak tie" between two or more subgroups was interviewed. For this study, a parent was identified as a "weak tie" (referred to as a bridging actor) when at least one of the following conditions existed: (1) the parent was not placed in a subgroup by the network software, although has ties to two or more subgroups, (2) the parent was placed in a subgroup, but has one or more ties to members of other subgroups, or (3) the parent was placed in a group, but has more inter-subgroup ties than intra-subgroup ties.

Isolates.

According to the social network maps created from the survey data, each school had one subgroup that did not maintain ties with any other subgroup identified. In order to compare these "disconnected" parents to those in the larger parent network, one member from each of these subgroups was interviewed. As a member of an isolated subgroup, parents identified within one of these subgroups might have less access to information or other resources other parents can offer. These interviews began by confirming that the map generated is accurate and then investigated reasons for these parents' "outsider" status. Information about these parents perceptions of the school, other parents, and their role in the education of their children was investigated.

Non-respondents.

From each school, three parents who chose not to return the survey were interviewed in an attempt to collect information about the parents who are not represented in the survey data. Interviews with these parents mirrored some of the information collected in the survey and probed further about their interactions with other

parents or adults. In general, the purpose of these interviews was to enable a comparison between the parents who did not return the survey and those that did, while also collecting more data on how interpersonal relationships among parents and other adults might function as social capital.

Among the parents who were interviewed as non-respondents, half could be identified on the network maps created by the survey data. All three parents that were on the network maps sent their children to the suburban school. None of these parents could be characterized as either a central actor, weak tie, or isolate. Some of the non-respondents, however, had connections to more than one other person, suggesting that they might be a weak tie or a more central actor than the maps suggests.

Data Analysis

Interview data were analyzed to provide information about the processes through which social capital and social cohesion might affect parent involvement. Comparisons between respondents and not-respondents were conducted, as were comparisons among central actors, weak ties, and isolates. In addition, all twelve interviews were examined collectively for trends regarding the manner and extent to which parents use and are affected by their relationships with others.

Analysis of the interview data began by coding interview data into two categories: statements indicative of social capital and statement indicative of social cohesion. Following the initial coding, parent statements were further broken down based on the theoretical framework guiding this study (Figure 2). Unlike grounded theory approaches to analyzing qualitative data, where the researcher is attempting to build theory with his

or her data (Strauss & Corbin, 1990), the interview data in this study were used to confirm the theoretical framework developed and to inform the analyses of survey data.

CHAPTER FOUR: SCALE DEVELOPMENT AND SURVEY RESULTS

Measuring Role, Efficacy, and Parent Involvement

Parents were asked to complete four multiple-item Likert scales, each of which was used to examine the relationship between social capital and parent involvement. Three of these scales were created expressly for this study; one to assess parent involvement at home, one to assess parent involvement at school, and one to assess parents' beliefs about the degree to which they should be involved in their child's schooling. The fourth scale, assessing parents' sense of efficacy to help their children with school, was developed and used previously by Hoover-Dempsey and her colleagues (Hoover-Dempsey, et al., 1992). As a first step in data analysis, descriptive statistics and reliability coefficients were generated for both parent involvement scales and the two parental belief scales (Table 2). The adequacy of each scale was tested by conducting Cronbach alpha reliability tests. The reliability coefficients for all four scales are reported in table 1 alongside scale means and standard deviations.

The degree to which a parent was involved in her or his son or daughter's education was assessed using two involvement scales; parent involvement at home and parent involvement at school. The scale for parent involvement at home consisted of 10 items that asked parents to report on the frequency of various behaviors (See appendix A). The reliability proved adequate, with an alpha coefficient of .84. The scale for

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parent involvement at school was smaller, five items, and also proved reliable for this sample (alpha = .82).

Three parental beliefs were measured in this study, two of which required reliability analyses. With this sample of parents, the scale measuring parents' sense of efficacy proved to be reliable with an alpha= .89. How parents construe their role and responsibilities with their child's schooling was assessed using a 20-item scale developed expressly for this study (See appendix A). Eighteen of the twenty items were used in the following analyses. The two items withdrawn were conceptually different from the other 18 items, focusing on parents' role in relation to their child's teacher rather than in relation to their child. The lack of conceptual congruence with these items was demonstrated as each item had relatively low item-total correlation coefficients (.256 and .333). The 18 remaining items of this scale proved to be reliable, resulting in an alpha coefficient =.90.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics and Reliability Coefficients of multiple item scales

Scale	Number of Items	Mean	Standard Deviation	Reliability Coefficients
Parental Role	18	77.24	8.43	.90
Parent Involvement at Home	10	41.22	5.02	.84
Parent Involvement at School	5	19.03	3.67	.82
Self-efficacy	10	40.11	5.98	.89

In order to ensure the scales used in this study were relatively independent of one another, the relationships among the four scales were examined using zero-order correlation coefficients (See Table 3). The results of this analysis suggest that each of the four scales are measuring somewhat related constructs. The correlation between parental role construction and parental efficacy showed a relatively strong relationship between the two constructs. Tests were conducted in order to assess the degree to which

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Multicollinearity between these two scales might have biased the statistical tests (See Appendix C). Based on the reliability analysis, as well as the zero-order correlation among scales, the four scales were used throughout the remainder of study.

Table 3: Zero-Order Correlation Coefficients among Scales

	PI at Home	PI at School	Parental Role	Self-Efficacy
PI at Home	--			
PI at School	.357***	--		
Parental Role	.365***	.244**	--	
Self-Efficacy	.207**	.137^{+}	.442***	--

$^{+}$ p<.10 * p<.05 **p<.01 ***p<.001

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistical procedures were used to help guide later analyses of the relationships between parents' network characteristics and involvement in their child's education. Mean and frequency counts of the number of parents with children at the same school as the respondent's own child (Parent Network), the number of "other" adults each respondent talks to (Non-Parent Network), and the number of educators and relatives in a parent's network were calculated for the sample as a whole (Table 4), across ethnic groups, and across parents with different levels of education. In Table 5, network characteristics were examined across ethnic groups and parents' education level due to prior research suggesting differences in the amount of parent involvement, and it's impact on student achievement, based on these classifications (Keith, et. al., 1998; Lareau, 1989).

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Table 4: Means and standard deviations of network characteristics

Network Characteristics	Mean	Standard Deviation
Number of parents*	1.96	2.11
Number of "other adults"	3.31	1.64
Number of Relatives	1.59	1.23
Number of Educators	0.79	1.00

n=185, *n=184

Parent Network Size.

Across the entire sample, parents reported a small number of other parents at the school with whom they talk about their children's education. On average, a parent talks to approximately two other parents (1.96) whose children attend the same school as their own children (Table 4). Approximately one-third of the parents (n=63) reported that they do not speak to any other parents at the school.

By ethnic group, parents who considered themselves White or Caucasian averaged the most ties to other parents whose children attend the same school as their own child (mean = 2.22). Asian-American parents averaged the second highest number of ties to other parents (mean = 1.75), and Hispanic families reported the lowest average number of ties to other parents at the school (mean = 0.33). In general, Hispanic families appear to be the most isolated from other families whose children attend the same school as their own children.

Across education level, there appears to be more homogeneity with regard to the size of the parent network. Parents who have a college degree, however, tend to know more parents with children at the school than those with either more or less education (2.80 parents). Parents with the least education, a high school diploma or less, know the fewest other parents at the school (1.05 parents).

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"Non-Parent Adult (NPA) Network.

Most parents in this sample reported that they speak to at least one adult who does not have a child at the same school as their own. Only 15 parents reported that they do no speak to any adults who do not have at least one child at the same school as their own children. On the other hand, over one-third of the parents in this sample reported speaking to at least five "other adults" (n=63). On average, parents have just over three NPAs with whom they talk about their child's education (mean = 3.31).

By ethnicity (Table 5), parents who consider themselves White/Caucasian, African-American, or Hispanic all reported, on average, maintaining over three NPA. Parents who consider themselves Asian-American reported the lowest average non-parent network size (1.75), while those who indicated that they were "other" averaged 2.35 NPAs in their social network. Examining the data across educational levels (Table 6), the average number of non-parent adults listed from each group ranged from 3.10 to 3.44 adults.

Table 5: Means and standard deviations of network characteristics by ethnic groups

Ethnic Group	Number of parents	Number of "other adults"	Number of Relatives	Number of Educators*
Asian-American	1.75(2.35)	1.75(1.91)	0.94(1.34)	0.38(0.62)
African-American	1.50(2.32)	3.27(2.10)	2.00(1.48)	0.45(0.52)
White	2.22(2.11)	3.64(1.39)	1.72(1.16)	0.90(1.07)
Hispanic	0.33(0.52)	3.17(2.04)	1.17(1.33)	0.83(0.98)
Others	0.82(1.19)	2.35(1.66)	1.29(1.36)	0.71(0.84)

Mean (std. Dev.), n=182, *n=181

Table 6: Means and standard deviations of network characteristics by parents' EDUCATION LEVEL

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Education Level	Number of parents	Number of "other adults"	Number of Relatives	Number of Educators
High School Degree or Less	1.05(1.45)	3.15(1.68)	1.92(1.44)	0.46(0.72)
Some College	1.62(2.13)	3.40(1.58)	1.65(1.13)	0.75(0.91)
College Degree	2.81(2.24)	3.46(1.58)	1.38(1.25)	1.00(1.15)
Post-Bachelor	2.09(1.99)	3.12(1.87)	1.35(1.20)	1.03(1.09)

Mean (std. Dev.), n=176

Number of Relatives in Network.

Throughout the sample, parents reported speaking with an average of 1.59 relatives about their child's education. Parents who considered themselves African-American reported speaking to the highest number of relatives (2.00), while Asian-Americans, on average, spoke to less than one relative about their child's education (See table 5). Furthermore, parents with the least education seemed to speak with the most relatives (1.92), in comparison to parents with more education (See table 6).

Number of Educators in Network.

Investigation into the average number of educators each parent speaks with about his or her child's education suggested that many parents do not communicate with her or his child's teacher. On average, parents reported talking to less than one person who works in the field of education (0.79). On average, parents with a college degree or more reported speaking to at least one person who is involved in the field of education. Of the 39 parents with a high school degree or less education, 26 (approximately 67%) reported that they do not speak to anyone who works in the field of education. In general, parents with more education appear to speak with more educators about their child's education than those parents who never went beyond high school.

Egocentric Analyses

In order to test for the possible effect of social capital on parent involvement in children's education, ordinary least square regression analyses were used to predict the relationship between network characteristics and parent involvement, as well as the relationship between parents' beliefs and parent involvement. A hypothesized model, where the network influences on parent involvement are mediated by parents' beliefs, was tested in addition to models testing for unique effects of parental beliefs and parents' social networks. Four models were tested consecutively. Model A tests the relationships between demographic variables and parent involvement, model B includes social network information as a predictor of involvement, and model C uses demographic and parent belief variables as predictors of parent involvement. Finally, model D includes parents' beliefs, in addition to demographic and network variables, as predictors of involvement. By comparing changes in coefficient values and R-squared, the mediating role of parents' beliefs can be tested.

Throughout these analyses, network size was used as a proxy for social capital. It has been argued that the size of an individual's social network is an indicator of the potential resources available to an individual, and is therefore a measure of the social capital available to him or her (Bourdieu, 1986). In this dissertation, network size was taken as a proxy for social capital. Although the existence of a large network does not guarantee that parents are utilizing their relationships with others as a resource, without a network of other parents from which to draw resources, social capital cannot exist. Network size, therefore, represents a measure of the potential social capital to which each parent has access.

In order to simplify the models, variables that did not significantly predict the dependent variable (either involvement at home or involvement at school), and that were not theoretically significant, were removed from the regression equations in order to preserve degrees of freedom. Throughout the analyses, gender of the child and the length of time the family had lived at their current residence did not predict parent involvement at home or at school. As a result, both variables were removed from the analyses. Grade level of the child also did not predict parent involvement at home or at school. Despite the fact that this result was inconsistent with existing literature on parent involvement (Eccles & Harold, 1996), grade level was subsequently removed from the models.

Across all of the regression analyses, anonymity of the respondent was not found to significantly predict either type of involvement. This variable, however, was kept in later models in an attempt to measure, and control for, any response bias that may exist in the data. Among the remaining background variables, race and parents' educational attainment were included in all of the OLS equations as dummy variables to assess differences across groups.

Due to the relatively high correlation between parental role construction and parental efficacy, analyses were conducted to test for any possible bias due to multicollinearity. OLS regression analyses were conducted, entering either parental role construction or parental efficacy as a predictor of each type of parent involvement. The results of these analyses indicate that multicollinearity was not occurring between the two measures. Analyses discovered that parental efficacy, when entered without parental role construction, predicted parent involvement at home, but not at school. Parental role

construction, when parental efficacy was not entered, predicted both types of involvement. Further discussion of these analyses accompany the tables in Appendix C.

Parent Involvement at Home.

Across the four models tested, the r-squared improves from approximately 4% of the variance, when only background variables are used at predictors, up to 28.5%, when network and belief variables are included (See Table 7). Model A suggests that, in general, the parents with children at the urban elementary school (Pierce) reported more involvement at home with their children's education than parents at the suburban elementary school (Chief). The relationship between school and parent involvement approached significance ($t = -1.889$, $p \leq 0.060$).

Model B tested the relationship between measures of network size and parent involvement. The results of this model suggest that social capital may play a role in creating parent involvement. Specifically, parents who talked to more adults (NPA), other than parents with children at the same school, reported higher levels of involvement ($t = 3.233$, $p \leq 0.001$). Furthermore, upon controlling for network size, Asian-American parents reported significantly more parent involvement at home than other parents ($t = 2.721$, $p \leq 0.007$). Finally, with network characteristics accounted for, parents with children at the urban school reported more involvement at home than the parents who live in the suburbs ($t = -1.949$, $p \leq 0.053$). Together, this model accounted for almost 11% of the variation in parent involvement at home.

Table 7:Models Predicting Parent Involvement at Home

Variables	Model A B (Std. Error)	Model A Beta	Model B B (Std. Error)	Model B Beta
Anonymous	-0.634	-0.035	-0.982	-0.035
	(1.420)		(2.098)	
Asian-American	2.175	0.129	4.097**	0.234
	(1.436)		(1.506)	
White	1.107	0.102	0.466	0.042
	(0.909)		(0.944)	
Some College	-0.567	-0.051	-0.557	-0.051
	(0.908)		(0.870)	
College Degree	-0.813	-0.071	-0.882	-0.078
	(0.940)		(0.920)	
School	-1.448^{+}	-0.144	-1.523*	-0.153
	(0.766)		(0.781)	
"Other adult" Network Size (NPA)	-----	-----	0.797***	0.262
			(0.247)	
Size of School-Based Parent Network	-----	-----	-0.058	-0.025
			(0.191)	
Parental Role	-----	-----	-----	-----
Self-Efficacy	-----	-----	-----	-----
Obligation	-----	-----	-----	-----
R-squared	0.036		0.108	
(adj. r-sq)	(0.005)		(0.067)	

$^{+}$ $p \leq 0.10$, * $p \leq 0.05$, ** $p \leq 0.01$
n=193

Table 7(cont'd):

Variables	Model C B (Std. Error)	Model C Beta	Model D B (Std. Error)	Model D Beta
Anonymous	-0.326	-0.018	-2.457	-0.091
	(1.335)		(1.939)	
Asian-American	4.278	0.240**	4.868***	0.270
	(1.378)		(1.446)	
White	0.981	0.091	0.649	0.059
	(0.834)		(0.873)	
Some College	-0960	-0.089	-0.927	-0.087
	(0.821)		(0.808)	
College Degree	-1.452+	-0.128	-1.313	-0.117
	(0.870)		(0.872)	
School	-1.510*	-0.153	-1.129	-0.114
	(0.706)		(0.734)	
"Other adult" Network Size (NPA)	-----	-----	0.634**	0.208
			(0.243)	
Size of School-Based Parent Network	-----	-----	-0.234	-0.102
			(0.184)	
Parental Role	0.217***	0.381	0.190***	0.337
	(0.043)		(0.044)	
Self-Efficacy	0.048	0.060	0.070	0.086
	(0.061)		(0.063)	
Obligation	0.085	0.228	0.082	0.025
	(0.228)		(0.235)	
R-squared	0.234		0.270	
(adj. r-sq)	(0.194)		(0.220)	

+ $p \leq 0.10$, * $p \leq 0.05$, ** $p \leq 0.01$
n=193

The third regression model (Model C) used demographic and parental belief variables as predictors of parent involvement at home. Neither parental efficacy nor parents' sense of obligation significantly predicted involvement at home ($t = 0.797$ & $t = 0.373$, respectively). Parental role construction, however, was strongly associated with parent involvement at home ($t = 5.043$, $p \leq 0.001$). In addition, as with earlier models, parents at the urban school reported greater parent involvement at home ($t = -2.138$, $p \leq 0.034$), as did Asian-American parents ($t = 3.104$, $p \leq 0.002$). In general, how parents perceive their role in a child's schooling is a strong determinant of the extent to which they interact with their child, outside of school, in ways that might affect educational achievement.

The final model tested, Model D, helped examine whether or not network influences on parent involvement are mediated through parents' beliefs. In this model with all of independent variables included, parents' role construction was the only belief found to predict significantly parent involvement at home ($t = 4.344$, $p \leq 0.001$). Neither parents' sense of efficacy nor their perceptions that others expect them to be involved in their child's education predicted involvement at home. Moreover, in this model, Asian-American parents reported significantly more involvement than parents from other ethnic groups ($t = 3.368$, $p \leq 0.001$). In addition, the relationships between the number of "other adults" in one's network (NPA) and involvement at home continued to be statistically significant related ($t = 2.610$, $p \leq 0.01$). The more people that are in a parent's other-adult network, the more involved at home that parent is likely to be. Together, parents' background, social network, and beliefs were able to account for 27.0% of the variance in parent involvement at home.

Comparing Model D to Model B, the results suggest that any effect social capital may have on parent involvement at home is not mediated through parents' beliefs. Instead, the influence of parents' social network appears to be separate from the influence of parents' privately held beliefs. A parent's social network, in particular those people not affiliated with his or her child's school, may provide that parent with various resources which enable parent involvement at home. The survey data collected, however, could not provide details into how one's network might directly affect parent involvement at home.

The conclusion that parental beliefs and social capital independently affect parent involvement at home is based on two findings. First, comparing the amount of explained variance in parent involvement across Model B and Model D shows a dramatic increase when parental beliefs are included in the regression equation. This suggests that parental beliefs have a separate effect on parent involvement at home. Second, the relationships between network variables and parent involvement at home remained significant after parents' beliefs were added into the model. If beliefs mediated the effects of parents' networks, the relationship between network characteristics and involvement would be expected to disappear. Together, the increase in r-square and persistence of a significant relationship between network variables suggests that the effect of parents' beliefs and parent networks are additive.

Parent Involvement at School.

As with parent involvement at home, four models were tested to assess the effect of social capital on parent involvement at school (See table 8). Model A describes the

relationship between various background variables and parents' involvement at school, Model B includes social network characteristics at predictors, Model C predicts parent involvement at school using demographic and social network variables, and Model D is the full model of independent variables (demographic, parental beliefs, and social network size) predicting parent involvement at school. Unlike the models for predicting parent involvement at home, these models examine the relationship between having educators in one's network and parent involvement at school. When the non-parent network members were divided into educators versus non-educators, the number of educators in a parent's network predicted involvement. This was not the case in the previous analyses predicting parent involvement at home.

Analyses looking at differences across demographic groups in parent involvement at school (Model A) show that White/Caucasian parents reported being more involved at the school than other parents ($t = 3.181$, $p \leq 0.002$). In this model, no other demographic variables predicted parent involvement at school.

The regression analysis examining social network and demographic variables (Model B) added insight into explanations of parent involvement at school. First, parents who talked to more educators tended to be more involved at the school ($t = 3.155$, $p \leq 0.002$), as were parents who reported speaking to more parents with children at the same school as their own ($t = 2.546$, $p \leq 0.012$). Also, after including social network variables, both White and Asian-American parents reported greater involvement at school than the other ethnic groups of parents ($t = 2.289$, $p \leq 0.023$ & $t = 2.165$, $p \leq 0.032$, respectively). Upon entering network variables, the amount of variance accounted for by the regression

model increased from 7.6% to 19.0%. The increase in r-square suggests that network variables help explain some of the variation found in parent involvement at school.

Table 8:Models Predicting Parent Involvement at School

Variables	Model A B (Std. Error)	Model A Beta	Model B B (Std. Error)	Model B Beta
Anonymous	1.223	0.091	1.355	0.065
	(1.026)		(1.509)	
Asian-American	1.628	0.131	2.346*	0.178
	(1.038)		(1.084)	
White	2.090**	0.260	1.554*	0.188
	(0.657)		(0.679)	
Some College	0.952	0.115	0.944	0.116
	(0.657)		(0.626)	
College Degree	1.084	0.127	0.678	0.080
	(1.084)		(0.663)	
School	0.065	0.009	-0.578	-0.077
	(0.554)		(0.563)	
Educators in "Other" Network	-----	-----	0.904**	0.241
			(0.287)	
Non-Educators in "Other" Network	-----	-----	0.014	0.006
			(0.187)	
Size of School-Based Parent Network	-----	-----	0.352*	0.199
			(0.138)	
Parental Role	-----	-----	-----	-----
Self-Efficacy	-----	-----	-----	-----
Obligation	-----	-----	-----	-----
R-squared	0.076		0.190	
(adj. r-sq)	(0.047)		(0.148)	

$^{+}$ $p \leq 0.10$, * $p \leq 0.05$, ** $p \leq 0.01$
n=193

Table 8(cont'd)

Variables	Model C B (Std. Error)	Model C Beta	Model D B (Std. Error)	Model D Beta
Anonymous	1.376	0.099	1.027	0.050
	(1.043)		(1.499)	
Asian-American	2.768*	0.206	2.761*	0.201
	(1.077)		(1.118)	
White	1.681*	0.206	1.524*	0.184
	(0.651)		(0.675)	
Some College	1.072+	0.132	1.083+	0.134
	(0.641)		(0.625)	
College Degree	1.346*	0.157	0.921	0.108
	(0.679)		(0.676)	
School	0.178	0.024	-0.441	-0.059
	(0.552)		(0.569)	
Educators in "Other" Network	-----	-----	0.676*	0.183
			(0.292)	
Non-Educators in "Other" Network	-----	-----	-0.166	-0.068
			(0.196)	
Size of School-Based Parent Network	-----	-----	0.316*	0.180
			(0.142)	
Parental Role	0.102**	0.238	0.100**	0.232
	(0.034)		(0.034)	
Self-Efficacy	-0.002	-0.004	-0.053	-0.085
	(0.047)		(0.049)	
Obligation	0.399*	0.160	0.300	0.118
	(0.178)		(0.182)	
R-squared	0.177		0.250	
(adj. r-sq)	(0.134)		(0.194)	

+ $p \leq 0.10$, * $p \leq 0.05$, ** $p \leq 0.01$
n=193

Model C examined parental beliefs as a predictor of involvement at school separate from network variables. In this analysis, two beliefs predicted parents' behavior. Specifically, parental role construction predicted parent involvement at school ($t = 3.035$, $p \leq 0.003$), as did parents' sense that others' expect them to be involved ($t = 2.241$, $p \leq 0.026$). In addition, Asian-American and White parents reported greater involvement at school than other ethnic groups ($t = 2.570$, $p \leq 0.011$ & $t = 2.582$, $p \leq 0.011$, respectively). Parents who have attained a college degree also reported greater parent involvement at school ($t = 1.981$, $p \leq 0.049$). Like parent involvement at home, parental role construction predicted involvement at school. Unlike the previous type of involvement, however, a parent's sense of others' expectations was predictive of his or her involvement at school.

The final model, model D, tested the relationship between parents' beliefs, demographic, and social network variables as predictors of involvement at the school. In this model, parents who believe that they should be more active in their child's education tended to be more involved at school ($t = 2.942$, $p \leq 0.004$), although parents' sense of obligation no longer significantly predicted this behavior ($t = 1.646$, $p \leq 0.102$). In addition to parental role construction, the number of people in the field of education and the amount of conversations with other parents at the school remained significant predictors of parent involvement ($t = 2.313$, $p \leq 0.022$ & $t = 2.220$, $p \leq 0.028$, respectively). Also, with parents' beliefs and network variables accounted for, Asian-American and White/Caucasian parents continue to report greater amounts of parent involvement at school ($t = 2.469$, $p \leq 0.015$ & $t = 2.257$, $p \leq 0.025$, respectively). Finally, the relationship between having some college and being involved at the school

approached significance ($t = 1.733$, $p \leq 0.085$). With the inclusion of parents' beliefs, 25% of the variance in parent involvement at school was explained, improving on the previous models.

As the models predicting involvement at school developed and became more complex, they were able to account for greater amounts of variability in parents' behavior. Like parent involvement at home, a parent's belief about her or his role as a parent and the effect of her or his social networks seem to act independently. Unlike parent involvement at home, however, parents' sense of obligation was moderately predictive of involvement at school. This suggests that a parent's perception of other parents' expectations predicts behaviors which are public and which contribute to the school environment and community. The fact that the relationship between the sense of obligation and parent involvement at school disappeared once network variables were included in regression models suggests a connection between the pressure a parent feels to become involved in her or his child's education and his or her social network. It is also possible that, given a more reliable measure, the relationship between parents' sense of obligation and parent involvement at school might remain significant after controlling for network factors.

Summary in Relation to Theory.

The results of the multiple regression analyses suggest some important similarities and differences with respect to factors that help predict to parent involvement at home versus parent involvement at school. Across both types of parent involvement, the belief that all parents have a responsibility to be involved in their children's education strongly predicted the extent to which a parent reported that she or he was involved. Likewise,

across both types of involvement, ethnicity also proved to help predict parent involvement behaviors. Both of these factors continued to be predictive of parent involvement when social network variables were accounted for in the analyses.

Parents' social network, like parental beliefs and ethnicity, predicted both parent involvement at home and parent involvement at school. However, the analyses suggest that different networks predict different types of parent involvement. Specifically, a parent who knows other parents with children at the same school as his or her own child, is likely to report greater involvement at the school. In contrast, the larger a parent's social network outside of the school, the more that parent tended to be involved at home. The finding that different networks are predictive of different types of parent involvement suggests the need to more fully examine how networks function to affect each type of involvement.

Sociocentric Analyses

The previous analyses approached social capital as a resource and phenomena which operates idiosyncratically and separately for each individual. Such analyses, while useful in their own right, fail to consider the fact that individuals' lives are embedded within a larger social network (Wellman, 1988; Frank & Wellman, 1998). In order to examine the effect of social capital on parent involvement, as a network phenomenon, the network data collected were used to construct a map of social relations for each school. Following the creation of these maps, Hierarchical Linear Modeling (HLM) enabled an analysis of the degree to which parent involvement at home and at school vary across subgroups. HLM is appropriate because parents are embedded within subgroups and are therefore neither isolated nor independent of one another. Through HLM analyses,

subgroup effects could be estimated as predictors of parents' involvement. This type of analysis allows for subgroup characteristics, such as group norms, to be tested as forms of social capital.

The first step in analyzing subgroup effects on parent involvement was to create a social network map for each school. Using parents' reports of who they talk to and how often, social network maps could be generated by software (Kliquefinder) that identifies cohesive subgroups of parents. The software utilizes a clustering algorithm, maximizing the ratio of within subgroup ties to between subgroup ties (See Frank 1996 for more on this). The emphasis is on the network as a whole, rather than on the individuals who comprise the network. Using the software, a network map was then created for each school. In Chief Elementary School, the network program identified 13 different subgroups. With the data from Pierce Elementary School, Kliquefinder identified 9 subgroups. For both schools, memberships were concentrated within subgroups at a level that was unlikely to occur by chance alone ($p \leq 0.001$). This suggests that the subgroups identified by the Kliquefinder software are not the result of a random pattern of network ties, and that they reflect the discernible patterns of social relationships reported by the responding parents.

Having identified 22 groups within the entire sample, analyses into subgroup influences on parent involvement at home and at school followed. With so few subgroups, there was limited power to examine effects at the subgroup level. Analyses are likely to be conservative and to underestimate effects.

When conducting HLM analyses, Bryk and Raudenbush (1992) recommend beginning with unconditional models to examine the extent of variation across groups. In

addition, this analysis allows the researcher to compare the variance at the group level to the variance at the individual level. The unconditional model examining parent involvement at school indicated that the extent of variance across subgroups was not different from zero ($p \leq 0.356$). Given these results, HLM analyses were not continued on this outcome. Subgroup characteristics do not appear to be determinants of parent involvement at school.

In contrast to the analysis into parent involvement at school, the unconditional model predicting parent involvement at home found significant variance across subgroups ($X^2 = 30.66$, $p \leq 0.06$). Approximately 13.6% of the variance in parents' involvement at home could be attributed to subgroups. This finding suggests that subgroup characteristics and processes might influence the degree to which members of a subgroup become involved with their children's education at home. Given the results, further analyses were conducted to study subgroup effects on parent involvement at home.

Social-Structural Characteristics as Predictors.

Building on the unconditional model of parent involvement at home, individual level variables (Level-1 variables) were used as predictors for the outcome. Students' grade level and gender were not entered into any of these models due to the fact that they did not predict parent involvement in the OLS-regressions previously discussed. School was also not included in the HLM analyses due to the fact that each subgroup is nested within a school. Parents' ethnic affiliation and level of educational attainment were the only background variables included in these analyses. Nether set of variables

significantly predicted involvement at home in the HLM analyses and are, therefore, not discussed.

Parents' beliefs, in addition to race and education level, were included in the level-1 predictors of involvement at home (See Table 9). Each of the individual level variables were subgroup-mean centered, so that the constant (β_0) would represent the average level of involvement (See Bryk & Raudenbush, 1992). Subgroup-mean centering also allowed a more meaningful examination of the variation across subgroups in parents' involvement at home. Similar to the OLS results, parents' role construction was the only belief to predict parent involvement at home ($\beta = 0.265$, $p \leq 0.000$). Furthermore, the analysis showed that significant variation in parent involvement across subgroups remained after level-1 predictors were entered ($X^2 = 35.721$, $p \leq 0.017$).

Table 9: Conditional Model predicting Parent Involvement at Home

Variables	Coefficients	T-ratio
Constant	40.807	68.505***
Some College	0.638	0.591
Asian-American	1.978	0.795
White	-0.270	-0.097
Obligation	-0.308	-0.846
Self-Efficacy	0.094	0.917
Parental Role Construction	0.265	5.866***

*p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

Estimation of Variance Components

Random Effect	Variance Component	Chi-Square
Constant	3.380	35.721 *
Level-1	15.789	

*p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

Social capital theory suggests that the social structure of people's lives can affect their behavior (Coleman, 1990; Burt, 1992). In order to investigate the effect of social

capital on parent involvement, three aspects of subgroup structure were used as subgroup level predictors; the density of ties among subgroup members (DENSITY), the number of connections each subgroup has to other subgroups (BRIDGES), and the presence of social closure among some or all members of a subgroup (CLOSURE). Each variable was entered into a separate HLM model due to the limited degrees of freedom available.

Analyses of socio-structural influences on parent involvement at home suggest that none of the structural measures (subgroup density, the number ties that bridge one subgroup to another, or the presence of closure) could reject the null hypothesis stating there is no relationship between social structure and parent involvement at home. The first model tested (Table 10) found that density of subgroup ties did not predict parent involvement at home ($\beta = -2.23$, $p = ns$), nor did it reduce the amount of residual variance in parent involvement across subgroups. The null hypothesis, that there is no relationships between subgroup tie density and parent involvement at home could not be rejected.

Table 10: Conditional Model Predicting Involvement at Home with Tie Density

Variables	Coefficients	T-ratio
Constant	40.823	27.820***
DENSITY	-2.23	-0.975
Some College	0.460	0.453
Asian-American	-1.822	-1.303
White	-0.087	-0.049
Obligation	-0.395	-1.162
Self-Efficacy	0.1.2	1.037
Parental Role Construction	0.272	6.048***

*p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

Estimation of Variance Components

Random Effect	Variance Component	Chi-Square
Constant	3.367	32.574*
Level-1	15.936	

*p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

The number of ties to other subgroups (bridges) was also tested as a subgroup characteristic, representative of social capital, which may affect parents' involvement activities (Table 11). Like subgroup density, membership in a subgroup with more ties to other subgroups was not significantly related to parent involvement at home ($\beta = 0.109$, p = ns). Inclusion of this variable did not reduce the residual variance of involvement at home across subgroups. The null hypothesis in this case, that there is no relationship between the number of subgroup ties to other subgroups and parent involvement, could not be rejected.

Table 11: Conditional Model Predicting Involvement at Home with Bridges

Variables	Coefficients	T-ratio
Constant	40.823	27.820***
BRIDGES	0.110	0.644
Some College	0.460	0.453
Asian-American	-1.822	-1.303
White	-0.087	-0.049
Obligation	-0.395	-1.162
Self-Efficacy	0.1.2	1.037
Parental Role Construction	0.272	6.048***

*p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

Estimation of Variance Components

Random Effect	Variance Component	Chi-Square
Constant	3.492	33.039*
Level-1	15.901	

*p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

Finally, the existence of social closure among some or all subgroup members was used to help predict parent involvement at home across subgroups (Table 12). Social closure, it has been argued, enables individuals to monitor the behavior of one another and allow for the emergence and enforcement of norms (Coleman, 1990). Like the previous two subgroup measures, closure among subgroup member did not significantly predict parent involvement at home ($\beta = 0.299$, p = ns). The findings of this analysis suggest that behaviors which take place within the privacy of one's home, where the monitoring of behavior may be especially difficult, may not be influenced by social processes associated with social capital. The null hypothesis stating that there is no relationship between the presence of social closure and parent involvement at home could not be rejected.

Table 12: Conditional Model Predicting Involvement at Home with Tie Density

Variables	Coefficients	T-ratio
Constant	40.647	43.886
CLOSURE	0.298	0.250
Some College	0.638	0.591
Asian-American	1.978	0.795
White	-0.270	-0.097
Obligation	-0.308	-0.846
Self-Efficacy	0.094	0.917
Parental Role Construction	0.265	5.866***

*p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

Estimation of Variance Components

Random Effect	Variance Component	Chi-Square
Constant	3.677	35.274*
Level-1	15.843	

*p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

When social capital is measured using structural variables as indicators of social processes, it does not appear to affect parent involvement at home. None of the structural measures of parents' subgroups significantly predicted involvement behaviors. These findings suggest that social capital may not affect those types of parent-child interactions that occur within the home. Whether the shared beliefs of subgroup members are predictive of parent involvement at home is the focus of the following analyses.

One limitation in the analyses above is the small number of subgroups with which to conduct the HLM analyses. Given the limited degrees of freedom with the HLM, failure to reject the null hypotheses regarding social structure does not necessarily mean social structure has no effect on parent involvement. In this study, with 22 subgroups, the probability that existing relationships were not found is relatively high. Also, results of the level-two analyses are likely to be conservative. Studies in which data can be

gathered from a larger number of subgroups would increase the power of the analyses in this study and reduce the likelihood of a Type II error.

Using Subgroup Beliefs as Predictors.

In addition to examining the effects of social structure, HLM analyses were conducted using the mean of each subgroup's belief scores as predictors of the intercept. Whereas structural features are considered indicative of social capital effects, social cohesion is expected to be represented by the effect of the mean level of subgroup members' beliefs on an individual's involvement. In the analyses using subgroup beliefs as a predictor of parent involvement at home, the mean level of obligation to be involved was not significantly related to the outcome. The extent to which subgroup members believe that others expect them to be involved, therefore, does not help explain why parents are more or less involved at home with their children's education.

In the first analysis presented here, a subgroup's mean scores on the parental role construction scale, as well as individual level variables, were used to predict involvement at home (See table 13). The HLM analysis found that parents who were above their subgroup's average on the degree to which they believe it is parents' role to be involved with a child's education were more likely to be involved at home ($\beta = 0.265$, $p \leq 0.000$). In addition to this individual level effect, parents who were members of a subgroup that more strongly believe parents should be involved, tended to report greater amounts of parent involvement ($\gamma = 0.396$, $p \leq 0.007$). These findings suggest that membership in particular subgroups affect parental behaviors. More specifically, if a parent interacts often with other parents who believe that all parents should be involved in their children's education, they are more likely to become involved themselves, regardless of their own

personal beliefs. Parent involvement at home, then, can be explained by both individual and subgroups effects.

Table 13: Conditional Model using Subgroup mean of Parental Role Construction

Variables	Coefficients	T-ratio
Constant	9.884	0.982
Mean Role Construction	0.396	3.038**
Some College	0.638	0.591
Asian-American	1.978	0.795
White	-0.270	-0.097
Obligation	-0.308	-0.846
Self-Efficacy	0.094	0.917
Parental Role Construction	0.65	5.866***

*p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

Estimation of Variance Components

Random Effect	Variance Component	Chi-Square
Constant	1.353	24.692
Level-1	16.183	

*p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

The second belief used to predict parent involvement at home was parental efficacy, particularly the mean level of efficacy among subgroup members (See table 14). At the individual level, parents' role construction predicted parent involvement at home ($\beta = 0.265$, $p \leq 0.001$). In addition, the subgroup mean level of parental efficacy was found to significantly predict parent involvement at home ($\gamma = 0.472$, $p \leq 0.025$). When subgroup members believe parents can help their children in school, a parent in that subgroup was likely to be involved in his or her child's education at home. Upon entering the mean level of parental efficacy, much of the variance in parent involvement across subgroups was explained ($X^2 = 28.433$, $p \leq 0.075$), approximately 13%. Like parental role construction, this subgroup effect helps explain variance in parent

involvement at home, although it is not as powerful a predictor as parents' role construction.

Table 14: Conditional Model using subgroup mean of efficacy

Variables	Coefficients	T-ratio
Constant	21.280	2.642*
Mean Subgroup Efficacy	0.472	2.439*
Some College	0.638	0.591
Asian-American	1.978	0.795
White	-0.270	-0.097
Obligation	-0.308	-0.846
Self-Efficacy	0.094	0.917
Parental Role Construction	0.265	5.866***

*p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

Estimation of Variance Components

Random Effect	Variance Component	Chi-Square
Constant	2.323	28.433+
Level-1	15.940	

+p<0.10, *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

Overall, the HLM analyses suggested that social structural factors may not be predictive of parent involvement at home, although the shared beliefs of a subgroup did appear to have an impact on individual behaviors. Throughout the analyses, a parent's private beliefs about the proper role of all parents in a child's education helped predict the extent to which she or he reported being involved. In addition, the analyses suggested that membership in some groups may make parent involvement more likely. Membership in a subgroup whose members felt as though parents should be involved, or that parent involvement can produce educational benefits, was related to more frequent parent involvement at home.

To the extent that the social structural variables represent the effects of social capital, while subgroup beliefs represent social cohesion, the HLM analyses suggest that social cohesion may be an influential network process affecting parent involvement at home. In all three analyses using social structure variables as indicators of social capital, there was no significant predictive relationship between the subgroup variables and parent involvement at home. Due to a lack of variation in parent involvement at school across the subgroups, the relationships between social capital and parent involvement at school could not be explored.

Summary of Results

The regression and HLM analyses revealed several important findings with regard to the relationship between social networks and parent involvement: 1) network size is an important characteristic which predicts parent involvement, 2) different social networks seem to facilitate different types of parent involvement, and 3) the mean level of subgroup beliefs predict parent involvement at home. These findings are consistent with the theoretical model depicting the role of social capital and social cohesion in the facilitation of parent involvement at home and at school. Parents' social networks appear to affect different types of parent involvement through different social processes.

To the extent that network size is related to the transfer and availability of resources among social actors, the finding that network size is predictive of parent involvement (at home and at school) supports the hypothesis that social capital contributes to parent involvement generally. Bourdieu (1986) defined social capital as the resources to which an individual has access by virtue of his or her connections to others. Overall, parents who reported speaking with more individuals about their child's

education tend to be more involved than parents with smaller social networks. Although network size alone should not be taken as direct evidence that social capital is present and functioning in an individual's social network, it can serve as a measure of the potential resources available to a parent. Thus, parents with more ties to others have more opportunities for resources to be made available, and therefore have more social capital available.

The findings that network size predicts parent involvement builds on existing research which has shown the importance of studying network size. Nan Lin, in discussing his theory of social resources, argues "social structure allows access to and use of resources not necessarily in the possession of each individual" (Lin, 1988, p.263). Research drawing upon this theory has shown that individuals with larger networks have ties across a wider range of status levels. These ties across levels, according to Lin (1998), provide access to others with dissimilar, useful resources and have been shown to predict social mobility and a person's ability to obtain employment. Ties, therefore, serve as access to resources which help individuals achieve various goals

The second important finding from the regression analyses was that different networks were associated with different types of parent involvement. While network size is an important characteristic for *measuring* social capital, understanding the composition of a network's membership may be necessary in order to *comprehend the effects* of social capital. The regression analyses show that larger school-based networks predicted greater involvement at school. However, the network of "other adults" with whom parents talk about their child's education (NPA) did not predict parent involvement at school, but was instead related to parent involvement at home. This suggests that social

capital, the resources individuals invest in one another or the school, function toward specific goals and types of behavior. The finding that network members provide specialized support is consistent with existing research on social support. Kin, for example, are more likely to provide individuals with financial aid or large services (Wellman & Wortley, 1990), and women are more likely to provide emotional support (Frank & Wellman, 1998). Different network members and different subgroups, it appears, provide parents with unique types of resources which facilitate different forms of behavior.

In addition to using multiple regression analyses, Hierarchical Linear Modeling (HLM) enabled analyses of the relationship between subgroup characteristics and parent involvement. The relationships between the mean beliefs of a subgroup and parent involvement suggest that social cohesion may be an important network process through which parents are encouraged to become active in their child's education at home. The findings that subgroup characteristics generally associated with social capital processes (i.e., density of ties and number of weak ties) did not predict involvement at home suggests that social capital among parents at a school does not affect the behaviors that take place in the privacy of one's home.

While socio-structural measures did not help predict parent involvement, subgroup measures of beliefs did. Members of subgroups that felt more strongly about the importance of parent involvement tended to be more involved at home. Likewise, those parents who are in a subgroup whose members more strongly believe involvement can help children in school were also more likely to be involved. These results suggest that subgroup norms may develop and encourage parents to be more involved at home.

Although a parent may not believe strongly that parents should get involved in their child's education, frequently interacting with others who do seems to affect parents' behaviors.

The statistical analyses conducted in this study support the theory proposed in this dissertation by showing the importance of examining parent involvement at home and at school. Different subgroups may provide parents with different resources. The regression analyses also suggest that network affects are not mediated by parental beliefs, supporting the idea that the presence and investment of resources among parents (i.e., social capital) has a direct effect on parental behaviors. The HLM analyses, meanwhile, suggest an affect of subgroup beliefs (social cohesion) on parent involvement at home. Each method of data analyses (OLS & HLM) seems to highlight a social mechanisms through which networks affect parent involvement.

Although the survey data illustrates the importance of parental networks with respect to parent involvement, it cannot provide direct evidence for *how* social relationships among parents and other adults might serve as a resource which facilitates parent involvement. Network size, for example, says nothing about the types of resources exchanged or how they affect parent involvement. For this type of analysis, individual parent interviews are needed. Social capital and social cohesion can then be studied at the more micro level; from the ground up. This type of "ground up" analyses of social capital and social cohesion is the focus of the following chapter, which begins to explain how social relationships foster social capital and social cohesion toward the creation of parent involvement at home and at school.

CHAPTER FIVE: HOW SOCIAL TIES AFFECT PARENT INVOLVEMENT

In the previous chapter, analyses of the survey data suggest an important connection between parents' social networks and parent involvement. Multiple regression analyses found a relationship between the number of people a parent talks with about her or his child's education and parent involvement. In addition, HLM analyses revealed that membership in a subgroup of parents who emphasize a parent's role in the education of her or his child's education, or a subgroup in which parents believe that parent involvement can help a child in school, predicted the extent to which a parent will be involved at home. Both findings support arguments for further investigation into the effect of social capital and social cohesion on parent involvement. However, the survey data provide little insight into how network processes function among parents of elementary school children. In this chapter, parent interview data were analyzed in order to examine how social capital and social cohesion function toward parent involvement at home and at school.

Parents' reports suggested that social networks, and the subgroups in which a parent are embedded, can affect involvement behaviors and beliefs about the education of his or her children. First, parents reported that in their conversations with other parents, they compare their own beliefs and actions with their friends and acquaintances. Furthermore, the interview data suggest that parents can learn about, and are sometimes influenced by, other parents' opinions. Where the survey data could provide findings that were consistent with social cohesion explanations of influence among parents, the

interview data in the first section of this chapter provide instances and examples which support the claim that social cohesion functions among parents to facilitate parent involvement.

In contrast to social cohesion, social capital appears to affect parent involvement through the transfer or exchange of resources among parents, as well as through the creation of a sense of obligation for a parent to become involved in her or his child's education. In the former case, parental interviews identified three resources shared among parents; (1) favors, (2) education materials, and (3) information. The second way in which social capital might affect parent involvement is through the creation of a sense of obligation among parents. By watching others become involved, some parents reported that they developed a sense of obligation to be involved. Moreover, parents also reported that they have tried to foster a sense of obligation in other parents by applying pressure on their friends to become involved.

The qualitative data collected for this dissertation, while limited in size, support the claims made earlier regarding the role social networks have in the creation of parent involvement at home and at school. The parents who were interviewed described their relationships and interactions with others in ways that are generally consistent with social cohesion and social capital theory. Each of these processes are examined separately in the remainder of this chapter.

Social Cohesion

As a network process among individuals, social cohesion refers to the influence interpersonal conversations can have on an individual's beliefs. Through conversations parents share their beliefs with one another, they compare their own perspectives with

other parents' perspectives, and they may modify their own beliefs as a result of this sharing and comparing. The effect of this influence, ultimately the result of being part of a social network or subgroup, may be that parents become more involved in their children's education. In chapter 4, HLM analyses suggest that social cohesion can function among parents' social networks to affect parent involvement at home. In the section below, each aspect of social cohesion (sharing beliefs, comparing beliefs, and the effects of exposure to others' beliefs) is assessed in terms of interview data. Analyses of the interview data highlighted the interpersonal processes that make up social cohesion in support of the data presented in the previous chapter.

Sharing Beliefs.

During the interviews, parents reported that they often knew how their friends and acquaintances felt about a variety of issues pertaining to their child's schooling. Asking parents what they talked about with one another revealed that they frequently exchanged opinions on specific school policies, teachers' actions, and at times students' academic achievements. These conversations between parents appear to have provided them with knowledge of one another's opinions (direct exposure to beliefs), as well as exposure to the opinions and beliefs of parents who are not participating in the immediate conversation (indirect exposure to beliefs). It is the direct exposure to others' beliefs that enable social cohesion to operate between two individuals, while indirect exposure to others' beliefs help explain how social cohesion might function within a larger subgroup of individuals.

Direct Exposure.

Across the interviews, parents remarked that their children and childrearing are among the most common topics of conversation. Further, almost all of the parents reported that they shared opinions about involvement, as well as the ways in which they are involved with their children's education, with other parents. Through their conversations, parents appear to have access to the beliefs and behaviors of those with whom they speak.

Insight into other parents' beliefs appeared to be common among parents. Even parents with the fewest network ties reported speaking with other parents about how they were involved with their child's education. An illustration of how common it is for parents to talk about their own involvement was Phil Park[8], the member of an isolated subgroup, who commented that he and other parents ask one another about different types of involvement practices; "what do your children do in extra hours? All day Kids Club, or they will do piano lessons, or art lessons? So we exchange such information." These types of questions might be one way through which ideas circulate among parents, enabling them to share and compare parenting and involvement behaviors. These conversations, however, can do more than inform parents of what others are doing. Phil described how talking to other parents affected his own perceptions,

> Because when I talk with the other parents, they talk about what they did with their daughter. Some night they went someplace during the weekend, and they say that to me. So I assume that during the day they have some involvement, at least several hours a day. (Phil, Isolate)

According to Phil, through conversations with other parents he learns how much other parents are involved in their children's education. Phil's comments suggest that the interactions among parents allow for exchanges of information regarding involvement practices.

Parents, in addition to talking about the ways in which they are involved in their child's education, also reported sharing perceptions of their children's teacher. Michelle Kelly describes how she and another parent share perspective of their children's teacher,

> "[B]ut with someone like Val and I, who had the same teacher, we might have been talking right after conferences...There is a problem and I don't think its so and so, or she doesn't seem to notice that this kid is really out of hand, or have you ever volunteered and noticed that this and this happens?. It really does go across the board" (Michelle, Central Actor)

Although parents reported that teachers were a common topic of conversation, few parents reported conversations as detailed as those between Michelle and her friend Val. These comments may be rare because few parents volunteer in the classroom, the primary way of getting firsthand knowledge about the way a teacher manages her or his students. Nevertheless, discussions like the one Michelle described characterize the communication through which two informed parents share their observations and impressions of a teacher, enabling the process of social cohesion.

According to both the OLS and HLM analyses, the degree to which a parent believes that all parents should be involved in the education of their children was predictive of the parent involvement at home and at school. The case of Nicole Seaver, a bridging actor between two groups of parents, provides an example of conversations where parents share their belief about the role parents should have in the education of their children. Nicole reported that, when talking to other parents, conversations often reinforce the belief that parents should be involved,

> "It would be like, like what the kids are doing, *the reason why we are* there volunteering, we'll just talk about that. Nothing major, you know, like if they are working part-time they will talk about that, but nothing in detail."
> (Nicole, Bridger)

In addition to conversations reinforcing the importance of parent involvement, Nicole also talks to parents who believe they should not have to be involved in their child's education. Below Nicole relates her own frustration with parents who think that the responsibility for teaching children to read rests solely with the school and its teachers,

> "I've talked to, I don't know them personally, but I've talked to them at the school and I've found that one mom was blaming the school for stuff. 'they're not doing this, and they're not doing that'. It's hard to tell them 'I feel that you should be doing more at home' because I've talked with a couple of parents and they weren't from Pierce, just in our neighborhood, and I mean when you tell them you should be teaching your children, they thought 'Man, no. When I was growing up my parents didn't have to read to me and do this and that with me.' (Nicole, Bridger)

Despite the fact that this later type of conversation was reported by only one parent, it suggests that social cohesion may work in opposition to the creation of parent involvement.

It is perhaps noteworthy to highlight the fact that Nicole Seaver was identified as a bridging actor within the network structure at Pierce Elementary School. As a "Bridger," Nicole connects subgroups who would otherwise be isolated from one another. The two comments presented support the identification of Nicole as a Bridger, indicating that she interacts with a variety of groups, from parents who are highly involved to those who may have no intention of ever being involved in the education of their children.

Like some of the examples above, two-thirds of the sample of parents interviewed (8) indicated that conversations with other parents allow them to learn what other parents think about the school, teachers, and parent involvement. Furthermore, each example illustrates an instance where one parent's exposure to others' beliefs is direct - parents share *their own* perspectives in conversations.

Indirect Exposure.

In addition to gaining direct exposure and access to other parents' attitudes and beliefs, a parent's interpersonal interactions with other parents also provide insight into the attitudes of the larger school community. Interview data contain instances where the conversations among parents provide indirect exposure to others' beliefs. That is, a parent can become informed about the attitudes of parents with whom he or she has no contact. This phenomenon makes it possible for the beliefs of one parent to influence another, without the two parents ever talking to one another.

Four of the parents interviewed related instances when their own friend passed along insight into others' beliefs. Among these four parents, Francis Brock most clearly described the process while responding to a question asking her what she talks about with her friends and other parents at Chief Elementary,

> "and then she told me about what the other parents were saying -- how did they feel about it. And it's just that, it's not just my son, it's, you know, there's not too many boys in the fourth grade at Chief and it's just...maybe one or two are handling [homework] okay, the rest of them are struggling. (Francis, Non-Respondent)

In this quote, Francis clearly states that in talking to her friends about a homework situation, she is informed of "the other parents" perspectives. In addition to finding out what her friend believes and discussed with the teacher, Francis gained indirect insight into the beliefs of parents she may not know. This conversation provides her some understanding of how the community of parents was reacting to the teacher's homework policy, and an opportunity to compare her own experiences to the larger community.

In addition to Francis, other parents reported having access and exposure to other parents' beliefs, without actually talking to them. Like Francis, Michelle states that her conversations with other parents are often spurred by controversies at the school:

> "Actually it runs the entire gambit. And it's usually timely - I mean if something has come out in the mail, I will go to the [gym] Sunday with the kids and I will see two other parents from the class there...and I will say, 'what did you think about the so and so.' And, you know, 'if I had my choice I don't know if I would vote year around. I really seem to like it - ideal for Zack, but its not ideal for me. So if they are going to stick with that, I back it and if not it might be easier for me.' *And I say, 'Gee I think so and so left because her son was in 6th grade and it must have goofed up the schedule' and [they say], 'No, she left for another reason.'* And then you get into the policy of this Halloween thing, which was a big problem, how they would not let kids wear costumes in class and that has become a topic of the discussion more than once. (Michelle, Central Actor, emphasis added)

In Michelle's quote above, her indirect access to the beliefs of other parents is indicated. Identified as a central actor, Michelle has a large social network which can provide her with information about the larger network of parents at Chief Elementary School. When Michelle states why she thinks another mother left the school, she is corrected and informed of why that parent actually left. The conversation between Michelle and her friend at the gym began by discussing their own opinions, however, the context expanded into an opportunity for Michelle to learn the reason why another parent pulled her child out of the local elementary school. Despite the fact that Michelle never spoke to the parent who left the school, she nonetheless has knowledge of that parent's attitudes about the school.

The comments of Francis and Michelle illustrate an important network process; the diffusion of attitudes throughout a network. As parents convey the beliefs of others in their conversations with one another, it appears as though social cohesion can function as

a subgroup process. Through their interactions with friends and acquaintances, parents come to learn about the opinions and attitudes of other parents with whom they may have no interactions, but to whom others are connected through subgroup ties. Because of this phenomenon, parents' observe and compare beliefs with others in their social networks.

Opportunities for Comparison.

While the previous section provided evidence that parents share their beliefs on a variety of issues, further evidence exists in support of the proposition that this serves as the basis for one parent to compare herself to another. The theoretical model proposed in this dissertation suggests that parents' social networks affect parent involvement because the process of social cohesion affects parents own beliefs about themselves, the school, and/or their child. An important facet of social cohesion models is that individuals compare themselves to others with whom they come into contact. This comparison, combined with a pressure toward conformity, makes others' beliefs influential on the individual (Festinger et. al., 1959).

In this dissertation, parents reported that they often compared their own beliefs and behaviors to the beliefs and behaviors of other parents. In addition, parents reported that these interactions are important to them and influence them. Michelle Kelly, a central actor, describes how the process of comparison can begin slowly and subtly;

> "Yes, I honestly think that [parents] would just rather think all their teachers are the best of all the classes. But every once in a while you will get into a situation where we will start talking about the teacher and they say, 'I'm really uncomfortable with this.' and you say, 'I am too.' And - but for awhile I honestly think that at the beginning of the year we all want to go, 'yes, we got a good one this year'...." (Michelle, central actor)

Michelle's comment suggests that as parents compare each others' opinions and perceptions, they may modify their beliefs. The effect of interactions such as those above can be seen as Michelle elaborated, "I try to take it with a grain of salt, but I betcha that's in my head the whole year." Although Michelle is supportive of her child's teacher, conversations with other parents establish a basis for comparison and allow her to voice her concerns among other parents.

Like Michelle, Karen Clarke reported that her conversations with friends allow for them to compare perspectives, influencing Karen's own attitudes about the school and her child. Karen, also a central actor, reported that talking to others allows her to compare the development of her daughter to the daughters of her peers. When asked what the most common topic of conversation is among her friends, Karen reported it was their children:

> "What is going on at school and it could be anything. First you talk about the kids growing up - the new things - a boyfriend now - how are we going to deal with this. The body changing you know. Its more about the attitude of growing up. To discuss - you can figure out - is the kid really waco here or we....Is this something I got to worry about or is it not. So we discuss a lot about growing up with personality changes. We talk about the work of the teachers - we discuss teachers a lot. I agreed with that, I disagree with that - did you hear about that - did you hear about this or what's going on at the school"

Karen's comment suggests that she gauges her own reactions, whether they are to developmental changes in her daughter or her opinions of a teacher, through interactions with other parents. In talking to her friend, Karen compares her reactions and her daughter's maturation to others. She confers with her friends about how to handle the developmental changes in her children. What is considered an appropriate reaction to any given event, and what is considered a "waco" reaction, appears likely to be

determined among Karen's network of friends, through their interactions with one another.

In addition to comparing beliefs and attitudes, parents also reported comparing involvement practices. One example, Brenda Cassey, reported that she and her close friends not only compare, but coordinate their involvement. Brenda, a non-respondent to the survey, stated that, "with homework and stuff, we talk a lot about how to do- or different ways to do that, when to do it - when is the best time - make sure that they all do it at the same time so that they can play together." Brenda later explained how conversations about the ways in which she and her friends are involved at home can be specific, enabling them to compare and contrast their involvement strategies against one another;

> "On Mondays they get spelling words...and talking with other parents on how much you have them do each night, do you have them do it all in one night or...How do you review the word? Do you just have them spell them out loud, do you have them write it down, if they make mistakes do you have them write it 10 times, or do you just wait until the next day? Just comparing what you do." (Brenda, Non-respondent)

According to Brenda, she and her friends are constantly talking to one another, hoping to discover strategies that will help their children learn. Brenda and her friends share new ideas with one another about how to help their children with school and other extracurricular activities.

Although Brenda presents a good example of how close friends might compare involvement behaviors with one another, the act of comparing is not necessarily confined to groups of friends. During an interview, one parent (Jackie, a Non-respondent) could recall a situation where she and a group of parents stood around at the school, comparing

the sacrifices they made to be there and the various demands and constraints of their lives. Jackie states,

> J: "...and I don't know how we got into the conversation, but I said- I said 'how long have you been here?'... I asked them how long they had been there and we talked about what hours they worked and I said, 'wow, you had to take a day off work to come here?' and they said, 'yeah, but it was worth it because it was for my kids. I took a vacation day or early leave day.' And there was a few of us parents standing around, and a few said, 'yeah that was the only way I could of done it, was if I took a vacation day or early leave.' Some parents didn't have a vacation, so they took an early leave day or a late come-in day (if they work second shift). There were some parents, I told them I wouldn't have been able to do this if it would have been during the day, during the school hours. And a few parents said, yeah, I wouldn't have been able to do it if I hadn't taken a vacation day. So we were all kind of talking about it.
>
> S: How you could manage to be there?
>
> J: Yeah, I think that helps because it gives other parents ideas. You know, I didn't think about it, but I could have taken a vacation day. But I was saving my vacation days to go to camp, so I still, I still was o.k. I was good." (Jackie, Non-Respondent)

In addition to further illustrating how parents compare their own behaviors and dedication to the schooling of their children, the statement by Jackie also conveys the pressure that is created from this comparison. These parents, while publicly sharing the sacrifices they made to be at the school, are also communicating to others that they too could (and perhaps should) be making sacrifices. As parents' sacrifices are made public, it may become increasingly difficult for parents not to compare themselves to others.

The comparisons parents make among one another not only propel them to action, but also ease some parents' concerns about their children. Throughout the interviews, parents stated they will talk to a close friend or family member in order to reassure themselves that they are not overreacting to a given situation. Michelle Kelly, a central actor, makes this point well;

> "They either bring me back to earth- because you are so wrapped up in this, that you think it is the worst it could be or the best you could be, or this is what I tried and they bring you back -'Oh, don't worry about it you know what, everybody does that.' You talk to people who usually have a child a year older than you are or a couple months older than yours is.

For Michelle and five other parents interviewed, having a network of parents to call and discuss recent events appears to help them gauge the relative normalcy of their own child, their reactions to various situations, or simply the developmental course their child is on. Moreover, a parent's social networks may function to help understand what role to play in his or her child's development. In some cases, the interactions with other parents allowed a parent to compare his or her children to other children. Interactions also enabled parents to compare their beliefs to the beliefs of other parents and to compare their involvement practices with the practices of other parents.

The Effect on Parental Beliefs

Ultimately, through sharing and comparing beliefs and behaviors, social networks may influence a parent's beliefs. Interview data collected for this study indicate that a parent's own beliefs about issues pertaining to her or his children's schooling can be affected by interactions with other parents. It is this final dynamic among parents that allows a parents' social networks to become a context in which social cohesion has an important influence on parent involvement.

Throughout the interviews, and regardless of whether or not they returned the surveys, parents reported that teachers are among the most common topics about which parents talk to one another. Parents continually related incidents in which they shared with their friends opinions about their child's teachers and other teachers at the school. Francis, a mother who worked at Chief Elementary School as a noon supervisor,

described how she is often approached by other parents who wish to learn more about the teachers at Chief;

> "We used to live in an apartment and then there was a lot of parents wanting to know about the teachers and my feelings about it and what was going on at the school. New parents and even some of the old parents that are there and they are not able to come in and volunteer in the classroom. They asked me - so I tell them my opinion" (Francis, Non-respondent)

In the statement above, Francis described herself as a bridge between the school and those parents who cannot visit the school or talk to their child's teacher often. As a bridge, Francis states that her opinion of the school and its teachers were often sought after and held in high regard by many parents.

The opinions and beliefs of parents are not always stated explicitly and are often embedded in the subtext of a conversation. Michelle Kelly, a central actor, described how parents share their opinions of various teachers:

> "I have never had anybody sit down and say, 'now tell me about so and so' or 'what do you think of so and so?' It has come up but someone will say, 'you have Mrs. Little, well I hear she was one of the best.' I must say if I had my choice all over again I might have chosen her over Dunn, but I wouldn't have known the difference and Dunn was fine for Zack." (Michelle, Central Actor)

Michelle's comment is particularly enlightening about parents' conversations for several reasons. The quote suggests that the exchange of opinions and beliefs is not necessarily an explicit topic of conversation and may come across in casual comments made by parents. This is evident when Michelle comments that nobody has explicitly asked her to "tell me about so and so." Instead, social cohesion may operate in more subtle ways, as parents comment on what they have seen or heard about teachers.

In addition to the subtle exchange of opinions, Michelle's comment also indicates that these conversations can impact parents. Upon reflection, Michelle claims that she

would prefer her son to have been in the classroom of "one of the best" teachers, despite the fact that Michelle's son succeeded, and even thrived, in Mrs. Dunn's classroom. The influence of others' opinions about Mrs. Little seem to be more influential than Michelle's own experiences with Mrs. Dunn.

In addition to helping parents choose a teacher for their child, conversations with other parents also appear to provide an additional perspective on the classroom and children's learning. Heather Wallace, an isolate, commented about how conversations with another parent affected the way she perceived the competency of her son's teacher,

> H. My last conversation with one of the parents was over, you know, [the teacher's] teaching methods and her ability to come across, represent what she was talking about so that the kids can understand. Or at least so that [my son] can understand what she is trying to tell him. When he asks her a question and she tells it to him in the same thing over and over again, instead of repeating it in some way he can understand. And so one of the parents said, yeah, that some of their kids have had...the same problem.
>
> I. ...Did that just make you feel better?..
>
> H. Apprehensive as to whether she is going to be able to teach my son where he can understand, learn it, and come with -you know- a good comprehension of the fourth grade, and what he needs to learn. So I am a little leery, we're going to wait until conferences come around and then see how he is doing. Whether I should switch him into the other fourth grade class. So we'll see.

If Heather was concerned about her son's fourth grade experience before talking to a friend, the result of this conversation seems to have only heightened that worry. One of the results of Heather's conversation about her son's teacher, at least according to her, was that it confirmed for her that there may be a problem with the teacher- as opposed to her son. The fact that other children have had similar issues with this teacher makes the child's learning difficulties more easily attributable to the teacher. Having "confirmed"

that there may be a problem with the teacher, Heather appears to be ready to get involved with her son's education and have her son moved to another fourth grade classroom. Heather's beliefs about the ability of her son's teacher to effectively help him learn have been affected (perhaps magnifying her concern) by the conversation(s) with a friend.

It is important to note that some parents explained how their conversations with their friends do *not* affect their own beliefs. The degree and frequency with which social cohesion occurs, therefore, may be quite limited. When talking about her friendships, Karen Clark responded; "I'm not going to change my view just simply because they do it a different way. But I will view how they handle their kids, and if I like the results or I like the interaction, I may try it." The amount of influence may be dependent on the personal values held by the individuals interacting with one another. For example, some parents may be more self-assured than others.

As a social context, the conversations a parent has with other parents at the school are capable of influencing his or her beliefs about the school and it's teachers. In showing how a parent's beliefs can be affected by her or his interactions with other parents, the claim that social cohesion can affect parent involvement appears receives support. Specifically, the interviews were able to provide illustrations of various stages which comprise the process of social cohesion. As parents talk to one another they may become involved in sharing opinions with one another, comparing their own beliefs and behaviors to one another, and ultimately influencing the beliefs of one another. By identifying each of these processes and illustrating them with interview data, I have lent support to the survey data and guiding theoretical model of social cohesion.

Social Capital: The Investment of Resources

In addition to social cohesion, a parent's social network was hypothesized to affect involvement in her or his child's education when it provides a context in which social capital functions. In this dissertation, social capital has been argued to facilitate parent involvement when interpersonal relationships provide a means through which parents can invest resources in one another, or when parents invest their own personal resources into their child's school. During the interviews, parents spoke about both types of resource investment, and the manner in which they facilitate parent involvement at home or at school.

Investments Toward Other Parents

The first mechanism through which social capital promotes parent involvement is the sharing of resources among parents. During interviews, parents indicated several types of resources they share with their friends that affect parent involvement. Among the resources identified were favors, educational and learning materials, and information. Parent interviews suggest that the cooperative exchange of these resources can help facilitate parent involvement at home and at school.

Favors

Among the many factors which affect the degree to which a parent becomes involved in her or his children's education is the parent's perception that she or he has time available to be involved. Parent involvement, whether at home or at school, can only occur if parents feel that they have the time to volunteer at the school, go to the museum, or read with their children. Throughout the interviews, three-quarters of the parents repeatedly stated that one of the biggest obstacles to parent involvement was a

lack of time to be involved at the school, or even to interact one-on-one with a child at home. In some of the cases, parents reported that their friendships and network ties helped provide them with more time to accomplish numerous errands and responsibilities.

Although relatively few parents reported that they seek favors from their friends, relationships that can offer a parent extra help function as social capital. By offering to take a friend's child to community events or by helping a parent with child care, friends and network ties can provide a parent time and allow her or him to accomplish more than if there had been no network tie present. Furthermore, performing favors was also reported as having a positive effect on parent involvement and other types of parent-child interactions.

An important form of investment from one parent to another was help with childcare and carpooling. During interviews, parents who reported that they share childcare responsibilities with their friends emphasized the importance of this form of interpersonal investment. One mother, Brenda Cassey (Non-respondent), is involved in a cooperative system of daycare with three of her neighbors. When asked if she and her friends share childcare, Brenda responded;

> But yeah we communicate back and forth on that because all of us work. We say, OK you guys- lets bring your calendars to soccer, because we are going to figure out- and we did. You know, there is four of us, and we have it all organized about who is taking... I have an appointment today at 3, and at 4. Well, they are done at 3. So my kids are going to my neighbors and her son was with me yesterday. Oh, yeah, that's very important.

Brenda explained how one day a week, each mother takes the group of children so that the others can work or run errands. According to Brenda, without this network she and

her children would be deprived of valued activities and experiences. She stated, "If I didn't have them to rely on, I don't know what I would do. I wouldn't be able to work, my kids wouldn't be participating in anything. They would be in Kids' Club[9] and Chief Elementary, morning and at night, and I don't want that." The coordinated system of favors described by Brenda creates time for her to practice law, read in her children's classrooms, hold a position on the school's parent counsel, *and* watch her children play league soccer.

Among the parents interviewed, the cooperative daycare described by Brenda may be among the best illustrations of how investments among parents help them accomplish more. Such scenarios, however, are relatively uncommon. More often, investments and favors that affect childcare occur between two parents. Parents indicated these types of interactions foster parent involvement in two ways: by expanding the opportunities children have for involvement and by maintaining a tie across which one parent can stay informed about community.

For a parent who works or who has several children, finding time to spend with her or his children was often perceived to be difficult. One strategy reported to help ease the pressures of time is sharing the responsibility of driving children to various community events. Terri Grossman (Non-respondent) described how both she and her friend benefit from the fact that Terri's friend drives both of their sons to basketball practice:

> "it's helpful for her to have someone to come along with her son because he'll want to do it more. So she sort of used my child to help make it more enjoyable for her child, but she help me out tremendously by actually getting him there and back and, um, just letting me know what is going on."

In the case above, Terri's friends actually asked if she could take Terri's son to basketball, helping her own son stay motivated to play while also helping Terri. Offers to carpool or look after a friend's child for an hour or two are particularly helpful to parents who are trying to manage the time constraints of both their own lives and the lives of their children. Terri, who has two other sons and worked, reported that investments such as the one described above help ease the demand for time that parent involvement can have. Specifically, these favors connected Terri and her children to community activities without having to, "put the time in to do the research" that would be required were it not for her social relationships with other mothers.

Where Terri described the profits of having others invest in her, Karen Clarke describes how investing in others can also provide benefits. During her interview, Karen mentioned that she will often invite her daughter's friends to join her family on trips to places such as the museum. Despite the fact that Karen's investment toward her friend results in an extra child to be responsible for, it also makes her own parent involvement easier. She explains this apparent contradiction, "My girls will have more fun if [her] girls are with me" (Karen Clarke, Central Actor). An extra child to take care of may be the needed resource in order for parent involvement, in this case at the museum, to be a positive experience for parents and children.

The previous examples of social capital among parents have taken the form of carpooling and sharing childcare. The final example describes a different type of investment. According to Francis Brock (Non-respondent), her friend cooked dinner for her family while she was involved with their sons' schooling and Cub Scouts. This act of

generosity also fosters parent involvement and may increase the degree to which the relationship between Francis and her friend have social capital between themselves;

> Francis: last night a parent brought food over because we had Cub Scouts right after school and then we had an hour and we had to be back at the school. OK, Cub Scouts from 3:30 - 5:30 - we went on a field trip and she insisted on bringing dinner over. She brought dinner over at 6:15.
>
> Interviewer: Now that's amazing - very generous and I am very curious to find out, like, why she did that.
>
> F: Well she said if I would drop off her son she would bring me food.
>
> I: Like trading favors.
>
> F: She just did it, because I had to drop him off anyway. When we go on field trips we drop all the kids off - hassle to go back to school. It is easier to drop them off - they all in the neighborhood...*I still haven't repaid her for that*, I'll have to do something special for her. (emphasis added)

As Francis described, being friends with another mother helped her juggle the tasks of helping the Cub Scouts, making dinner for the family, and being involved at the school.

Francis' comment also illustrates how social capital is maintained or perpetuated among parents. Francis' comment, "I still haven't repaid her for that, I'll have to do something special," suggests that her friend's action engendered a sense of indebtedness and a need to repay the favor. This comment suggests that being the recipient of an investment develops a sense of obligation to invest in others, in much the way Coleman and others (Coleman, 1990; Portes & Sensenbrenner, 1993) have hypothesized obligations are created among social actors.

Terri Grossman also described a time when she had offered resources of her own to other parents, with the hopes that they would become more involved at the school. According to Terri, parents can be influenced to become involved in their child's

education by watching other parents get involved or by getting some help from their friends:

> "By seeing someone else being involved then, you know, I think then maybe other people have followed suit. I have, I have in the past very subtly encouraged just by saying, 'you've got a small child, I have a nanny. Feel free to have your child come to my home for an hour while you go to help. (Terri, Non-Respondent)

In the second half of the quote, Terri very clearly states that she has offered her own resources to help another parent with childcare, so that the parent can help at the school. Terri's offer to let another parent use her nanny, so that the parent can help at the school, is demonstrative of the kinds of resources and favors parents can (and sometimes do) invest in one another which create additional time for parent involvement.

Taken together, the examples from Francis, Karen, Terri, and Brenda support the connection between social capital and parent involvement. As hypothesized in this dissertation, when parents invest their own personal resources in other parents they may enable parent involvement at school and at home. Based on the interviews conducted, social capital among networks of parents, in the form of doing favors for one another, might affect parent involvement at school and at home by providing parents with extra time to engage in these types of interactions.

Educational Resources.

In addition to carpools and daycare, a small group of parents reported that they invested material resources in one another. The parents who reported exchanging this type of resource all sent their children to Chief Elementary and, therefore, were more likely to have higher incomes than those parents who did not report sharing educational

resources with other parents. In all of the cases presented, the investment of educational resources among parents facilitated parent involvement at home, where parents could work more closely with their own children.

In the first example, Joan Getty stated that she and her friends lend and borrow resources from one another. In her interview, Joan (a bridging actor) commented that she has shared and borrowed educational computer games and learning resources with friends. Terri Grossman (a Non-respondent) also reported this type of investment, where parents share educational software with one another.

Joan Getty reported investments and exchanges of educational resources beyond computer software. In one instance, Joan borrowed a phonics game from her friend so that she could work with her son on reading and evaluate the product to see if it was worth purchasing. Knowing that her son does not like to read, and feeling as though reading and writing are his weakest academic area, Joan sought out her friends for ideas and resources to increase the amount and quality of involvement at home.

In addition to borrowing others' resources, Joan has also been in the role of lender. Joan describes how she shared her own educational materials with another mother and that mother's children,

> "I shared with my friend about the SRA (reading curriculum materials). I was doing with Michael, and she and her kids came over 2 or 3 times this summer...we put them at various levels because one of her kids is in junior high school. And they worked on things together."

Through her friendships and acquaintances with other parents, Joan not only shared the resources she has purchased for her son, but she has also used the educational resources owned by others.

Examination of Joan Getty suggests that the exchange and investment of educational resources among parents can influence parent involvement at home greatly. These exchanges, however, appear to be quite rare. Only one other parent reported that she and her friends lend materials to one another. Both of these parents are representative of parents who are highly educated and generally wealthy. While this second type of resource invested among parents may be influential, it is not likely to be widespread. Although highly encouraging and enabling of parent involvement at home, it is unclear how often or in what context this type of exchange might actually occur among parents.

Information.

Theoretical arguments describing social capital and how it functions among actors suggest that information is among the most important resources individuals provide one another. Unlike opinions or beliefs, which are the basis for social cohesion, information exchange among parents involve conversations where parents are sharing facts or relating events to one another. Coleman (1990) has argued that information provides a basis for action, and that network ties function as social capital to the extent that they make information available. During the interviews, many parents reported that they frequently engage in conversations where they seek and offer information about parent involvement and their children's schooling.

While most parents reported that they collect a lot of information from other parents, this was not true of all parents. Terri (a non-respondent), for example, reported that she felt that she rarely had time to hold conversations with her friends; "Life is so busy...and when you get together with your friends, you know, you're usually there with your kids, and it is actually hard to have a conversation." In addition, almost all of the

parents reported that they get a lot of information from the teachers at their children's school. Jackie (non-respondent), for example, stated that she rarely spoke with other parents and instead, "concentrated on talking to the teachers, but not the parents." Although not all parents perceived themselves as drawing upon a network of other parents for information, when parents began to talk about their conversations with other parents it became clear that a great deal of information was exchanged.

Analyses of parent interviews indicated that the topics of conversation vary widely and that the exchange of information actually occurred among all parents. Across the sample, parents reported at least three types of information they share and invest in one another: (1) information about educational resources and activities, (2) information about teachers, schools, and school policy, and (3) information about parent involvement and parenting in general. These topics of conversation occur among parents from across the social network (central actors, bridging actors, isolates, and non-respondents), although the frequency with which these conversations occur varies by network position. Parents who were central actors more often spoke about exchanging information with other parents than those parents who were isolates.

Information about Resources and Activities. Conversations in which parents share their own experiences and knowledge about various educational resources or activities were reported to be one of the more important ways in which social ties affect parent involvement. Although some parents reported that they often learned about community events from school notices or communications home, they also stated that friends function as additional resources from which they can learn about new opportunities for getting involved in their child's education. Oftentimes, information

about resources and involvement activities fosters the type of parent-child interactions that occur at home or in the community.

Perhaps one of the best examples of how social ties can provide useful information to a parent regarding new and different ways to become involved in her or his child's education comes from Karen Clarke. According to Karen, a central actor, she receives information about a variety of books and activities from different friends;

> "One of my friends...and I used to work in a book store, we love books. So she reads a book, 'Jenny just got this book it's really good, Carrie should get it'...Another friend of mine, Alice...she is a naturalist...We will discuss-Woldumar [a group] are having their Winterfest and you should really bring your girls to [the] arboretum-they are doing tapping, they are doing the apple butter. You should come in and see how they tap the trees. It really cool so lets do that with your kids."

In this example, Karen describes how her friendships provide information about various books to read and places to go with her daughters. These relationships keep Karen informed of the different ways in which she might be involved in her daughters' education and development.

Karen's comment, in addition to describing the information she is provided with by her friends, illustrates a connection between social capital and human capital. Through her connections to others, Karen is afforded opportunities in which she and her daughters can develop knowledge, information, and skills. Karen's social capital enables the development of human capital. While one friend may be particularly knowledgeable about books, another may know more about ecology and the environment. Karen and her friend Alice, the naturalist, seem to keep their exchanges focused on the environment, and local environmental organizations with which Alice is involved. The information exchanged between Karen and each of her friends is highly specific and tends to be focused on the interests and knowledge of those friends[10]. Conversation topics, and the

information that is passed along, is specific to the person with whom Karen interacts. The friend with whom Karen worked at a bookstore provides exchanges of information about books that are new or that her daughters might enjoy. In contrast, she almost never talks about books for her daughters with her friend who is active with the nature group. As Karen states, "Maybe once I've told [Alice] that this is a cool book, [her daughter] would probably like it." It may be that Karen's social network consists of a variety of people with specialized knowledge, expertise, and interests. For Karen, the network can serve to broaden her individual knowledge and range of resources. Karen draws on her social capital, using others' human capital in order to provide her with greater opportunities to be involved in the education of her daughters.

Karen's comment suggests that parents with friends who are interested and involved in a wide variety of activities are capable of obtaining a great deal of information about a wide range of activities. This conclusion is consistent with Nan Lin's theory of social resources (1990), which suggests that individuals with larger, more diverse social networks have access to more heterogeneous resources. Conversely, parents who have very few social relationships might be less likely to get involved in their child's education at home, due to the likelihood that they are presented with fewer options and opportunities for parent involvement. This finding complements the OLS regression analyses by making connections among network size, the amount, and the variety of information to which a parent has access.

Where Karen demonstrates how networks can offer information about involvement to a parent, other parents reported actively seeking information from their social network. Among these parents, Phil Park (a father from Korea, unfamiliar with the

community, and a member of the isolated subgroup at Chief Elementary) stated that he has asked others for information regarding the resources and activities important to his daughter. One example Phil described involves finding a piano instructor for his daughter;

> "My daughter wanted to learn some piano lessons and the problem is that we don't know where to go, and then one of the parents showed me, O.K. you should try a music store, it's on Main Street...it was very helpful for me because I contacted them and it was very nice."

Unlike Karen, who demonstrates how friends and network ties might offer ideas for involvement, Phil's comment suggests that parents will also use their network ties to actively pursue information. Having a larger social network provides parents with a greater variety of people from which to gain information about activities to become involved in with their child.

Teachers, School, and School Policies. Perhaps the most common topic of conversation among parents, and one that might provide the most helpful information with regard to a child's schooling, is the school personnel and policies. By gathering as much information as possible about the school, its teachers, and its policies, parents can interact with schools as knowledgeable advocates for their children. Annette Lareau (1989) has shown how parents take information they collect from their friends about a school or teacher and use it to interact with the school more effectively. Like the parents Lareau studied, the parents in this study also talked to one another about teachers and how to approach them when problems arise. Furthermore, their conversations with one another lead to several types of parent involvement, including involvement at home, involvement at school, and even discuss about which school to send their child.

Across the interviews, parents reported that they frequently talked to other parents about the personalities and competence of individual teachers. Both schools participating in this study had at least two teachers per grade level. Having two possible teachers, it was not uncommon for parents to request that their children be placed in one classroom and not another, or to compare teachers who taught the same grade. Parents from each network position reported talking to others about teachers. For example, Heather Wallace (an isolate), reported using her friend as a source of information about her son's current fourth grade teacher. She asked,

> "What kind of teacher [is] this person? I've asked them because they've had kids that were at higher grades, and mine are lower, so you knew kind of what teachers would be like, as far as their teaching abilities, their personalities".

Drawing upon the experiences of parents with older children was a strategy Nicole Seaver (Bridger) also used. Both Heather and Nicole's relationship with their friends could function as a valuable resource to the extent that they provided each mother with insight gained from others' personal experiences.

Information about teachers was not only exchanged between close friends. Francis Brock, a Non-respondent, was previously a noon hour supervisor and at the time of the interview worked at Chief Elementary School as a paid classroom aide. She stated (in a comment used earlier to indicate the exchange of beliefs) that a lot of people have asked her about the teachers at Chief. Many of these parents are new to the school and unknown to Francis:

> "We used to live in an apartment, and there was a lot of parents wanting to know about the teachers and my feelings about it, and what was going on at the school. New parents and even some of the old parents that are there and they are not able to come in and volunteer in the classroom. They ask me – so I tell them my opinion."

Francis is functioning in the way that researchers have described actors as "weak ties' and filling "structural holes" (Burt, 1992; Granovetter, 1977; Morgan and Sorensen, 1998). She linked different groups and acted as a conduit across which information could travel. In this case, Francis bridged parents in the apartments and the school staff. Francis' role as a source for information for those parents who cannot spend time at the school was further illustrated when she stated:

> "And then there are some parents that are not there because they are not able to come and then they ask so, OK, this is what happened - do you know anything about it - you are usually there...Do you know about this."

Knowing that Francis spends a great deal of time at the school, parents have used her as a resource from which they may obtain more information about school events and information about teachers.

In addition to illustrating how conversations about specific teachers might function as a resource for parents, the interviews also highlight the role bridging actors might play in affecting parents' choice of school for their children. Joan Getty, identified as a bridging actor, removed her child from Chief and sent him to a private school. During the interview, Joan described a conversation she had with another mother who also took her child out of Chief Elementary and a third parent who was considering withdrawing his or her child from the public elementary school system. Living in the same community as other parents with children at Chief Elementary School, Joan has become a connection between those who are considering private school for their children and the school to which she currently sends her son.

These interpersonal exchanges (conversations) can be interpreted as social capital functioning to influence parent involvement in the form of school choice. Whether it is

to compare teachers or schools, parents gather information and use it as a basis for their own actions, as well as a basis for the role they take in their children's education. For example, Joan Getty remarked that she sent her son to a private school because of the stories she heard from other parents about the district middle school,

> "from what I have heard about the middle school, and I have a friend whose daughter was assaulted at the middle school, Assaulted-there was a police report and her daughter begged her not to press charges....the girl was suspended for a week...how about kicking her out for a year?...I hear that kind of stuff and I just- my son is not going there. Because I have no respect for the people who run that place. They obviously have no standards there."

Joan's reaction to her friends' stories about the middle school illustrates how conversations about a school and its administration can affect parent involvement in the form of school choice. Joan, who never mentioned having any conversations with staff from the middle school, has judged them to be people with "no standards" and has already decided not to send her son there. She stated, "I will be putting my son back into high school though...that's what my other friend in the neighborhood did with her older daughter." Through her friendship with a mother who has an older child than she, Joan has heard stories, passed judgment on the Middle School, and made educational decisions regarding which schools her son will (and will not) be attending in the upcoming years.

Parent Involvement and Parenting. Analysis of the interview data identified a third type of information that parents shared with one another. According to parents, their social relationships and interactions with other parents will, at times, provide them information about general parenting strategies and/or specific strategies for becoming involved in their children's education. Unlike the first type of information, the types of

resources available (i.e., books, events, or computer software), parents also reported that they shared information about how to interact with and help their children.

Several parents, from across schools and network positions, reported that they go to their friends for advice about a variety of circumstances they encounter as children grow up. Among the topics of conversation, parents stated that they share information with and help one another regarding non-education related issues such as how to deal with a child who is not succeeding in sports, a child who is undergoing bodily changes that occur from entering adolescence, how to set up an allowance schedule, and more. Parents look to their close friends for advice on raising their children, particularly those friends who have older children and who may have had similar experiences.

Specifically with regard to information about their children's education, parents reported that they have learned about involvement strategies and information regarding developmental problems with learning from other parents. In some cases these conversations appeared to occur in organized forums, and at other times they took place under more informal conditions (i.e., over the phone). Francis Brock (a bridging actor) talked about her own experiences interacting with other parents from Chief Elementary School,

> "I used to go...'O.K., this is what I am doing with my kids now and it is not working. Any suggestions?' ... I go to parents and see what they have to suggest. We even have a literacy team and that's what that is for. Where the parents come in and we have ideas - we swap ideas O.K., 'What problems are you having. Is it working? This is what I would do for that.' And we have a teacher - a couple of teachers come in and they give suggestions"

Chief Elementary created this literacy team as a forum where parents can help one another remain involved with their child's education at home. Teachers are there as an

added resource for parents, although not necessarily the primary resource. Given Francis' emphasis on how parents "swap ideas:" the literacy team seems to be an example of how schools can develop social capital among parents that promotes parent involvement.

A second example of parents exchanging information about how to get involved came from Jackie, a non-respondent, who commented that through a conversation with another mother she eventually came to get special education resources for one of her sons:

> Jackie: Like I talk about Ricardo, my oldest son, I'm worried about him because he has a learning disability. He comprehends what he reads, but he has to take his time, he has to go really slow, and his writing is slow. When I run across a parent who talks about their child having a disability, usually we get into a deeper conversation about it.
>
> Interviewer: Have you ever gotten advice that's really helped Ricardo out?
>
> J: Yeah, there was one parent that I talked to, when he was going to Davis Elementary, in Baily, that was telling me that no matter how many times people tell you that it's all in your head, or you worry too much, there is something inside a mother that tells her something isn't right. Don't ever let go of that feeling, or just think that you are just-you are over reacting. Don't ever let anybody tell you that you are overreacting when it comes to your child's welfare. And she was right because I went ahead and went through and got Ricardo tested for ADD and he doesn't have ADD, but he does have a learning disability.
>
> I. So it sounds like you found out that he had a learning disability through some encouragement?
>
> J: Right, talking to a parent and hearing her side. I mean, all of the symptoms that she told me her son had, that's how Ricardo was acting at the time. And so I thought for sure that it was ADD, when they said he didn't have ADD and that he does have a learning disability.

According to Jackie, the idea that she should get her son tested for Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) had not occurred to her until a conversation with another parent in which

symptoms of ADD were described. From this conversation, Ricardo was tested and eventually diagnosed as having a learning disability. As Jackie reports, her role as an advocate for her son was the direct result of her conversation with another parent.

As influential as parents' conversations with one another appear to be, the sample of parents interviewed also reported that they get a great deal of information and advice from their children's teachers. In some cases, the teacher might have been the most frequently consulted and most trusted source of information. Both parents who were isolates (Heather Wallace and Phil Park) reported that they typically do not consult other parents. For Phil, parents are a secondary source of information, "The teacher is the major source of discussion, and the other parents are more superficial." For parents without many network ties, teachers may be these parents' only source of information and advice about parenting.

Reliance on teachers for information was also reported by Brenda, a non-respondent who was actively involved at home and at school. Brenda stated that she finds out which teacher to request for her sons from teachers they have already had. While parents can, and at times do, provide one another with information, they may not be perceived to be the most valued resource upon which a parent draws. A Parent's social network of other parents is only one resource. For many parents, across network positions, the establishment of a social relationship with their child's teacher is more valued and is perceived to be a more important resource.

The interview data, although based on only twelve interviews, supports the theoretical framework described earlier regarding social capital. The type of social capital created by the investment of resources from one parent to another appeared to

affect parent involvement at home and at school. It is important to note, however, that a parent's social ties to other parents may not be perceived to be the only, or even most important, resource available. Many parents stated that they often consult their child's teacher (or past teacher) for advice about the education and development of their child. For some parents, their social network is perceived to be an important and valuable resource, while for others it is seen as a secondary resource upon which to draw.

Investments Toward the School

In contrast to the previous section, where parents' investments in other parents were discussed, this section deals with situations where parents direct their investments toward their children's school. When parents see others getting involved and investing in the school, or when parents are subject to pressure to contribute to the school community, they begin to feel as though they should invest in the school. At times this pressure may be subtle, whereas in other instances the pressure to become involved at the school is more obvious. This second form of social capital, it is hypothesized, operates to create parent involvement at school.

A number of parents expressed a sense of obligation to be involved and resentment of those who are not. They explained how these perceptions impact decisions to become more involved at the school. Unlike investments from one parent to another parent, investments toward the school appear most likely to function as social capital among parents who have larger networks (e.g., central actors and weak ties). The description of how membership in certain subgroups within the school can expose a parent to pressure to become involved at her or his children's school is consistent with

the HLM analyses and support the theoretical claims that social capital can affect parent involvement at school.

Based on the interviews I conducted, investments toward the school seemed to function in two ways. First, some parents are particularly conscious about reciprocity, making sure that they repay or contribute alongside other parents who invest in their children's school. In these situations, action is motivated by parents' perception that they are paying off a debt, making the relationship function as social capital (Coleman, 1990; Portes & Senesenbrenner, 1993). Second, a sense of obligation to become involved was evoked as individual parents or parent groups created a social pressure for parents to become involved at the school. Parents who engender a sense of obligation posses social capital. In this study, because social capital facilitated parent involvement at school, the school and its students are the ultimate beneficiaries.

The Obligation to Reciprocate.

Interviews indicated that, in some cases, the felt need to repay a favor was based on the interactions between two individuals. In other cases, the obligation to repay was directed toward a group or community. Jackie (a non-respondent) is an example of a parent who felt obligated to the community of parents at Pierce Elementary School. She commented that "pulling one's weight" is an incentive for her to get involved at the school. Jackie expects herself and other parents to help when asked. Jackie's attitude was justified in her mind because she believed other parents are more involved than herself; "that parent is spending a heck of a lot more time at school and helping my children out with tutoring or whatever else." For Jackie, she owed it to the school and the other parents to get involved at the school.

In the case of Jackie, the sense of obligation to contribute to the education of her own children, and the children of other parents, is a powerful influence on her involvement. She commented,

> "I feel that way because my children are going to that school...and there are parents there almost everyday, bless their hearts. I feel like I just don't get to help out enough. That is my guilty conscious. But I've had them tell me plenty of times, 'you have tried to help out a few time and we appreciate it.' So I feel like, myself, I feel like that is the least I could do."

The sense of obligation to be involved at the school, to not freeload and to contribute as much as other parents, was a powerful motivating force for Jackie.

In addition to describing the emergence of a perceived obligation to become involved, Jackie also described how this perception actually facilitates parent involvement. Throughout the interview, Jackie commented that she felt as though she fulfilled her commitment to the school community by going on a week-long field trip with her son's third grade class. The degree to which this involvement was motivated by a need to reciprocate was indicated by Jackie when she stated, "I took a whole week of vacation so that I could go help out at camp. I felt better about that, because I'm thinking, you know, a lot of these parents do a lot more than this, you know, and I was thinking that I wasn't doing enough." In the case of Jackie, this sense of obligation to contribute to the school community was a significant influence on her behavior.

Pressure from Others

Despite the fact that almost all of the parents interviewed said they recognize not all parents can or will be involved, some parents reported that they often tried to pressure and convince their friends to become involved in school activities. As an active member

of the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA), Karen Clarke (a central actor) described how the pressure to become involved at the school functions:

> "Yeah we do that all the time with the PTA/PTO. And I have a friend who is from the school, who just doesn't like to volunteer, but yet I know she likes to bake. So I will call her up and, 'can you make some stuff for the bake sale' or 'can you do this or that.' If I am going on a field trip I will call another - 'come and go on the field trip with me.' So, and they do that to me all the time too, 'Oh come on to open house and walk through' and Ellen Jones will catch me- 'Oh you are going to do this for me this year, Right.' Sure, you know. It's the other parents helping out too and part of it you don't feel put upon because you know everybody else is doing something too."

Karen's description of her interactions with other parents, and how they convince one another to help with school activities, is indicative of interactions among parents which can function as social capital. According to Karen, she and her friends constantly pressure one another into getting involved at the school. The comment above by Karen highlights the influence friends can have on one another, in large part because they know the likes and dislikes of one another. Moreover, there is reciprocity among these friends. Karen convinced others to help, just as others have convinced her to be involved at times when she had not planned on it.

Pressure to become involved at the school is not limited to bake sales and field trips. Parents from both schools in this study stated that they became officers in the school's parent groups (PTA or parent counsel) because a current officer in the group approached them. At Chief Elementary, Brenda commented that she became treasurer of the parent council because her friend called and asked if she would accept a position. Without that outreach, according to Brenda, she would have never thought about being on the council.

Like Brenda, Karen happened to be treasurer of her school's PTA. She became active in the organization, despite her intention to not get involved that year. Karen describes the situation where another parent (Katie) finally convinced her to accept a position on the PTA board,

> "And one of the teachers at the other school who I really liked said, 'you need to take a year off - just go in and do what you want. Go sit in the class and be with your kids. Don't get involved for a year - just relax and do what you want.'...And so I did that. And then Katie came out and she was the one who got me involved. [She asked, do you] think you would like it [to be on PTA]?- 'Oh I don't know.' 'How about treasurer you don't have to come to all the meetings - you don't have to do this- you just have to keep the book -would you like something like that'. 'Yeah I guess I could do that.' And she just kept asking."

Despite Karen's original commitment to not get involved at the school and focus on her own daughter, her interactions with other parents convinced her to take the job of treasurer on the school's PTA. As a parent who invests heavily in the school, Katie could apply enough pressure to eventually get Karen to be more involved at the school than she originally wanted to be. Social capital, in this instance and in the case of Brenda, involved one parent reaching out to another and convincing them to get involved at the school in a manner they otherwise may have not.

The type of social capital illustrated by Brenda and Karen can be perpetuated by the same people who are affected by it. Karen described her interactions with a friend who enrolled her daughter at Pierce and who, like Karen, intended to take a year off. Karen discussed how she convinced her friend to get involved in a school event called "Field Day":

Karen: But constantly, I have a friend who decided to do a school of choice and she said, 'I am taking off a year' because she did the same thing I did. And then I called about field day and said, 'lets you and I do it.' So now she does the field day. And she has got younger kids than I do, so when I am done she will be able to, when my kids are out she will be able to take over and invite somebody to do the bake sale.

Interviewer: You have already got her spotted for your job?

Karen: She is doing them. And I feel like whenever I do something it's my responsibility then I go tell my friends and say 'I know you don't do it, but you are going to have to come and help me.'

Just as Karen became involved at school as a result of social capital, in the form of pressure from another parent, she uses the same social process to get her friends involved. Drawing on her friendships, Karen pressured her friends to become active in their children's education by becoming active at the school.

In contrast to the kind of pressure that Karen and Brenda describe, other parents describe experiencing indirect pressure to be involved. Terri (Non-respondent) reported that the pressure she feels comes from her close friends and the people she interacts with the most:

"Among my, you know, the people that I associate with there's, um, there is an expectation for participation. Not so much in the kinds of things that I do, you know, like going in, you know, to actually help out in the class, but more in terms of the like the social aspects, you know, the parties and the, um yeah. I, I think my, my friends are going on the field trips and the, planning the parties and that sort of thing."

According to Terri, she perceives an expectation from her friends to be supportive of the teachers and school in some ways and not others. Parents are expected to help with events such as parties and field trips, but there is little pressure on parents to actually spend time in the classroom. Terri's comment suggests that the social capital which results from investments in the school facilitates specific forms of involvement at school.

In Terri's case, the social ties and network relationships among parents reinforce parents' role as a supportive resource to teachers, rather than a resource that might impact student learning more directly.

Although Terri's comment does not specify how expectations or pressures to be involved at the school emerges, the social structure of parents' relationships might be one enabling factor. Social closure among parents, or parents and school employees, may help generate social capital, which facilitates involvement through the development of a sense of obligation. Although analyses of the survey data did not find a relationship between social structure and parent involvement, interviews with parents suggest otherwise.

During interviews, parents commented about the role teachers might play in generating social closure and parent involvement. According to Karen Clarke, teachers can facilitate social ties among parents. During Karen's interview she recalled how Katie, then president of the PTA, approached her and asked if she would become PTA treasurer; "[Katie said], 'yeah, I'm president and somebody gave me your name, and come on let's do this" A follow-up question to this statement revealed that it was one of the teachers at Pierce Elementary School who gave Karen's name to Katie. In this case, it was a teacher who served to connect two parents who, at the time, did not know one another.

Familiarity and social relationships among parents and teachers makes it easier for parents to create norms or pressure for involvement at school. Comments by Karen Clarke (central actor) suggest that social closure among herself, her friends, and school personnel made it easier for her to encourage other parents to become involved at the

school. In her interview, Karen compared the teachers at Pierce to those at the elementary schools her daughters previously attended to reveal how perceptions of a closed system of social relationships (including school employees) might function to generate parent involvement at school:

> "Here [at Pierce Elementary] I call on two friends, I have examples within the school showing them that the teachers and the principal are going the extra mile, where at Hillsdale Elementary- there were [only] two teachers that (*comments unclear here*) none of the other teachers [and] the principal could care less."

Karen described Hillsdale as a school where the principal and teachers were more concerned about their careers than about the children, and where they had to "bargin" with the principal in order to have activities at school. The result, according to Karen, was that parent began to refuse to help at school or with any activities for the students.

In contrast to Hillsdale, Karen spoke of an event where the teachers at Pierce Elementary were actively involved at the school, and discussed how teacher participation can affect parent involvement:

> "At the haunted house it wasn't just the parents – every teacher helped out at a station, and they absolutely earned no money – it was for the school, the PTA. Every teacher was there doing it right along with a parent and so this year I can get a parent – the parents – it means something to the teachers and the teachers are having fun and everybody is enjoying it, and everybody is saying thank you so much for coming – thank you , so everyone is willing to come back."

By working "right along" with parents, the teachers seem to affect the parents at Pierce, making them more willing to volunteer for future school events.

Social closure, according to Coleman (1990) creates social capital because it enables actors to observe and evaluate one another. In the case of Karen, her attempts to involve parents were supported by the social closure existing among parents and teachers,

and her ability to point to school staff as examples of individuals making sacrifices for the school and students. The teachers and principals at Pierce not only worked with parents, making them more visible and adding pressure on parents to become involved at the school, but actively connected parents to one another. Teachers, therefore, can be an important influence on parent involvement at school, not only through their interactions with individual parents, but also through their ability to connect parents with one another and to create a social network with closure among it's members.

In addition to the visibility social closure provides, at times enabling teachers to act as examples to others, it also appears to enable the diffusion of teacher expectations among parents. Michelle, a central actor, discussed how she felt pressure to be involved through conversations with her children's teacher:

> Somehow I have found that out, through either the teacher or a parent who got it from the teacher, and it has come up in conversation there. We say, I said, 'I thought you said Torie's mother was going to chaperone one of the field trips' and she said, 'Oh no, I have never met her mother - she hasn't been to one teacher conference - I have never met her.' And this was like a week before school ended. So things like that come out and there is definite disapproval. There is definite disappointment when I hear that

Unlike the case of Karen, where social closure enable a parent to point to others to demonstrate the importance of parent involvement at school, Michelle's comment highlights how social closure can facilitate the expectancy for parent involvement and the development of norms among parents. Michelle's ties to the teacher and other parents provide her information regarding the sense of disappointment teachers (and perhaps other parents) feel toward parents who are not involved at the school. The expectations of others, be they a teacher or other parents, become public. Without a social structure to facilitate the expectations for attending parent-teachers conferences or helping with field

trips, parents may not feel any social pressure or obligation to become involved at the school. In contrast to the survey results, the interview data indicated that closure among parents, or between parents and the school, might affect involvement and a parent's sense of obligation to become involved at the school.

Summary

Overall, the interview data collected for this dissertation lends additional support to the hypothesized model of how social networks might function toward the creation of parent involvement at home and at school. Although interviews were conducted with a small sample of parents, evidence that parents' social networks affect their involvement at home and at school was found. Among the network ties connecting parents, social cohesion and social capital appear to affect parents' beliefs, perceptions, and the resources to which they have access. Similar to the survey analyses, the interview data support the hypothesis that parents' social networks influence parent involvement and that the social context created by subgroups affect the manner and degree to which a parent is active in her or his children's education.

In the first part of this chapter, examples of how parents' social ties and social networks might affect parent involvement through their effects on parents' beliefs were provided. Previously, in Chapter 4, survey data showed a strong relationship between parents' beliefs regarding the role they should play in the education of their child and parent involvement. The data in this chapter were able to illustrate how interactions among parents might affect their beliefs. Through conversations and interpersonal interactions with one another, parents can share opinions, they can compare themselves to others, and they may modify their beliefs based on these interactions.

Use of subgroup beliefs as a predictor of parent involvement was supported by examples which illustrate instances where parents are exposed to the beliefs of parents with whom they do not directly interact. HLM uses subgroup mean values as a predictor of individual behavior, and the beliefs held by parents who never interact directly might be used to predict each other's behavior. Studying social cohesion as a multi-level phenomenon (individual and subgroup levels) is consistent with the dynamics reported by parents in this dissertation.

In addition to social cohesion, evidence was found in support of the idea that parents' social networks provide a context in which social capital can facilitate parent involvement. Both hypothesized mechanisms of social capital, parental investments in other parents and parental investment in their children's school, appear to affect parent involvement at school and at home. Examples were presented where parent involvement was promoted when parents provided one another with an assortment of resources to help their children at school. Among these resources were material resources, favors, and information. These investments led to parent involvement at home and at school.

Instances where a parent's investment of his or her own resources toward the school facilitated other parents' involvement at school were also found. Despite survey results which could not show an association between subgroup structure and parent involvement, interview data suggest that social closure might be related to parent involvement at school. Social closure might play an important role in facilitating the development of obligation and expectations in parents. In addition to the findings on social structure, the network position of individual parents (i.e., central actor, weak tie, or isolate) is related to the way social capital affects parent involvement. Social capital as a

sense of obligation was reported almost solely by parents who were central actors and/or who reported being highly involved at the school. These are the parents embedded within the closed social structures within parental subgroups.

In contrast, to social capital as investments toward schools, the social capital that emerged when parents invested in one another appeared to facilitate parent involvement across all parents. Specifically, all of the parents reported that they shared and exchanged information about a wide variety of topics related to children's schooling. Network position, however, was related to the amount of investment a parent provides or receives. Parents who were central actors reported a greater amount of information exchange, while isolates reported sharing less information with other parents and a greater dependency on the teacher. The more embedded a parent was within the social network, the more access to social capital she or he seemed to have.

Although the interview data presented support the claims made regarding the role parents' social relationships have in the creation of parent involvement at home and at school, it is important to treat these results with some caution. First, data were collected on a small number of parents, from two schools. From this small sample of parents it was clear that different parents draw upon their social networks to different degrees. Second, a parent's social network was viewed as one resource among others. Teachers, for example, were seen as a very important resource to parents. While social relationships with other parents are important, the relative importance of these network compared to the parent-teacher relationship is unclear.

In the end, the interview data presented support and extend analyses of the survey data. Parents who maintain larger social networks may have access to a wider range of

resources, and more exposure to the beliefs of others regarding parent involvement or the school, than parents with fewer social relationships. Given the illustration of social cohesion and social capital in this chapter, measures of network size seem to be justifiable estimates of how much social capital and cohesive pressure a given parent experiences. A parent's social network and ties to other parent, although perhaps not the most important resource, does appear to play a role in facilitating parent involvement at home and at school.

CHAPTER SIX: REVISITING THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The findings of this study suggest that parents' social networks may facilitate partnerships between schools and families. Analyses of survey and interview data support the theoretical framework guiding this dissertation, which argues that social network processes impact parent involvement. In the original framework for this study, I hypothesized that social cohesion would affect parent involvement at home and school by influencing a parent's beliefs about her or his own role in the education of his or her child, or beliefs about the impact parent involvement can have on a child's schooling. Likewise, I argued that social capital would affect parent involvement at school and at home through the exchange and investment of resources among parents or between parents and the school.

Together, the quantitative and qualitative data of this study are consistent with the claims that social network mechanisms can act as a resource toward parent involvement at home and at school. Analyses of the survey data demonstrate a relationship between parents' social ties and parent involvement. The larger a parent's social network, the more likely she or he is to be involved. Furthermore, multiple regression analyses indicate that different social networks predict different types of parent involvement. Examination of subgroup effects on parent involvement show that membership in a subgroup whose members more strongly believe that all parents should be involved in their children's education, or that parent involvement can impact educational achievement, predicted parent involvement at home. Together, these analyses suggest that the social processes associated with social networks, social capital and social

cohesion, can affect a parent's decision to become involved in her or his children's education.

The qualitative data analyses conducted as part of this dissertation further support the claims that a parent's network ties and relationships function as social capital or social cohesion to help create parent involvement. Examples were provided of conversations in which the cooperative exchange of resources and social pressure for parent involvement appear to have created opportunities for parent involvement. A parent's social networks can become a resource that generates parent involvement at home and at school.

Summary in Relation to the Theory

This dissertation began by suggesting that current attempts to study parents and parent involvement have largely focused on qualities of the individual parent or ways in which social institutions shape the behaviors of parents. In both cases, parents are characterized as isolated individuals who do not interact with other parents about their own children's education. Acknowledging that parents are social actors, and that interactions with other parents or adults might affect the manner and degree to which a parent becomes involved in his or her child's education, network processes and mechanisms were hypothesized to influence parent involvement.

Although this dissertation focused on the role of social networks in a parent's decision to become involved in her or his children's education, results from the survey analyses demonstrate the importance of parental beliefs as unique predictors of parent involvement at home and at school. Individual level and multi-level analyses both show that a parent's belief regarding the role all parents should play in a child's education

(parental role construction) strongly predicted his or her involvement. In contrast, a parent's sense that her or his involvement can affect learning (parental efficacy) did not predict either type of involvement when parental role construction was controlled for. Even when parental efficacy was the sole belief used to predict involvement, it was only predictive of parent involvement at home.

Analyses looking into the effects of social networks on parent involvement found that a parent's interactions with other parents, as well as the beliefs of a parent's subgroup, predicts parental behaviors. Social cohesion, the process whereby the beliefs of network members affect one another, was found to be one mechanism through which a parent's social network affects involvement in her or his children's education. A parent, through interactions with other parents, can compare her own beliefs and perceptions to those of others, and change these beliefs based on these comparisons.

Hierarchical Linear Model (HLM) analyses provided preliminary support for models of cohesion. These analyses show a relationship between a parent's involvement at home and the beliefs of subgroup members. In addition to the survey analyses, interviews with parents illustrate how interactions with other parents might affect a parent's beliefs and involvement behaviors. Parents described how they are capable of observing the beliefs of other parents, directly and indirectly, as well as how they often compared their own involvement behaviors with the behaviors of others. Both the survey and interview data, therefore, support the hypothesis that social cohesion can affect parent involvement and that a parents' beliefs about involvement can be influenced by her or his social interactions with others.

The second social mechanism through which social networks are believed to affect parent involvement is social capital. Social capital was hypothesized to influence parent involvement at school or at home through two network processes: (1) When parents invest their own personal resources (favors, information, and/or material resources) into other parents, and (2) when parents direct their resources toward the school (generally through involvement at the school). In the first case, parent involvement is affected directly. In the latter type of social capital, the investment of resources seem to foster a sense of obligation among other parents, which then leads them to become involved at the school.

The initial survey analyses found a relationship between the number of people a parent speaks with about his or her children's education and both types of parent involvement. To the extent network size represents the amount of available and invested resources, the statistical relationship represents the effect of social capital on parent involvement. Network membership, however, is differentially related to type of involvement. The greater number of parents who have children at the same school a respondent reported talking to, the more involvement at school she or he reported. In contrast, a larger network of adults outside of the school was associated with more involvement at home. These results suggest that different social networks generate different types of involvement. This effect may be the result of different types of resources that function among a parent's network of social ties.

The first type of social capital explored in this study results from the investment of resources among parents. In this case, a social relationship that exists between parents provides a channel through which resources such as favors and information can be

exchanged from one person to another. Analyses of the interview data provided examples of the way in which parents share and trade resources with one another and how these exchanges affect parent involvement. Parents reported that they often share a variety of forms of information (about schools/teachers, involvement activities, and educational resources), help one another with childcare, and sometimes lend educational materials. These interactions, according to parents, helped them become more involved in their child's education at the school, as well as at home. This latter finding, that the interactions among parents with children at the same school facilitates parent involvement at home, was not found in the survey analyses.

With so few parents interviewed, the connection between social capital and parent involvement at home remains uncertain. Parents, for example, were reluctant to comment on the amount of involvement other parents should engage in, especially with regard to what takes place inside another families' home. More research, perhaps using ethnographic methods for data collection, may be able to investigate the connection between social capital and parent involvement at home. The establishment of a trusting relationship, and one that exists over time, between researchers and participants may be needed in order to collect data about what influence the activities that take place inside families' homes.

The second manner in which social capital might affect parent involvement was found when parents invest in their children's school. As the theory suggests, when a network of parents is structured so that they are able to observe one another's investments, parents can develop a sense of obligation to become involved. This obligation was found to be predictive of parent involvement at school. In this study,

multiple regression analyses found a relationship between a parent's sense of obligation to be involved and her or his involvement at school. This relationship, however, disappeared when network variables were controlled for. The change in statistical significance between parent involvement at schools and a parent's perception of others suggests a connection between social networks, parental beliefs, and parent involvement. The relationship between a parent's sense of obligation and parent involvement at school might have disappeared due to the lack of a reliable measure for parents' sense of obligation. Despite the limitation in the survey data, the qualitative data collected supports the theoretical model connecting a parent's network to a sense of obligation, which then affects parent involvement at school.

During interviews, parents described how they felt obligated to be involved because other parents were more involved then they were. In addition, parents reported that they often pressured others, and felt pressure from others, to work with parent groups at school events. Evidence, albeit limited, was found suggesting that social structure can facilitate the development of a sense of obligation in parents. Although the HLM analysis could not find support for the hypothesis that social structure predicts parent involvement, the limited number of subgroups created conservative results. More data, therefore, is needed to better examine the relationships among social structure, a parent's sense of obligation, and parent involvement at school.

Overall, the results of this dissertation are supportive of the general proposition that social networks are influential in a parent's decision to be involved in the education of her or his children. Analyses of both quantitative and qualitative data are supportive of the theory that social cohesion and social capital affect a parent's decision to become

involved at home and at school in his or her children's education. This study supports arguments regarding the importance of parental beliefs as predictors of parent involvement, however, it also suggests the importance of other influences on parents. The image of parents as isolated individuals does not capture the aspects of parents' lives that involve social relationships and interpersonal interactions. It can be argued that models of parent involvement which do not recognize the social psychological and sociological aspect of parents' lives cannot fully account for why a parent chooses to become involved in her or his children's education. The implications this study has for the broader literature on parent involvement and social capital are discussed in the next sections.

Beyond the Theory

Implications for Parent Involvement

Previous research on parent involvement, particularly why parents get involved in their child's education, has focused heavily on the role of parents' beliefs and social-contextual factors that differentiate groups of parents. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995; 1997) have proposed a theoretical model in which parents' ideas about their role in the education of their children (parental role), their sense of parental self-efficacy, and opportunities to get involved all interact to create parent involvement. This dissertation adds to the literature on parent involvement by casting parents as social actors, embedded within a larger network of parents surrounding a school. Some parents are central to the network, while others may be more peripheral. Furthermore, membership within a network appears to be related to parent involvement at home and at school. In showing a

connection between network processes (social cohesion and social capital) and parent involvement, this dissertation illustrates limitations of individualistic models.

The findings that network size and membership predict parent involvement suggest that the degree to which a parent is integrated into a structure of relationships can impact that parent's role in educating her or his child. Even after controlling for parents' beliefs and background characteristics, the ties among parents predicted parent involvement at home and at school. These results suggest that social capital directly affects and facilitates parent involvement at home and at school. The resources of other parents may be invested through social ties, affecting a parents' ability or willingness to become involved in his or her child's schooling.

The qualitative data collected for this study, albeit limited, support and extend previous research on the role social relationships have in facilitating parent involvement. Previous studies have focused on the ability of parent's to use network ties in order to obtain information and advice (Lareau, 1989; Lareau & Shumar, 1996; Useem, 1992). The data collected in this study suggests that social capital is particularly important for parent involvement, not only because of the information that is exchanged, but also because network ties allow access to other resources (favors and educational materials).

In addition to extending, this study also supports Hoover-Dempsey's model of parent involvement. Results of the regression analyses show that parental role construction is an important predictor of parent involvement at home and at school. Parents' sense of efficacy to help their child in school, a belief commonly thought to be predictive of parent involvement, was not related to either type of involvement when parental role construction was controlled for. Analyses examining multicollinearity

between these two beliefs (Appendix D), found that parental role construction may be a more important predictor of involvement than parental efficacy. Once we take into consideration the degree to which parents think that they *should* be involved in their child's education, it becomes less important to know the degree to which they believe their involvement will have an effect on their children's education. Moreover, even without parental role construction in the regression models, the tables in Appendix D indicate that parental efficacy only predicted parent involvement at home.

The finding that self-efficacy does not predict parent involvement, or only predicts one type of parent involvement, is counter to previous research which has characterized self-efficacy as an important predictor of parent involvement (Hoover-Dempsey, et. al., 1992; Ames et al., 1993). The discontinuity between this study and past research looking at self-efficacy and parent involvement may be due to the fact that earlier research not examined parental efficacy and parental role construction simultaneously and/or has not differentiated parent involvement at home and parent involvement at school. Further research on the relationship between parents' self-efficacy and parental role construction is needed to evaluate the relationships found here. In addition, the role of parental efficacy may need to be re-examined and understood as a predictor of some types of parent involvement and not others.

Parents' beliefs about the role of all parents, and not simply beliefs about themselves, appear to be a more important predictor of behavior. Where role construction defines the types of behaviors a parent believes she or he should do, perceived efficacy guides whether or not an individual commits to these actions (Hoover-

Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). With this in mind, it follows that parental efficacy would and should be of secondary importance, as a predictor, to parent involvement.

This study extends existing research on parent involvement, as well as suggests a new direction for those interested in studying parent involvement. First, parental role construction was shown to predict parent involvement at home and at school, as hypothesized by others. In addition, the data show that parents should not be studied as isolated individuals. Research into why a parent becomes involved in his or her child's education should examine the role of interpersonal interactions among parents. Beyond the individual parent exists important and influential resources.

Implications for Social Capital

One of the primary goals of this dissertation was to explore the role of social contexts as an influence on parent involvement. In particular, social capital was considered to be a social process that is dependent on a network of relationships between parents. For this study, social capital refers to the investment of resources from one person to another (parent-parent), or from a person to an institution (parent-school). Data analyses suggest that social capital, represented by measures of network size, affects a parent's decision or ability to be involved in her or his child's education through these two mechanisms

The relationship between network characteristics and parent involvement have implications for general thinking and research on social capital. To date, educational research on social capital has generally ignored its effect on parents, focusing more on student outcomes such as school drop out, truancy, and academic achievement (Carbonaro, 1998; Morgan & Sorenson, 1998; McNeal, 1998; Stanton-Salazar &

Dornbusch, 1996). This dissertation suggests that, rather than (or in addition to) affecting student outcomes directly, social capital can affect parents' lives and the decision to become involved in a child's education.

A great deal of the current research on social capital has been criticized for being overly optimistic, downplaying the possible negative effects social ties might have on individuals (Portes, 1992). In the end, this study plays up the positive effect social capital may have, while downplaying the possibility that social networks might decrease involvement in some parents. However, I recognize that conversations among parents can discourage parent involvement, just as they might encourage involvement. The extent to which social capital inhibits involvement could not be estimated in this study. Data were not obtained which suggest that the social ties among parents reinforce a distancing from the school.

One possible reason why no information was collected on the negative aspects of social capital may be the sample of parents who participated. If network ties and social capital promote a lack of involvement, parents who utilize this resource would be less likely to return the surveys sent home from the school. The lack of survey information on any negative effects of social capital, therefore, may be a result of the functioning of this type of social capital. Although interviews with non-respondents, chosen at random, also did not indicate that social capital might inhibit parent involvement, the number of interviews conducted was modest. The lack of data on negative forms of social capital, therefore, should not be taken as evidence that it does not exist. Rather, more data are needed in order to better explore whether and how social capital might operate to discourage various types of parent involvement.

Despite the optimistic characterization of social capital, the findings in this study do have implications for other aspects of social capital theory. In particular, this study raises issues regarding the distribution of social capital across families, the role of social structure, and the measurement of social capital. Through the collection of quantitative and qualitative data, several new insights into social capital could be explored.

Distribution of Resources.

Personal interviews with parents suggest that network ties can help facilitate parent involvement through the transmission of information, doing favors for one another, and lending educational materials to one another. The trading and exchanging of these resources is similar to the form of social capital Portes and Sensenbrenner (1993) refer to as reciprocal transactions, where resources move back and forth between individuals. Parents reported sharing resources with one another often, sometimes providing and other times receiving.

The types of resources parents share with their friends and peers were often immaterial and priceless, most often in the form of information or doing a favor. This finding is consistent with research by others who have studied the types of support and assistance social networks provide individuals. In their discussion about network support, Wellman and Wortley (1990) suggest, "most relationships are based on the mutual exchange of intangible or mundane resources..."(p.582). Although Wellman and his colleague examined general forms of support, the findings of this study are consistent despite the fact that it focused on a specific set of parent behaviors. Parents, in their desire to enrich their children's lives, exchanged what can be thought of as intangible and mundane resources and information.

All of the parents interviewed reported that they shared at least some resources with other parents who are their friends, however, some families appear to draw from or build this type of social capital more than others. In particular, parents who maintained a higher socio-economic status (i.e., a higher level of education and a job where they made more money) reported sharing material resources with other parents. In contrast, parents who make far less income did not report that they shared material resources. This distinction by SES suggests that some types of social capital are more likely to occur among some parents and not others. Given the small sample of parents, however, more research is needed in order to better understand the relation between social capital and socioeconomic status.

Like financial and cultural capital, social capital may create advantages for one group of individuals over others. According to Bourdieu, both cultural and social capital are forms of power that people use, consciously and unconsciously, to provide themselves and their families benefits and advantages over others (Bourdieu, 1986; Swartz, 1997). As such, the additional resources some parents access by virtue of their network ties may provide some advantages to their children in the way of educational achievement. Difference in the resources exchanged among parents may be predictive of differences in parent involvement across SES and racial groups (Muller, 1993).

In addition to gaining access to a greater number of resources, some social networks may provide their members with different types of resources. A subgroup of well educated and wealthy parents may have greater educational expertise and knowledge of activities or resources needed for schooling. In addition, these parents might also possess the money funds needed to purchase resources for their children. In contrast, a

subgroup whose members have little education or money possesses less of the cultural and financial capital that prove useful in school systems. Support for the idea that social capital interacts with other forms of capital has been found elsewhere (Teachman et. al., 1996), although the effects these interactions might have on parents has not been studied.

Researchers interested in social inequities and social capital might begin to investigate how individuals and groups with social capital use this resource to gain advantages for their children. Network ties may gain parents or children access to a wider variety of resources that can affect schooling. Research into this might, for example, compare the ways in which social capital affects the nature of parent-teacher or parent-school relationships. A parent who is displeased with a new school policy may talk to his or her friends about how to repeal a new school policy. Without the support of friends, the parent speaks as an individual. However, if a parent uses the social capital available to her, she can be supported by others and perhaps exercise a more influential voice.

The Role of Social Structure.

In adopting a network approach to studying social capital, this study has been able to highlight the importance of an individual's position within a larger network of ties. Interview data revealed that parents who maintained different positions within a school's network of ties acted somewhat differently. Parents who were central actors, for example, more often discussed how they shared information and did favors for their friends. Furthermore, these individuals also reported putting more pressure on their friends, as well as feeling more pressure from their friends, to be involved at the school.

In contrast to central actors, parents who were bridges, connecting two distinct subgroups or individuals (for example Francis Brock, Nicole Seaver, and Joan Getty), appeared to fill "structural holes," (Burt, 1992). These individuals, as predicted by network researchers (Granovetter, 1973; Burt, 1992), were particularly active channels of information. In two cases, the mothers acted as channels of information between a school and parents searching for information about the school environment. Each individual who was identified as a bridging actor described a situation where they acted as an active channel of communication between two individuals or groups.

Measurement of Social Capital.

The survey data collected for this research are unique to the study of social capital. The data collected from mothers enabled the creation of a network map of the social relationships among parents, identifying subgroups within a school. From this, social capital could be studied as a subgroup phenomenon, rather than as an individual attribute. Few others interested in social capital have studied it as a subgroup phenomenon (See Frank & Wellman, 1998; Frank & Yasumoto, 1998). By studying social capital at two levels, the individual and the subgroup, the structural and normative features of social capital could be examined as influences on parents' behaviors. Although the subgroup measures of social closure did not predict involvement at home, the results indicating a subgroup effect of parental beliefs add validity to the sociocentric approach to studying network phenomena like social capital and social cohesion.

In addition to using network information for statistical purposes, the network maps created were used to help identify interview participants. Parents who maintained structurally meaningful positions (i.e., central actors, inter-subgroup bridges, and isolates)

were chosen for interviews to help examine how differences in network positions might be related to the processes by which social capital affects parent involvement. These interviews enabled a more detailed perspective of parents' social relationships than the surveys could. Without the information collected through the interviews, processes through which relationships might act as social capital would have remained hidden.

In addition to studying social capital at the individual level, subgroup effects were tested in order to study social capital as a network resource. Social closure and inter-subgroup ties were structural measures used in order to test the hypothesis that social capital facilitates parent involvement. Both of these subgroup measures (social closure and inter-subgroup ties), although argued to foster social capital elsewhere (Coleman, 1990; Burt, 1992), were not predictive of parent involvement with this sample of parents. Future research with a more representative sample of a network (perhaps 70%), or with a greater number of subgroups would be better able to evaluate the relationships between social structure and parent involvement at home or at school.

Implications for Schools and Teachers

Social capital is a network resource that predicts parent involvement. As such, educators who wish to increase parental participation and partnerships might look to the parental network embedded in their school as a resource (or perhaps barrier) toward this goal. Recognizing that the social relations among parents can function as channels of information and influence, teachers and administrators might use existing ties to help create parent involvement at school or at home. Sarason (1971) has argued, "the effort to understand and to change something in schools should not be constricted by a narrow conception of a school system" (p12). With respect to parent involvement, the network

of parents that surround a school might be considered part of the school system. Thus far, however, schools have overlooked these networks and have not recognized them as a potential resource toward increasing parent involvement. By viewing parents as members of subgroups and small communities, or by trying to bring more parents into a subgroup of their peers, schools might be more successful reaching parents who are traditionally viewed as disengaged from their child's schooling.

Among the ways in which schools and teachers might utilize the social networks of parents to increase parent involvement at school would be to take advantage of the social pressure network ties can create. One example of how a teacher might draw upon network mechanisms to increase parent involvement at school would be to take time in public forums, such as open house nights, to emphasize the importance of parent involvement at school and then distribute a sign-up list on which parents commit themselves to an activity or indicate that they would like to help. A parent's commitment to become involved at school, when made in public, may encourage and pressure others to do act similarly. Moreover, choosing not to help may be more difficult when surrounded by other parents.

In addition to teachers' efforts, parent-teacher associations (PTA) might also try to establish and use network ties as a resource. A first step for PTA organizations is to establish, as a formal goal, the creation of network ties among families throughout the school. Strong networks ties, as illustrated by Karen Clark, can enable one parent to pass down the responsibility for a school event to a parent whose child has recently entered the school. In order to develop parent networks parent organizations might have their own "parent open house" or "town meeting" events. At these open houses, parents might

be given the opportunity to meet and speak with one another about the school, teachers, and the role they play (or would like to play) at the school.

At the school level, efforts to develop a highly connected network of parents might take several approaches. One possible way for a school to facilitate connections among parents is be to create a parent mentor program, where more experienced parents at the school are paired with parents whose children are entering the school for the first time. Also, schools can hold workshops about helping children with homework or other social events that bring parents together. At these events, schools might emphasize the fact that parents are an important resource to the school and to one another. The more opportunities schools create for parents to interact, the more likely network ties among parents are to develop.

In order for schools to facilitate the development of network ties among parents, it may be necessary for them to establish and utilize ties with other community organizations. When schools reach out to community groups, parents with children at the same school may eventually establish friendships with one another in contexts away from the school. For example, parents with children in the same boy scout or girl scout troop may establish a friendship because of these organizations, but also a relationship that continues throughout children's schooling. Another possibility is for schools to communicate with community sports leagues, helping establish network ties among parents whose children play with or against one another. Likewise, communicating with adult sports leagues might connect parents who share a common interest in sports. Community events outside and away from the schools, may be opportunities for schools to develop and build social capital among parents.

By investing in parent networks, schools can benefit themselves. A school's resources can be conceptualized to include the skills and knowledge of the parents whose children attend. School-community partnerships might be established more easily if schools knew and understood the connections parents have to organizations, groups, and resources in the community. Individual parents can act as bridging ties between the school and community businesses, increasing the resources and opportunities available to school staff and students. The resources to which a school has access, by virtue of its parent network, can not be accessed unless that school takes the time to assess and understand the resources that exist among its parents.

In addition to implications for school efforts to create parent involvement, recognition of the fact that social networks provide parents resources may also have implications for educational reforms attempting to institute market-based systems. Specifically, as school choice become more and more common across educational systems, the role of parents' social networks may begin to take on greater importance because of their ability to act as a channel of information. With the emergence of market-based reforms, network influences may become an even more hidden aspect of a parent's life that affects the education of her or his child.

Limitations of the Study

Although the data support the theoretical claims regarding the relationship between parents' social networks and parent involvement, this dissertation should be viewed as an introductory study with limitations. It is important to draw attention to the fact that this study is cross-sectional and uses a small sample of parents for insight into how a parent's social ties might affect involvement in her or his child's education.

Moreover, the sample of parents in this dissertation is comprised of mostly white individuals, and may not represent the perspectives of all groups of parents. In the end, this dissertation presents a methodological and theoretical approach to studying parent involvement that, despite its limitations, suggests the need for further research into parents' social networks as an influential context on parent involvement at home and at school.

Given the fact that the analyses and conclusions in this dissertation are based on cross-sectional data, strong claims about the causal relationship between parents' social network and parent involvement cannot be made. For example, it could be argued that parents meet other parents only after they became involved at the school, rather than before they visit the school. Social networks, then, would be a result of parent involvement at school, rather than an antecedent. In fact, there may be some validity in this statement. Some parents stated that they often met other parents while visiting their child's school. This does not mean, however, that social networks have no impact on a parent's decision to be involved in her or his child's education.

Social relationships that develop through involvement at school can encourage further parent involvement. The relationship between social networks and parent involvement might best be characterized as reciprocal, where involvement affects networks and networks affect involvement. Cross-sectional studies such as this dissertation cannot adequately address this issue. Instead, future studies investigating the effects of parents' social networks need to examine them longitudinally, exploring how networks develop and whether or not they influence parents' beliefs or behaviors.

Although involvement at school may create larger networks, it seems less likely that parent involvement at home leads to the development of social networks. Activities such as reading to one's child and discussing school events are not likely to create opportunities where a parent might meet other parents. It seems more likely that a parent's social network would suggest activities or communicate ideas about how much and what types of behaviors parents should be doing. Parent involvement at home, it would seem, is more likely to be *influenced by* a parent's social network than to be an influence on it.

In addition to the cross-sectional data, insight gathered from interviews with parents should be read with caution. Having only 12 parent interviews, the data presented can support theoretical claims, but should not be understood as confirming the theory presented. Studies in which a larger number of parents are interviewed, and in which parents from a wide variety of groups are interviewed, are needed in order to confirm the social processes that have been supported in this dissertation.

This study is particularly limited to the extent that the parents represented are mostly White/Non-minorities. Ethnic and cultural differences in parent involvement (Keith et. al., 1996) suggest the possibility that differences exist across ethnic groups in their social networks. Unfortunately, this study collected data from too few minorities and is unable to draw conclusions about how these networks might function with respect to parent involvement. More research on minority social networks is needed in order to assess if there are differences across ethnic groups. In particular, large scale studies are needed to better understand the variation in subgroup characteristics and processes

In addition to comparing minority groups to non-minority groups, comparisons across schools may also provide insight into the role social networks play toward the creation of parent involvement. Specifically, comparisons between minorities in a school with high minority enrollment and those in a school with a small minority population might provide additional insight into the role of school context as an influence on network processes. As research into social capital begins to emerge, researchers need to begin to examine how minorities understand and view the role their networks ties play in their lives, and in the education of their children.

Conclusion

In studying parents as social actors, who maintain and are influenced by their social networks, this dissertation has accomplished several goals. First, with regard to the literature on parent involvement, this study has shown the importance of social networks as a predictor of parent involvement. The results of the regression analyses showed that different networks predict different types of parent involvement. This finding seems to emphasize the need for research on parent involvement to consider each type of parent involvement, and the influence on them, separately.

The second contribution this study makes to the literature is the association between the way parents construct their role in the education of their children and parents' own behavior. The results, suggest that this belief (parental role) is more important in predicting parent involvement than parental efficacy. In addition, the degree to which the members of a parent's subgroup believe that all parents should be involved predicted parent involvement at home. This latter finding suggests the importance of a

parent's social network and the shared belief about the role of parents as an influence on parent involvement.

In addition to the importance of parental beliefs, this study examined two network processes as potential influences on parental involvement. In particular, social cohesion and social capital were found to affect the degree and manner in which a parent becomes active in his or her children's education. With respect to the former, social cohesion, a subgroup members' beliefs about parental role construction or parent efficacy predicted parent involvement at home. Furthermore, interview data corroborated these findings as parents described how they compare and adjust their own beliefs based on conversations with other parents and friends.

The second network processes associated with parent involvement is social capital. Through the exchange and investment of resources among parents or from a parent to the school, social capital was hypothesized to influence parent involvement at home and at school. Parents reported that they share with one another resources such as information, educational material, or favors (through carpools or childcare) which enable involvement at home and at school. Social capital, however, may also facilitate parent involvement when parents pressure one another to get involved. This pressure may be verbal or by example. This second form of social capital was associated only with parent involvement at school.

Overall, this dissertation was able to support claims made for the importance of parents' immediate social context, their social networks, on involvement behaviors. In addition to parental beliefs, previously shown to predict involvement, researchers and educators interested in parent involvement might also begin to examine network ties as a

resource and source of influence. Finally, the research here suggests that it is important to examine each type of parent involvement separately. In the end, researchers may need to re-examine the driving conception of parents as isolated individuals, and begin to approach research from a perspective that considers the immediate social contexts in which parents are embedded. Between the individual and the larger society exist a wide array of influences on parent involvement. Among these are parents' social ties and social networks.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: PARENT SURVEY

Dear parent,

Hello, my name is Steven Sheldon. I am a graduate student at Michigan State University, working on my doctorate in Educational Psychology. For my dissertation, I am investigating parents' involvement in their children's education and the role friends play in parents' lives. I have created a survey, which will be sent to the parents of first through fifth grade students, in order to study this question at ******** Elementary School. As a result of the topic, the survey I created asks you to provide your name and the name of your friends. I understand that providing a stranger with this type of information may feel risky, but let me assure you that nobody other than myself will look at the survey once it has been mailed to me. Only I will know who has filled out these surveys, and the information that you provide will be kept strictly confidential.

I have spoken with the Principal, ********, and the school staff at ******** about my study, and I have received their support for this project. The results of my study will be used to help the school consider new ways to keep you informed about your child's education, as well as make it easier to for you to participate in the education of your child.

I have tried to make this survey as short as possible and estimate that it will take you approximately 30 minutes to complete. If there are two parents living in the household, I would appreciate it if the mother or maternal guardian in the household could complete the survey. If you have more than one child in elementary school, please answer the questions in reference to your oldest child at ********. In addition to the survey, you should have a self-addressed stamped envelope. When you have completed the survey, simply mail it back to me. You do not need to send the survey back to the school. For those surveys that are completed and returned to me, I will have a lottery. Ten families from each school will be chosen at random to receive $100.00. If you are one of those chosen, I will contact you and mail you a check.

Finally, by completing and returning this survey you are indicating to me your willingness to participate in my study. If you have any questions about the survey or would like to complete it over phone, please call me at ********. I will do everything that I can to answer your questions and make filling the survey out as easy as possible. Thank you for your help!

Sincerely,

Steven Sheldon
Graduate Student in the Educational Psychology Program
Michigan State University
e-mail: ********

Section A

1. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements. There are no right or wrong answers to these statement, I simply want to know what you think. Circle the number that most closely matches your point of view.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I know how to help my child do well in school.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I never know if I'm getting through to my child.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I know how to help my child make good grades in school.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I can motivate my child to do well in school.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I feel good about my efforts to help my child learn.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Other children have more influence on my child's grades than I do.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I can get through to my child even when he or she has difficulty understanding something.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I don't know how to help my child.	1	2	3	4	5
9. My efforts to help my child learn are successful.	1	2	3	4	5
10. I make a difference in my child's school performance.	1	2	3	4	5

2. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements. There are no right or wrong answers, I simply want to know what you think. Respond to each statement by circling the number that most closely matches you point of view.

"It is parents' responsibility to..."

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. help their child understand homework assignments.	1	2	3	4	5
2. test their child on material being taught at school.	1	2	3	4	5
3. show their child how to use things like a dictionary or encyclopedia.	1	2	3	4	5
4. support the teacher, no matter what.	1	2	3	4	5
5. contact the teacher before academic problems arise.	1	2	3	4	5
6. determine what their child is good at and what needs more work.	1	2	3	4	5
7. review their child's completed homework.	1	2	3	4	5
8. visit their child's classroom.	1	2	3	4	5
9. keep track of their child's progress in school.	1	2	3	4	5
10. teach their child to value schoolwork and success.	1	2	3	4	5
11. show an interest in school.	1	2	3	4	5
12. contact the teacher if they think their child is struggling in school.	1	2	3	4	5
13. support whatever decisions the teacher thinks is best.	1	2	3	4	5
14. go to parent-teacher conferences.	1	2	3	4	5
15. work with their child everyday on something related to school.	1	2	3	4	5
16. know if their child is having trouble in school.	1	2	3	4	5
17. make sure that their child learns at school.	1	2	3	4	5
18. attend open houses at school.	1	2	3	4	5

19. ask their child about school everyday.	1	2	3	4	5
20. supplement what is learned or done at school.	1	2	3	4	5

3. Please indicate how often you do the following activities. There are no right or wrong answers, I am simply interested in finding out how frequently you do things with your child. Circle the number that best describes your behavior.

"How often do you..."

	Always	Almost Always	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
1. watch television with your child?	1	2	3	4	5
2. read with your child?	1	2	3	4	5
3. talk to your child about what he/she is learning in school?	1	2	3	4	5
4. work with your child on school subjects?	1	2	3	4	5
5. respond to the teacher's requests for your help?	1	2	3	4	5
6. review and discuss the completed work your child brings home?	1	2	3	4	5
7. help your child with math?	1	2	3	4	5
8. visit your child's school?	1	2	3	4	5
9. attend events that are going on at school?	1	2	3	4	5
10. ask your child about what he/she is learning in school?	1	2	3	4	5
11. help your child with homework?	1	2	3	4	5
12. talk to your child's teacher?	1	2	3	4	5
13. play with your child?	1	2	3	4	5
14. volunteer in the classroom or at the school?	1	2	3	4	5
15. ask your child how well he/she is doing in school?	1	2	3	4	5

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statement.

Other parents expect me to be involved in my child's education.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	2	3	4	5	6

Section B

1. Sometimes parents talk to other parents, who have children attending their child's school, about their child's education. Please list those parents you talk to most often, and circle the number that best describes how often the two of you talk. If you do not know the first name of the parent, please write the name of the child. You may list up to seven other parents.

Name of Parent/Child (first and last)	How often do you talk? twice a year	once a month	twice a month	once a week	once a day
1. _____	1	2	3	4	5
2. _____	1	2	3	4	5
3. _____	1	2	3	4	5
4. _____	1	2	3	4	5
5. _____	1	2	3	4	5
6. _____	1	2	3	4	5
7. _____	1	2	3	4	5

2. In this section, please list up to five other adults you talk to a lot about your child and his or her education

Name of Person (first and last)	Is this person a relative?	Does this person work within the field of education?	Does this person have a child at a different school?
1. _____	y n	y n	y n
2. _____	y n	y n	y n
3. _____	y n	y n	y n
4. _____	y n	y n	y n
5. _____	y n	y n	y n

Section C

1. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statement.

"It is difficult for me to communicate with the teacher because..."

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. we have different schedules.	1	2	3	4	5
2. we have different backgrounds	1	2	3	4	5
3. the teacher is not accessible	1	2	3	4	5
4. I do not have a phone	1	2	3	4	5
5. I don't have time	1	2	3	4	5

"It is difficult for me to spend time at the school because..."

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. my job demands too much time.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I am not available at the times when the school needs volunteers.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I cannot get to the school.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I don't get along with the teacher.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I feel like I am not wanted there.	1	2	3	4	5

"I cannot spend time working with my child at home because..."

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. my job demands too much time.	1	2	3	4	5
2 I am too tired at the end of the day.	1	2	3	4	5
3. my child doesn't like my help.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I don't know what my child does at school.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I don't have the right materials at home.	1	2	3	4	5

Section D: Background Information

Name of Parent:_____

Name of Child:_____

1. My child is a: _____ Boy _____ Girl
2. My child is in the:

   _____ First grade _____ Fourth grade

   _____ Second grade _____ Fifth grade

   _____ Third grade _____ Sixth grade

3. How much schooling have you completed?

   _____ Some high school

   _____ High school degree or equivalent.

   _____ Some college

   _____ College degree

   _____ Some post-bachelor credits or degree (e.g., Master's or M. D.)

4. I consider myself to be:

   _____ Asian-American

   _____ Black/African-American

   _____ Caucasian/Anglo-American

   _____ Hispanic/Latino(a)

   _____ Other ethnicity : _____ (please list)

5. How long have you lived at your current residence? _____ years, _____ months

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey! If you would like to be entered into the lottery, a chance to win $100, please write your phone number or address below. This section of the survey is optional. The information I am asking for is needed so that I may contact you if you win the lottery.

Name:_____

Street Address:_____

City:_____ State: MI

Zip Code: _____

Phone Number:_____

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Questions to define parent involvement:

In this first section, I would like to ask you some questions about the role of parents in the education of their child, what you see as being parent involvement, and some of the ways that you might be involved in your own child's education. Some parents think that it is their responsibility to be very active in the education of their child, while other parents believe that educating children is almost entirely the responsibility of schools and teachers...

1. What are some of the ways *you* are involved in your child's education *at school*? How much involvement in your child's education *at school* do you think is appropriate for *you*? [Probe: What do you feel *your* involvement at school accomplishes?]
2. What are some of the ways *you* are involved in your child's education at home? How much involvement in your child's education *at home* do you think is appropriate for *you*? [Probe: What do you feel *your* involvement at home accomplishes?]
3. How much involvement in a child's education *at school* do you think is appropriate *for parents in general*? How much involvement *at home* do you is appropriate for *parents in general*? [Probe: What are some of the ways parents should be involved in their child's education?]
4. Do you feel as though a parent can be too involved in their child's education *at school*? *at home*? [Probe: Can you give examples where this is the case and discuss why?]

Existence of social norms about parent involvement

Now I would like to ask some questions that focus on how you perceive other parents at [name of school] and the community at the school.

5. How much involvement in a child's education *at school* do you think *other parents* at [name of school] believe is appropriate? [Probe: Do you think that they believe parents should be involved at their child's school?]

Social Norms; expectations and sanctions

I would like to ask you some questions about your own experiences at [name of school]

7. Earlier you talked about involvement at school as being [list behaviors stated in #1]. Have you ever seen a parent at [name of school] encourage another parent to do these? [Probe: Could you tell me a little about this? Are there other examples?]
8. Have you ever seen a parent at [name of school] encourage another parents to be involved at home? [Probe: Could you tell me a little about this? Are there other examples?]
9. Can you describe a situation where someone has encouraged you to be more involved in your child's education, either at school or at home? [Probe: Have you ever experienced this from other parents at the school? relatives or others adults?]
10. Can you describe how a parent, teacher, or administrator might express disapproval in some way, if they felt that you were not involved enough at school? at home? [Probe: Have you ever experienced a situation such as this, or know of someone who has?]

Describing conversations and their function

11. In general, with whom to you talk to the most about your child's school and education? [Probe: what are some of the most common topics of conversation? Where did you first meet some of these people?]
12. Growing up, my mother would often talk to her friends about what my brother and I were doing and what we accomplished. Do you ever talk to your friends and relatives about how your child is doing in school? [Probe: How would you describe a typical conversations with these people?]

Demographics and survey questions

These last questions are designed to get some basic, background information

13. In terms of raising your child, do you feel as though your friends are an important source of support for you? [Probe: if yes, how so?]
14. Can you tell me what grade your child was in last year? Is your child a boy or a girl? How much education have you completed?
15. How often would you say you are involved at the school? at home? [list some behaviors they mentioned]

APPENDIX C: CONTRASTING MODELS TO EXPLORE MULTICOLLINEARITY

Table 15:Models Predicting Parent Involvement at School

	Full Model		Model 1		Model 2	
Variables	B	Std. Error	B	Std. Error	B	Std. Error
Anonymous	1.027	0.050	1.238	1.532	0.880	1.486
Asian-American	2.761*	0.201	2.804	1.144*	2.737*	1.108
White	1.524*	0.184	1.505*	0.691	1.525*	0.669
Some College	1.083+	0.134	1.153+	0.639	1.053+	0.622
College Degree	0.921	0.108	1.065	0.690	0.922	0.673
School	-0.441	-0.059	-0.527	0.582	-0.430	0.563
Educators in "Other" Network	0.676*	0.183	0.789**	0.297	0.653*	0.291
Non-Educators in "Other" Network	-0.166	-0.068	-0.036	0.196	-0.152	0.194

Table 15 (cont'd)

	Full Model		Model 1		Model 2	
Variables	B	Std. Error	B	**Variables**	B	Std. Error
Size of School-Based Parent Network	0.316*	0.180	0.309	0.146*	0.292*	0.140
Parental Role	0.100**	0.232	-----	-----	0.084**	0.031
Self-Efficacy	-0.053	-0.085	0.065	0.046	-----	-----
Obligation	0.300	0.118	0.325+	0.186	0.325+	0.179
R-squared (adj. r-sq.)	0.250 (0.194)		0.210(0.156)		0.246(0.195)	

+ $p \leq 0.10$, * $p \leq 0.05$, ** $p \leq 0.01$
n=193

Table 16: Models Predicting Parent Involvement at Home

	Full Model		Model 1		Model 2	
Variables	B	Std. Error	B	Std. Error	B	Std. Error
Anonymous	-2.457	1.939	-2.054	2.040	-2.354	1.930
Asian-American	4.868***	1.446	4.953***	1.523	4.741***	1.438
White	0.649	0.873	0.611	0.920	0.551	0.868
Some College	-0.927	0.808	-.792	0.851	-927	0.807
College Degree	-1.313	0.872	-1.045	0.917	-1.366	0.871
School	-1.129	0.734	-1.300^{+}	0.772	-1.045	0.729
"Other adult" Network Size	0.634**	0.243	0.876***	0.249	0.600*	0.242
Size of School-Based Parent Network	-0.234	0.184	-0.250	0.193	-0.208	0.181
Parental Role	0.190***	0.044	-----	-----	0.214***	0.040
Self-Efficacy	0.070	0.063	0.183**	0.061	-----	-----

Table 16 (cont'd)

	Full Model		Model 1		Model 2	
	B	Std. Error	B	Std. Error	B	Std. Error
Obligation	0.082	0.235	0.129	0.248	0.070	0.232
R-squared (adj. r-sq)	0.270 (0.220)		0.185		0.261	
			(0.134)		(0.216)	

+ $p \leq 0.10$, * $p \leq 0.05$, ** $p \leq 0.01$
n=193

Discussion

In order to assess the extent to which parental role construction might be concealing a relationships between parental self-efficacy and either type of parent involvement, regression analyses were conducted with one of these beliefs removed. Examination of the results (See tables above) suggest that the results regarding an absences of relationships between parents' self-efficacy and both types of parent involvement is not due to any multicollinearity between parents' self-efficacy and parental role construction. The tables above suggest; that self-efficacy may not be predictive of all types of parent involvement, and that even when self-efficacy does predict parent involvement, parental role is a better predictor of these behaviors. In general, the regression analyses support the interpretation that, of the parental beliefs assessed in this study, parental role construction predicts parent involvement at home and at school better than parental self-efficacy.

Examining the relationships between the two parental beliefs, parental role construction and parents' self-efficacy, and parent involvement required that three regression analyses be tested: one with both beliefs, one with parental role construction only, and one with parental self-efficacy one. By comparing the coefficients and standard errors of the beliefs across the models, as well as looking at changes in the amount of variance each regression model explains, the degree of multicollinearity could be assessed.

First, comparing the results across each type of parent involvement suggests that self-efficacy may not be an important predictor of parent involvement at school. In the full regression model predicting parent involvement at school, with parent role

construction and parental self-efficacy both entered as predictors, only parental role is significantly related to the outcome. In model 1, when parental role construction is removed from the regression equation, the relationships between parent involvement at school and parental self-efficacy remains not significant. These results suggest that parents' beliefs that they can help their children achieve in school may not motivate or inspire them to volunteer or spend time at the school itself.

In contrast to parent involvement at school, when parental role construction was removed from the regression equations predicting parent involvement at home parental self-efficacy was significantly related to the outcome. Although parental may be predictive of parent involvement at home, comparisons of the three models suggest that parental role construction is a more important predictor than parental self-efficacy. In the full regression model, with both parental role construction and parental self-efficacy included, the regression model explained 27% of the variance in parent involvement. With parental self-efficacy removed (Model 2), parental role construction was found to explain a similar amount of variance in the outcome (26.1%). However, when parent role construction is removed and parental self-efficacy remains as a predictor of parent involvement at home (Model 1), the amount of variance explained falls dramatically (18.5%). This decline exists despite the significant relationships between parental self-efficacy and parent involvement.

Further evidence supporting the relative importance of parental role construction can be seen by examining, across the models, the standard errors of the regression coefficients between parental self-efficacy and parent involvement at home. Typically, multicollinearity is evident when there is a change in the standard error for a coefficient.

Comparing the Full Model with Model 1, the relationship between parental self-efficacy and parent involvement at home become significant because of an increase in the coefficient, not because of any changes in the standard errors of the coefficients. This comparison of standard errors is further evidence in support of the conclusion that parents' beliefs about what they should be doing is a better predictor of involvement than their beliefs about what their involvement can help their child accomplish.

Comparing the models, across both types of parent involvement, the results suggest that the relationships between parents' self-efficacy and parent involvement may not be as strong as suggested by previous research. In addition, parents' beliefs that their involvement can affect their child's schooling may not even be an influential belief toward the creation of parent involvement at school. When parental self-efficacy is used as a predictor of involvement without parental role construction, it was found to only predict parent involvement at home. Upon entering parental role construction, the importance of parental self-efficacy diminishes. Parents' beliefs that involvement at home and at school are a responsibility of all parents, it appears, is a better predict or both types of behavior.

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ENDNOTES

[1] The reader should be aware that use of the plural terms "parents" and "their children" refer throughout this dissertation to a parent and her or his child, rather than a set of parent of parents and a set of children. Use of this plural form avoids continually using the phrase "his or her" throughout this paper.

[2] Although parents' beliefs did predict their behavior in these studies, this relationships was not found to be consistent across tasks. This finding suggests that the task itself may have some role in how parents interact with their child. One possibility is that parents' beliefs about the task or their own competence at that task may affect the way they instruct their children.

[3] For an excellent review of the term social capital and how it has been applied across fields, please see Woolcock (1997)

[4] The work "weak" refers to the relative strength of a ties between two individuals in separate groups. It does not refer to the importance of these ties.

[5] The term information is placed in quotes to indicate a recognition of the fact that what parents are exchanging may not be accurate or truthful. The process described may also perpetuate the spread of rumors and gossip among parents.

[6] The information provided here was gathered from the 1998 Michigan School Report Building Information, located on the internet at http://www.state.mi.us/mde/cfdata/msr98/msr_bldg.cfm.

[7] The return rate from Pierce Elementary School is an approximation due to the fact that a

complete list of parents who have at least one child attending the school could not be obtained. Also, parents who were sent a survey, but who had moved their child out of the school, were not considered as possible respondents (n=3).

[8] All of the names in this dissertation are pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality.

[9] Kids' Club is a before and after school daycare program

[10] This is not to say that Karen and her friends only talk about either books or the environment, or that these friendships developed around a single shared interest. These women are highly knowledgeable about specific topics that Karen is not. Hence Karen can look to them for information on those areas about which they are most informed.