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PARENT PERCEPTIONS OF THE HOME-SCHOOL RELATIONSHIP: UNDERSTANDING THE MODEL, THE PSYCHOLOGICAL MECHANISM, AND MODERATING FACTORS

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ABSTRACT

PARENT PERCEPTIONS OF THE HOME-SCHOOL RELATIONSHIP: UNDERSTANDING THE MODEL, THE PSYCHOLOGICAL MECHANISM AND MODERATING FACTORS

By

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Parents and schools are the primary socializing agents in the lives of children and as such, the relationship between the two groups is vitally important. This study unraveled how school-provided support influenced school-related outcomes for the parents of elementary school students. Study results revealed a number of findings. First, this study suggested that the home-school relationship might consist of an affective and a behavioral component contrary to theory in the field (e.g., Esler, Godber, and Christenson, 2002). In addition, this study offered evidence for social support as the psychological mechanism by which the home-school relationship operates; school-provided social support accounted for a sizeable amount of variance in parent trust and satisfaction and small amount of variance in parent involvement. This study also suggested that school-provided social support consists of a single factor as opposed to the emotional and instrumental structure espoused in previous research. Finally, this study showed that school location and parent education changed the relationship between social support and parent satisfaction. In particular, suburban parents indicated lower satisfaction than urban parents with lower levels of social support and higher satisfaction with more social support. Parent education also changed the relationship. Parents with less education indicated lower satisfaction than parents with more education with less

support and higher satisfaction with more support. Affective and behavioral strategies for transforming the home-school relationship were presented.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this text and this degree to my family whose unending love and support made it possible.

Mark and Andrew: thank you for your unceasing support throughout this process. Mark, you helped me to appreciate the humor inherent in academic pursuits. Drew, you put my work in perspective.

John, Lynn, and Christina Gezon, and William, Susan, and Todd Aupperlee: Thank you for your phone calls, e-mails, thoughts, and prayers throughout my academic career. You consistently promoted my mental health.

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Completing this dissertation was a joy. While I began the process with trepidation, I would not change a single step of this project. The completion of my dissertation has shaped my professional identity, illustrating the integration of research and practice, and helping me to feel like a full-fledged member of the academic community. This process would not have been as instrumental in my development without the support of the faculty and my colleagues in the School Psychology program at Michigan State University.

First, I would like to acknowledge my committee members, Jean Baker (director), Evelyn Oka, John Carlson, and Joanne Keith. To Jean, thank you for being an unflagging cheerleader and for helping me to write a "good enough" dissertation. To Drs. Oka, Carlson, and Keith, thank you for your thoughtful and timely feedback. You're helped me to create a better text and you've inspired me to think like a scholar.

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Chapter One: Introduction

With the rise in accountability and growing concern over failing schools and children, home-school collaboration is a hot topic in education. A variety of programs, including Title One, the National Educational Goals Panel, the National Parent Teacher Association, the United Stated Department of Education, and numerous other organizations have brought the relationship between families and schools to the forefront of the national consciousness (Esler, Godber, & Christenson, 2002). As a potential solution, federal and state funds have been allocated to promoting and enhancing parent involvement in schools.

Despite this financial and policy-related investment in home-school collaboration, research clearly show that children are failing to meet basic standards and that parent satisfaction with school is on the decline. For instance, data from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES; Wirt et al., 2004), indicated that in 2002, only 31 percent of fourth graders, 33 percent of eighth graders, and 36 percent of twelfth graders were reading at or above the proficient level, a key indicator of academic success. Further, NCES (2002) research reveals that the percentage of parents of third through twelfth graders reporting being "very satisfied" with their children's schools decreased from 56 percent in 1993 to 53 percent in 1999.

Despite this grim student achievement and parent attitudinal data, national data also offers some hope about the state of education, particularly in regards to parent involvement at school and family support of education at home. In particular, the percentage of parents who attended a general school meeting during the 1996 and 2002 school years remained consistent at 88 percent (NCES, 1999; Vaden-Kiernan &

McManus, 2005). Further, other markers of parent involvement showed increases during that time span. Specifically, the percentage of parents attending a school event increased from 66 to 70 percent and the percentage of parents who acted as a volunteer or served on a school committee increased from 40 to 42 percent (Vaden-Kiernan & McManus, 2005). Parent support of education at home also increased. Specifically, "the percentage of children who were read to by a family member three or more times per week increased from 78 percent in 1993 to 84 percent in 2001" (NCES, 2003, p. 75). In addition, the percentage of children whose family members taught them letters, words, or numbers increased from 58 to 74 percent (NCES, 2003).

Taken together, these data suggest that academic achievement could improve and that parent satisfaction with school is waning. On the other hand, evidence also indicates that parents are becoming more involved at school and in supporting learning at home.

Brief Introduction to the Home-School Relationship Literature

Despite the aforementioned statistics on student achievement, parent satisfaction, and parent involvement, the relationship between families and schools is at best poorly understood. This field lacks clarity for a number of reasons. First, the literature supporting home-school collaboration is overridden with competing models and constructs, very few of which have been empirically examined. Second, very few studies have proposed a psychological mechanism by which this phenomenon operates, which could be related to the overabundance of theories. In addition, while research clearly indicates that parents make a difference in educational outcomes for children, parent outcomes associated with their relationship with the school have been largely ignored. Finally, researchers have yet to examine how moderators like school location and parent

educational level change the nature of the relationship between home-school collaboration and various parent outcomes.

Key Definitions

One way to begin to impose order on this field is for researchers to clearly define important terms. Thus, a brief introduction to the key terms in this study follows below. The home-school relationship is the focus of this study. Briefly, the home-school relationship is defined as parent and school perceptions and practices that characterize the relationship between the adults who care for a child in the home context and the adults who contribute to the learning of the child in the school context.

Social support is the hypothesized mechanism by which the family-school relationship operates. In this study, social support will be defined after Cauce, Felner and Primavera's 1982 model as "the range of significant interpersonal relationships that have an impact on an individual's functioning" (p. 418). Although this definition neatly highlights human relational needs and the active role played by social support, the definition is too narrow. Thus, the definition will be broadened to include the support provided by organizations or institutions such as schools (House, 1981).

Three variables pertaining to school comprise this study's outcomes. The first outcome is parent trust, which will be defined according to Adams and Christenson's (2000) model as "confidence that another person will act in a way to benefit or sustain the relationship, or the implicit or explicit goals of the relationship, to achieve positive outcomes for students" (p. 480). Second, parent satisfaction with school will be included, which is a family's affective appraisal of their child's school life and experiences. Finally, parent involvement will be defined somewhat narrowly as parent-initiated

involvement activities focused on their children's school (Kohl, Lengua, & McMahon, 2000).

Issues Surrounding the Home-School Relationship

As noted previously, numerous studies have attempted to unravel the theoretical tangle of home-school collaboration. In particular, Epstein (1995) proposed a six-component typology of behaviors that comprise home/school/community partnerships. Her model included a variety of roles and tasks for families including parenting, communicating between the home and school, volunteering at school, fostering learning at home, sharing responsibility for decision making in the school, and collaborating with the community (Epstein, 1995; Epstein & Dauber, 1991).

Esler, Godber and Christenson (2002) have also attempted to bring order to this unruly field. Their model incorporates the actions, relationships, and attitudes involved in home-school collaboration. Although widely disseminated, this theory has at best meager empirical backing.

Although Epstein (1995) and Esler, Godber and Christenson (2002) present plausible, clear models, neither model has the scientific rigor necessary for advancing our knowledge in this area. In order for further growth in this field, I empirically examined Esler, Godber, and Christenson's model of the home-school relationship.

In addition, researchers have begun to tease apart different components of the home-school relationship. For instance, predictors of involvement like race (e.g., Marcon, 1999) and income level (e.g., Desimone, 1999) have been clearly documented, as have outcomes associated with home-school collaboration like student academic achievement (i.e., Fan & Chen, 2001). Despite clarity around the periphery of the

relationship, scholars studying home-school collaboration have largely failed to specify a psychological mechanism by which the relationship operates. In other words, they have failed to specify exactly what comprises the relationship between families and schools.

One notable exception to the dearth of psychological mechanisms comes from Grolnick and Slowiaczek (1994). They proposed and examined a motivational model by which parent involvement in schools affected child grades. In particular, they hypothesized that components of parent involvement influenced child variables including self-regulation, perceived competence, and control understanding, which in turn, affected child grades. In testing their model, Grolnick and Slowiaczek (1994) found that perceived competence and control understanding significantly influenced child grades. While their model is conceptually and empirically clear, it has been largely forgotten as scholars rush to understand parent involvement.

Another potential mechanism to explain this relationship, and one that is unique within the field comes from the realm of psychology rather than education. Specifically, the construct of social support has the potential to change the way scholars conceptualize the home-school relationship. As noted before, social support is the range of relationships with individuals and organizations that influence an individual's functioning. This definition calls attention to the relational aspects of social support. Further, it highlights the internal or phenomenological nature of the construct; perceived social support rests within an individual person. In this study, social support is conceptualized to flow from schools as systems to parents and families.

In addition to not specifying a psychological mechanism, a further difficulty within the field is that researchers have almost exclusively examined child outcomes

associated with the home-school relationship. Although child outcomes like academic achievement are indubitably important (i.e., Pettit, Bates, & Dodge, 1997), they only comprise one part of the home-school relationship. Parent outcomes deserve study as well, particularly since parents are the most proximal figures in the relationship.

A final gap within the field is that research has not established how the relationship between the home and schools changes in the presence of moderators including child grade, parent race, parent educational attainment, and school location. In particular, regarding child grade level, research suggests that the parents of children in earlier grades are more involved than the parents of older children (Izzo, Weissberg, Kasprow, & Fendrich, 1999). One purpose of this study is to ascertain whether this remains true when the mechanism of social support is used to explain home-school collaboration and when parent outcomes are examined rather than child outcomes.

A second moderator that has the potential to change the relationship between home-school collaboration and parent outcomes is parent race. A long tradition of literature has demonstrated that race influences parent involvement activities (i.e., Fehrmann, Keith & Reimers, 1987; Feuerstein, 2000). This study examines whether their relationship with school influences outcomes for parents of different racial and ethnic backgrounds.

Another potential moderator in the relationship between home-school collaboration and parent outcomes is parent educational attainment. Research has long demonstrated that parents without post-secondary education have lower levels of parent involvement in the schools, at least when involvement is traditionally defined (Bempechat, 1992). With a broader definition of involvement including support of

school at home, the relationship deserves further study (Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994). One aim of this study is to examine the link between educational attainment and parent outcomes, rather than child outcomes, as the dependent variable.

The final potential moderator of this relationship is school location. Although it is intuitive that school locations ranging from suburban to urban would influence outcomes of the home-school relationship, little research has examined this association. In particular, Thompson (2002) examined Detroit schools and found that location significantly predicts child academic achievement. However, the influence exerted by school location on parent outcomes has not been examined empirically.

Importance for School Psychology

The relationship between families and schools holds great potential for the field of school psychology. First, school psychologists are uniquely positioned to act as change agents and to facilitate relationship development. Second, as scientist-practitioners invested in the production, consumption, and evaluation of research, psychologists have a responsibility to further the theory supporting practices in schools. Third, better understanding the relationship between families and schools provides a solid base for designing interventions to improve the relationship.

In straddling the world of school and the world of families, school psychologists are uniquely positioned to act as change agents in school systems (Esler et al., 2002). Because school psychologists are a part of the school community yet work closely with parents and students, they have the advantage of multiple perspectives and being able to work on all sides to improve the relationship between families and schools. In addition, school psychologists have unique knowledge about systemic functioning and

communication. Specifically, with problem-solving skills and the ability to engage in systematic data collection, school psychologists have real power to change the standard operating procedure in schools. Finally, due to their role, school psychologists have the power to change or at least influence school- and district-wide policies related to collaboration and thus have the responsibility to facilitate the relationship between parents and schools (Demaray & Malecki, 2002).

In addition to being uniquely positioned to facilitate change in schools, school psychologists should also be invested in understanding the home-school relationship because of close ties with the world of scholarship. Psychologists who adopt a scientist-practitioner orientation act as consumers, producers, and evaluators of research (Hayes, Barlow, & Nelson-Gray, 1999). A commitment to being a scientist-practitioner entails a number of responsibilities pertaining to home-school collaboration. First, school psychologists have a responsibility to understand and develop the literature supporting this construct. As noted elsewhere, the empirical work supporting this construct is still in its infancy. In addition, as producers of research, school psychologists should strive to document, evaluate, and be accountable for their activities pertaining to home-school collaboration. For psychologists practicing in schools, this means that systematic data collection pertaining to the home-school relationship is necessary. Finally, as evaluators of research, school psychologists have a responsibility to critically review and follow best practices in enhancing home-school collaboration.

Third, better understanding home-school collaboration is important for school psychology because of the fields' commitment to using interventions to improve education for children and families (Ysseldyke et al., 1997). As Griffith (1997) notes,

changing school attitudes and climate can create real change in family satisfaction with schools. Further, since clear evidence suggests that parents are important in the educational lives of children (Henderson & Berla, 1997), and that the relationship with the school influences parents (e.g., Griffith, 1997), school psychologists have a responsibility to bring parents into the educational process in a practical and lasting way. This is particularly important since gaining knowledge about what type of support families need is the only way to design effective interventions (Cutrona & Russell, 1990). Until psychologists have established how this relationship works, what comprises the outcomes, and how it differs for families based on demographic information like child grade and race, school psychologists will not be able to design interventions that improve the relationship for all stakeholders.

In summary, the purpose of this study is to examine a theoretical model of the home-school relationship. In particular, this study will explore how parent perceptions of the home-school relationship affect parent outcomes related to their children's schools. The home-school relationship is thought to operate through the psychological mechanism of social support as defined by House (1981). In accordance with the model proposed by Esler et al. (2002), home-school collaboration, through the mechanism of social support, is hypothesized to influence attitudes, relationships and actions. Parent outcomes corresponding with these three components include: parent satisfaction with school (attitudes), parent trust of the school (relationships), and parent involvement with the school (actions). The second part of the study examines whether this relationship between home-school collaboration and parent outcomes differs by child grade, parent race, parent educational attainment, and school location.

Chapter Two: Review of the Literature

Families comprise the primary developmental context and socializing force in the lives of children (Scott-Jones, 1995). The second most important context in which children develop and learn is the schools (Epstein, 1995). As Bronfenbrenner (1977) and others have noted, the relationship between the systems in which children are raised is vitally important (Christenson & Buerkle, 1999; Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994). Luthar, Cicchetti, and Becker (2000) note that from an ecological perspective, these "levels transact with each other over time in shaping ontogenic development and adaptation" (p. 552).

For decades, researchers in education and psychology have attempted to understand how the family and school contexts work together to support the developmental and educational needs of children (e.g., Ames, 1993). Terms used to address this relationship have varied widely, including "parent involvement, family-school partnerships, family-support and family-centered practices" (Christenson & Godber, 2001, p. 455). Most recently, this literature has existed under the heading of the home-school relationship (Christenson & Godber; Esler et al., 2002). Regardless of the term, the relationship specified and examined is that between the home and school contexts of children. This is separate from the parent involvement literature that focuses on school-wide, systems-level initiatives designed to engage parents in the educational process. Examples of these parent involvement initiatives include bringing parents in as decision-makers and developing parent teacher organizations (e.g., Hara & Burke, 1998; Marcon, 1999).

Home-School Relationships

For this study, the interaction between families and schools will be termed the home-school relationship. The home component of this phrase suggests that a child's context of origin is not limited to parents or even to a family, which takes a variety of forms in our increasingly diverse society. Home refers to the child's developmental setting and all the people who contribute to the growth of the child and to the individuals who comprise the context, rather than the physical space in which they reside.

The second component of the term is school, which refers primarily to the people within the education system who influence the lives of children. This term is purposefully broad as a corrective against more narrow definitions of school (Bempechat, 1992). The term school incorporates all staff members such as school psychologists, administrators, teachers, and support staff as well as the students. In addition, the term includes the policies and practices of the school. For instance, a school's mission statement or motto like "be safe, be respectful, and be responsible" or a school- or classroom-wide policy of teachers calling parents when their children are missing homework assignments could both be included in a definition of school. Again, the definition refers not to the building but to the people, policies, and practices subsumed under the heading of school.

The third part of the term is relationships. Again, relationships are broadly defined so that a variety of parenting and schooling practices can be included. Relationships refer to interactions between individuals and systems. These interactions include both family and school perceptions of one another and their relationship and observable behaviors. For instance, relationships could include everything from parent

perceptions of school warmth to more traditional components like teachers sending home notes and parents volunteering in classrooms. From an ecological perspective, these "interrelations among major settings containing the developing person at a particular point in his or her life" are crucial to fully understanding child development (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, p. 515). Briefly, the home-school relationship is comprised of parent and school perceptions and practices that characterize the relationship between the adults who care for a child in the home context and the adults who contribute to the learning of the student in the school context.

Models of Home-School Relationships

Although literature supports the idea that home-school relationships are essential to development (Epstein, 1995; Pettit et al., 1997), the specific model by which it operates is less well understood. Researchers within various fields have posited models explaining the relationship. Three influential and oft-cited models include those presented by Joyce Epstein, Diane Scott-Jones, and Sandra Christenson and her colleagues. Although the Scott-Jones model is not a specific model of home-school relationships, it still presents a comprehensive model of one facet of parent engagement in education.

Epstein's Model

Joyce Epstein (1995) writes from within the field of school psychology. She examined school/family/community partnerships in schools and presented a theory designed to foster the success of all children "in school and in later life (p. 701)." Her theory is based on the idea that the three spheres of influence in the lives of children (families, schools, and communities) exist in relationship to one another. Specifically,

Epstein notes that these spheres should work together to create school-like families and family-like schools where learning is promoted and development is optimized. She breaks the relationship down into six essential components including: parenting, communicating between the home and school, family members volunteering at school, fostering learning at home, shared responsibility for decision making in the school, and collaborating with the community (Epstein & Dauber, 1991). In order to enact these components, Epstein specifies a number of school-based behaviors including creating an action team, obtaining funds and other support, identifying starting points, developing a three-year plan, and continuing to plan and work together.

Scott-Jones' Model

Diane Scott-Jones (1995) explores the family component of the home-school relationship. She conceptualizes how parents engage in academic socialization and beyond that, how they actively participate in assisting children with schoolwork. In particular, Scott-Jones postulates a four level model. First, parents value specific subjects and education as a whole. In particular, parents value specific subjects like reading and mathematics. Parents' valuing of education includes educational expectations, valuing effort, acting as models, and providing educational resources.

The second component of the Scott-Jones model is "monitoring school performance and activities that enhance or diminish school performance" (p. 87). Positive monitoring activities include setting rules and monitoring activities such as television viewing (Fehrmann et al., 1987).

Another component of the model is helping the child complete work. This component incorporates families fostering basic academic skills through the expert-

novice relationship elucidated by Vygotsky (e.g., Boekaerts, 1999) and parents assisting children with homework.

The fourth component, which has negative connotations, is doing, which refers to families becoming over-engaged in completing work assigned to their children. Doing occurs when parents take responsibility for assignments and attach consequences to task completion rather than supporting their children's learning, whereby reducing intrinsic motivation (Gottfried, Fleming, & Gottfried, 1994).

Esler, Godber and Christenson's Model of Home-School Collaboration

Esler, Godber and Christenson (2002) offer the most comprehensive model of home-school relationships. Their model is unique because it accounts for attitudes and relationships as well as the actions that comprise traditional parent involvement. They hypothesize that these three components are interconnected, influence one another, and are all necessary for optimal home-school relationships (Esler et al., 2002).

Attitudes form the basis of the model. Specifically, Esler and colleagues (2002) describe school-wide attitudes towards collaboration as the primary factor in determining whether families are involved in their children's schools. They cite Epstein and Dauber's 1991 research as proof. It showed that schools reaching out to parents was more important than parent demographic variables in determining levels of parent involvement. Esler and colleagues also describe the evidence-based components that comprise successful attitudes. First, shared responsibility between the home and the school, or a "posture of reciprocity" is essential. This posture of reciprocity is defined as the school providing official channels for reciprocal discourse between homes and schools (Esler et al., 2002). Schools also need to view parents as the experts on their children. Third, should adopt a

preventive, solution-oriented focus (Esler et al., 2002). This approach is characterized by relationships that are non-blaming and foster consistent messages across settings.

The second major component of the Esler et al. (2002) model is the relationships that maintain and support the partnerships. Esler and her colleagues present a list of six practices schools and particularly school psychologists should encourage to promote healthy relationships between schools and families. Some of the most important practices are detailed below.

First, *family-centered practices* are essential. These practices include a family orientation rather than a child orientation, positiveness, sensitivity, and friendliness. Second, schools should respect *cultural diversity*. Respect for diversity includes understanding and appreciating cultural differences and considering them in trying to forge relationships. A third essential practice is *personal connections* or informal opportunities for interaction. Esler and colleagues cite examples like phone calls about child successes, using first names, and personal contact between staff and parents.

The final major component of the Esler et al. (2002) model is actions. This component is most well developed because into practice the attitude and relationship components of the model. According to Esler and her colleagues, six components comprise essential actions in forging home-school collaboration.

First, schools should use the language of shared responsibility, which is inclusive, solutions-oriented, and optimistic. Also, two-way communication between the home and school is essential. However, Esler and colleagues acknowledge that this relationship has historically been one-sided and that schools need to be proactive in creating and maintaining channels of communication. Enhancing learning at home and school is the

third essential action and it has been studied extensively (e.g., Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994; Epstein, 1995). Fourth, schools should share decision making at all levels, from involving parents in interventions for individual students all the way up to school-wide policy decisions. Fifth, collaborating with the community is important (Esler et al., 2002). This action helps schools to access and mobilize community-based resources like service groups and agencies. Finally, Esler, Godber, and Christenson note that a family-school team is a prerequisite for enhancing relationships. These teams should include community members as well as school professionals and families. Functions of these teams include soliciting support from relevant parties, conducting needs assessments, and monitoring programs and initiatives.

In summary, researchers have proposed various frameworks for understanding home-school collaboration. Joyce Epstein's 1995 model focuses on community involvement and on defining the relationship in broad, inclusive terms. Her model has been widely cited and celebrated because it expands the range of activities that contribute to the home-school relationship and educational outcomes for children (Epstein, 1995). In contrast, Diane Scott-Jones (1995) presents a model of the home component of the relationship between families and schools. She theorizes that parents engage in four activities including valuing, monitoring, helping and doing schoolwork (Scott-Jones, 1995). Esler, Godber, and Christenson (2002) offer the most comprehensive model of home-school collaboration focusing on attitudes, relationships, and actions. While this model has the most conceptual strength, it still does not specify a psychological mechanism by which the collaborative relationship affects families; scholars should strive to fill this theoretical gap. In addition, parent perceptions of the attitudes, relationships,

and actions that form the basis and the outcomes of the relationship have not been examined and research should also address this deficit in the literature.

Review of Current Literature on Home-School Collaboration

The home-school relationship has been studied under a number of labels including parent involvement and parent engagement. Four lines of research have contributed most heavily to theory on the home-school relationship. One line of research emerged in the literature on resilience. In this field, parent involvement is examined as a protective factor that buffers children from negative outcomes and promotes well-being. Second, research on parent involvement includes the study of child outcomes associated with increased parent participation at school (e.g., Feuerstein, 2000). This data informed policy makers and school professionals about why reaching out to families is important (Esler et al., 2002). A third line of research that has shaped this field examines family demographic factors that make parents likely or unlikely to be involved with schools. A final area of research focuses on school or other organizational factors that increase parent involvement and home-school collaboration.

Parent Involvement as a Protective Factor

Within a risk and resilience framework, parent involvement is examined as a protective factor. In particular, Masten and Coatsworth (1998) note that having a close relationship with a caring parent figure is one factor that promotes successful development in children. Resilient children succeed academically and personally despite the presence of significant risk factors in their lives (Mash & Dozois, 2003).

Resilience literature has expanded beyond children who succeed in the face of adversity to exploring factors that promote success for all students. This success is

hypothesized to result from a combination of positive personal factors like being able to seek out guidance and environmental supports like relationships with teachers and other adults. Specifically related to parents, research shows that good quality parenting prevents antisocial behavior among children exposed to high levels of adversity (Masten, 1994). In particular, Masten and her colleagues (1999) followed a sample of children from childhood into late adolescence and found that parenting contributed significantly to resilience, which is marked by high adversity and adequate academic, behavioral, and social competence. Specifically, they found that parenting predicted conduct in childhood. Further, when Time One adjustment was accounted for, parenting in childhood contributed significantly to social competence in late adolescence. In addition, parenting in adolescence predicted competence in the academic, social, and conduct domains in late adolescence.

Similarly, Pettit, Bates, and Dodge (1997) found that supportive parenting acts as a protective factor, predicting child adjustment over seven years. High quality parenting indirectly moderated the effects of adversity on classroom adjustment for students with behavior disorders and "mitigated the effects of family adversity on later behavior problems" (p. 908). In particular, Pettit and colleagues found that supportive parenting directly influences academic, behavioral, and social adjustment in kindergarten and sixth grade and that it acts indirectly as a moderator of adversity. In the presence of socio-economic status (SES) risk, sixth grade externalizing scores were higher when supportive parenting was low. However, "When SES risk was absent, externalizing scores were similar for low and high SP (supportive parenting) groups" (Pettit et al., 1997, p. 917).

Overall, research suggests that parent involvement in education serves as a protective factor all students (Masten, 1994; Masten & Coatsworth, 1998).

Outcomes Associated with Home-School Collaboration

Within the field of home-school relationships, a second line of research examines how parent involvement influences child academic outcomes including grades and standardized test scores. Parent involvement is moderately associated with higher grades (i.e., Fan & Chen, 2001; Keith et al., 1998). In a meta-analytical review of the literature, Fan and Chen (2001) found a "small to moderate, and practically meaningful, relationship between parent involvement and students' academic achievement" (p. 1). In particular, they found that parent aspirations/expectations for the child's academic achievement moderates the relation between parent involvement and a global indicator of academic achievement like grade point average.

In addition, Reynolds (1992) conducted a longitudinal study and found that parent involvement in school is a significant predictor of future achievement. He examined how parent, child, and teacher perceptions of involvement influence reading and math scores on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills. Even after controlling for demographic information including parent education, eligibility for a lunch subsidy, and grade retention, parent involvement significantly contributed to academic achievement. Child reports of involvement, rather than parent or teacher reports, accounted for the most variance in standardized test scores.

Keith et al. (1998) also found a moderately large effect size in the relationship between parent involvement and grades. Specifically, their model showed that a one standard deviation change in parent involvement results in a .25 standard deviation

change in tenth grade academic achievement. Results from Keith et al. also suggested that gender does not affect the relationship between parent involvement and academic achievement. However, they did find that the relationship differs by ethnicity; the general model does not fit for Asian American students. Additionally, parent involvement was seemingly more important for Native American students than the rest of the sample and a standard deviation change in parent involvement was accompanied by a .43 deviation change in grades (Keith et al., 1998).

In accordance with a broader view of the successful outcomes, researchers have also examined non-academic child outcomes associated with the home-school relationship. Drawing conclusions about the link between parent involvement and behavioral outcomes is challenging because the scales measuring student outcomes vary widely, measuring everything from school behavior to dropout rates (e.g., McNeal, 1999). Despite the inconsistency in outcomes, overall, parent involvement seems to be related to higher levels of school appropriate behavior (Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994; Pettit et al., 1997).

For example, Grolnick and Slowiaczek (1994) found that for mothers, personal involvement and cognitive/intellectual behavior are weakly but significantly correlated with a child's perceived academic competence and control understanding. In addition, small correlations exist between mother-reported activities supporting "the dedication of psychological resources in the context of positive affect" and self-regulation (Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994, p. 241). In addition, mother and father cognitive/intellectual behaviors, which include cultural activities at home like reading the newspaper and

talking about current events, are weakly correlated with a child's perceived competence in the academic area (Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994).

Using a social capital framework, McNeal (1999) also examined the impact of parent involvement on non-academic outcomes. His research suggested, "parent involvement in general significantly reduces incidents of problematic behavior" (McNeal, 1999, p. 129). McNeal also teased apart the results for students from different racial backgrounds. His research indicated that parent involvement as social capital "consistently affects behavioral outcomes" (like truancy and dropping out) for Caucasian students, has less impact on African-American students and almost no impact on Hispanic and Asian students (p. 131).

Family Factors Affecting Parental Involvement

A third area within the literature on home-school relationships is family factors that make parents likely or unlikely to be involved at school. For instance, family configuration predicts parent involvement at school; single parents are less involved in school-based behaviors like volunteering in the classroom and PTO attendance than two-parent families (Kohl, Lengua, & McMahon, 2000). Parental education also predicts involvement. In particular, research suggests that more educated parents are more likely to have high levels of involvement (Kohl et al., 2000; Shumow & Miller, 2001). Third, race predicts involvement. Caucasian and African American parents are more likely than Asian American and Hispanic parents to engage in traditional parental involvement activities like volunteering at school. Desimone (1999) hypothesizes that language barriers may prevent involvement at school. Race also predicts communication about school. Caucasian students report the highest level of communication about school and

Asian American students report the most talk about educational aspirations (Keith et al., 1998).

School Factors and Initiatives

A final strand of the research on home-school relationships examines school factors and initiatives that increase parent involvement at school. Most of this research offers school staff specific school-wide strategies for involving parents in the classroom and school (i.e., Baker, 2000). This literature emphasizes the importance of including families on a school-wide level through practices like fostering parent's role as decision makers (e.g., Hara & Burke, 1998).

Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler, & Brissie (1987) offer one example from this area of research. They used multiple regression to examine the factors that contribute to parent involvement and found that the most consistent factors in predicting parent outcomes were teacher efficacy and school socioeconomic status (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 1987). Instructional coordination between grades, principal perceptions of teacher efficacy, and parent tutoring at home also contributed significantly to parent involvement outcomes. This research suggests that school-level variables can play an important role in influencing the families of their students.

Paradoxes and Gaps

Although the field of home-school relationships is burgeoning, a number of paradoxes and gaps still exist within the literature. First, while home-school collaboration is intuitively appealing and a mainstay in educational policy, the phenomena is not well understood. For instance, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act specifies that school districts must earmark at least one percent of their

money for promoting parent involvement (Baker, 2000). Esler and colleagues (2002) also list many other federal education bills that devote funds to increasing parent involvement. Despite this recent interest and investment in parent involvement, the relationship between families and schools remains unclear (Christenson & Godber, 2001).

One factor that contributes to this lack of understanding is the plethora of atheoretical research devoted to helping schools facilitate the home-school relationship. Despite the lack of empirical support, respected researchers within school psychology and education are quick to present strategies to foster home-school collaboration. For example, Esler, Godber, and Christenson (2002) moved from a basic review of the literature directly into presenting strategies to improve the home-school relationship. While their strategies are congruent with best practices in education and psychology, they are not based on a solid psychological model. This could be related to the applied nature of the field of school psychology and the relative newness of this construct.

Another factor that contributes to this lack of clarity, and a second paradox within the field, is that despite years of study, researchers have yet to agree upon a clear mechanism by which home-school collaboration operates. Various authors within the field of school psychology have proposed plausible explanations for the relationship, yet none of these models has become the dominant paradigm.

Perhaps the most prominent theory is Epstein's (1995) model of home/school/community partnerships, which is based on the idea that families, schools, and communities exist in relationship to one another. Epstein presents six components of the relationship including parenting, communicating between the home and school,

family members volunteering at school, fostering learning at home, shared responsibility for decision making in the school, and collaborating with the community. Despite the fact that her model is widely cited, researchers continue to propose and examine other models (e.g., Swap, 1990).

Related to the second paradox about the lack of a theoretical model is the lack of empiricism in the field. While researchers have proposed models (e.g., Esler et al., 2002), rarely are they statistically validated. Grolnick and Slowiaczek (1994) present an exception to this trend in offering a three-component model of how parent involvement influences learning. Specifically, they examined a multidimensional conceptualization of parent involvement and hypothesized a model in which children's motivational resources (including perceived competence, control understanding, and self-regulation) mediated the relationship between parent involvement and academic performance. Three hundred and two eleven- through fourteen-year-olds and their parents and teachers in a predominantly Caucasian area participated in this study. Factor analysis validated their three-component model of parent involvement. The three components include: *behavior*, which includes involvement activities like volunteering at the school, *personal involvement*, or the parent valuing the school and providing the student with resources, and *cognitive/intellectual*, which involves the parent providing the child with cognitively stimulating activities.

In addition to presenting a three-component model, Grolnick and Slowiaczek's (1994) results suggested that children's motivational resources acted as a mediator in the relation between parent involvement and school performance. Specifically, maternal behavior and cognitive/intellectual support uniquely predicted perceived competence and

control understanding, which in turn predicted school performance. Based on the findings, the authors recommend that researchers use multi-dimensional indices of parent involvement in education and that scholars examine how parent involvement influences a variety of outcome measures. Despite this well-constructed and empirically sound research, Grolnick and Slowiaczek's model has not risen to the forefront of the field.

A fourth paradox within this field is that the lack of conceptual clarity has in no way hindered research on outcomes of the home-school relationship. As noted above, this literature demonstrates a moderate association between parent involvement and student grades (i.e., Fan & Chen, 2001; Keith et al., 1998). In addition, research on home-school collaboration also includes behavioral outcomes (Pettit et al., 1997; Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994). Again, this research has proceeded despite a lack of conceptual and empirical clarity.

Addressing the Gaps

The previous section highlights a number of incongruities in the field. The present study is designed to address some of these gaps within the literature. As noted in the previous section, much work remains to remediate these deficits.

First, a conceptually sound model of the home-school relationship must be empirically validated to link theory and research. As noted before, one model that deserves further study is Esler and her colleagues' (2002) model of home-school collaboration. Second, the field of home-school relationships needs to devote time and energy to understanding the underlying psychological mechanism and to specifying a psychological theory by which these relationships operate. Third, this field needs to

widen its lens beyond child outcomes to parent outcomes associated with the relationship. Finally, moderators of the newly specified home-school relationship should be examined.

Model of the Home-School Relationship

As noted earlier, Esler and her colleagues (2002) offer a comprehensive, appropriately focused, and testable theory of home-school relationship involving attitudes, relationships, and actions. This model of home-school collaboration has three main advantages including flexibility, dynamism, and an affective emphasis. Despite the many strengths of the model, two serious weaknesses exist. This model does not account for the psychological mechanism by which home-school collaboration influences families and it under-represents parent perceptions of the relationship.

As noted above, one advantage of the model is that the authors flexibly define involvement so that it does not require resources like time during the day and post-secondary education. Specifically, many models of the home-school relationship call for parents to participate at the school, serving on the PTA and volunteering in the classroom (e.g., Feuerstein, 2000). While these activities are obviously beneficial to students and help to establish relationships (e.g., Marcon, 1999), they are fraught with barriers for some families. For instance, in many homes, all of the adults work full time and cannot take time off during the day. However, research by Bempechat (1992) suggests that possessing fewer resources does not necessarily predict less educational support by parents (see also Scott-Jones, 1995).

The second strength is that the Esler et al. (2002) model is dynamic and responsive. Changes in any component can lead to improved connections between families and schools. For instance, the model suggests changes can result from actions

and attitudes as in the case of parents becoming involved in a parent-school team and changing their perceptions of their role in educating their children. Also, the model captures the fluid nature of the relationship. Rather than a hierarchical conceptualization with schools providing opportunities for at-school involvement and parents choosing whether or not to respond, this model emphasizes relationship building and attitudes as well as school- and parent-initiated actions.

Third, this model has a strong emphasis on the affective component of family-school relationships, which goes hand in hand with the reduced emphasis on parent actions requiring resources like time, money, and post-secondary education. Esler and colleagues (2002) note that valuing education coupled with communication, engagement in decision-making, and enhancing learning at home are vitally important and sufficient to benefit students. In stressing the affective nature of the model, Esler et al. also remove pressure and blame from parents who have less education or familiarity with formal education. Their model suggests that believing in the value of education, conveying that belief to children, and staying involved in the lives of children can make all the difference.

One major weakness of the Esler et al. (2002) model is that it does not specify a psychological mechanism by which the home-school relationship influences outcomes. The authors describe the necessary components and conditions, but do not present the specific internal processes that create change. Future work in this area should strive to explain how home-school collaboration influences families.

A second weakness resides in the attitudes component, which neglects parent attitudes towards the school. Parent perceptions and appraisals of their relationship with

the school are not presented in this *Best Practices in School Psychology* chapter on supporting home-school collaboration (Esler et al., 2002). While the chapter includes teacher perceptions of sharing responsibility for the developmental and learning outcomes of children and a framework for school psychologists to assess and develop constructive attitudes, it does not include parents beyond their ambiguous role as non-specific stakeholders. Further, the authors describe empowering parents and teachers to change their attitudes, yet they do not explicitly describe how to measure let alone change parent perceptions of the relationship. Future research should examine parent perceptions of actions, relationships, and attitudes that comprise the home-school relationship.

Social Support

As previously noted, one of the major challenges within the study of home-school interactions is the fact that a mechanism explaining the relationship has not been specified. Psychology offers a potential mechanism with the construct of social support.

Social Support: An Explanatory Mechanism for the Home-School Relationship

Although social support is a seemingly straightforward construct, a vast array of definitions exists within the literature. Defining social support in such a way as to include the myriad forms of support (e.g., one's social network, professionally-affiliated colleagues, and professional service providers) while still maintaining a coherent definition has proven to be very challenging.

For the purposes of this text, Cauce, Felner, and Primavera's 1982 summarization of Caplan's (1974) definition of social support will be used. Cauce and colleagues (1982) define social support as "the range of significant interpersonal relationships that have an impact on an individual's functioning" (p. 418). This umbrella definition

highlights essential human relational needs. This definition also suggests that social support plays an active role in functioning. However, one area where it falls short is in limiting relationships to interpersonal relationships between one or more individuals. This definition excludes support provided by organizations as a whole, such as churches, employers and schools (Demaray & Malecki, 2002; House, 1981). For this study, social support is hypothesized to flow from schools and school staff members to families and parents.

History of Social Support

Conceptual and methodological complexity within the field stems from the fact that this research arose from three very different bodies of knowledge (Sarason, Sarason, & Pierce, 1990). Areas of research that gave rise to social support include the stress and coping literature from within the medical field, research on sociology and community psychology, and the attachment literature. Briefly, stress and coping literature examined people who maintained mental health despite the presence of significant stressors (Folkman & Lazarus, 1980). Sociology and community psychology examined individuals' relationships with others and described the benefits of social connectedness. Finally, social support arose from John Bowlby's work on parenting and attachment.

Research on social support first emerged within the field of clinical medicine (Lazarus, 1980; Sarason et al., 1990). Within that literature, John Lazarus examined the impact of stress on veterans from World War II and the Korean War and noted that stress significantly impairs functioning in some contexts (Lazarus, 1966).

Folkman and Lazarus (1980) extended research on social support to community settings. In their study of middle-aged persons, Folkman and Lazarus found that both

problem- and emotion-focused coping are essential in stressful episodes. Problem-focused coping refers to "cognitive problem solving efforts and behavioral strategies for altering or managing the source of the problem" while emotion-focused coping refers to "cognitive and behavioral efforts directed at reducing or managing emotional distress" (p. 224-225). They also examined the characteristics of stressful situations and found that context and an individual's appraisal of the situation are the most important factors in coping.

Cassel (1976) too offered a medical perspective on social support. He used an epidemiological lens on stress and coping, emphasizing social relationships as a factor that increases protection against environmental disease agents (Cassel, 1976). Specifically, he noted that psychosocial processes could act as stressors or protective factors. In the same text, Cassel urged the medical community to turn its attention to individuals at risk due to poor fit within their social milieus.

Cobb (1976) also studied social support in a medical context, conceptualizing it as a factor that protected patients against negative outcomes in times of illness. He examined literature in which social support mediated the relationship between a disorder and a variety of outcomes rather than examining social support as a main effect (Cobb, 1976; Sarason et al., 1990). Cobb summarized research on a variety of conditions ranging from low birth weight and arthritis to depression and alcoholism. He noted a strong and persistent mediation effect with social support reducing the amount of medication required, accelerating recovery, and increasing compliance with prescribed regimens.

Sociology and community psychology also gave birth to the construct of social support (e.g., Auerbach & Kilmann, 1977). These related fields describe social support in terms of social connectedness and social webs. For instance, Auerbach and Kilmann reviewed how support relationships influenced psychiatric crisis interventions. They suggested that the field adopt a pre-surgery model with group and individual sessions of relaxation and support for these patients in crisis. Auerbach and Kilmann also noted that successful crisis intervention plans already include a coping or social component.

Whitcher and Fisher (1979) also studied the impact of nurse-initiated therapeutic or interpersonal touch in hospitals. In a controlled experiment, Whitcher and Fisher's research suggested that female patients experience positive "affective, behavioral, and physiological" reactions to the touch (p. 87). In particular, female patients reported less anxiety, were satisfied with pre-operative instruction, liked their nurses, read the preoperative literature, and reciprocated touch. Their vital statistics were also closer to normal than those of patients who did not experience touch. On the other hand, males demonstrated negative reactions to therapeutic touch. Based on their research, Whitcher and Fisher recommend that nurses make a concerted effort to use therapeutic touch with female patients. Overall, they suggest that support dramatically improves outcomes for female patients.

Social support also arose from attachment theory derived from Bowlby's (1969; 1980) work on the relations between infants and their mothers. His 1969 book introduced the biological and emotional components of social support. Initially, Bowlby viewed attachment from a psychoanalytical lens, describing the relationship between the mother and child in terms of needs and drives. Bowlby also presented a biological case

for attachment based on his studies of animal behavior. In his later iteration of attachment theory, Bowlby presented attachment as a normal, biologically-based, and developmentally-appropriate process based in cognitive psychology (1980). In his 1980 text, *Attachment and Loss*, Bowlby presents caregiving as "protecting the attached individual" (p. 40). He elaborates, stating that caregiving is behavior shown by an adult towards a child, or behavior "shown by one adult towards another, especially in times of ill health, stress, or old age" (p. 41). Although he does not label this caregiving behavior social support, the idea of one individual supporting another in times of stress is remarkably consistent with social support.

Theoretical and Conceptual Challenges Associated with Social Support

Various researchers have concluded that theoretical and historical openness creates conceptual and methodological challenges (Tardy, 1985; see also Cutrona & Russell, 1990, Sarason, et al., 1990; Thoits, 1982a). As suggested by the definition and history, the first problem plaguing the field is the lack of a clear definition or framework. Intuitively, the term social support suggests the sense of well-being people derive from their relationships with others. At its most basic level, social support does fit this definition. In particular, social support as emotional support is the well-being people derive from perceptions of others' regard for them (House, 1981; Thoits, 1982a). However, beyond this basic definition, social support becomes far more nebulous and fraught with conflict (Thoits, 1982a).

Theories of Social Support

As suggested by its diverse origins, social support has been conceptualized in many ways throughout its history. In order to bring conceptual clarity to the field and to

summarize a diverse literature, Tardy (1985) presented a five-component model of social support integrating the work of many scholars. His model includes direction, disposition, description and evaluation, content, and source.

As noted above, the first component hypothesized by Tardy (1985) is direction. Direction refers to whether an individual is giving or receiving social support. Direction also encompasses the idea that the relationship can be reciprocal or unidirectional. For instance, a counselor or clergy can be a source of support without receiving support from the relationship.

Disposition is the second component of social support; it includes both the availability and the utilization of support (Tardy, 1985). Specifically, availability refers to the quantity and quality of available support. Utilization refers to persons availing themselves of the available support.

Third, Tardy (1985) summarizes the description and evaluation of social support. Description refers to models of social support that describe existing support resources. Evaluation is a more abstract component and refers to individual's perceptions of support. It can also refer to satisfaction with levels of support (Demaray & Malecki, 2002).

The fourth component of social support is content (Tardy, 1985). Significant diversity exists within conceptualizations of the content of social support (e.g., Demaray & Malecki, 2002; Thoits, 1982a). For instance, Thoits (1982b) conceptualizes social support from an emotional perspective. Her measure taps into belonging, friendships, and membership in clubs or religious affiliation. House (1981) broadens the notion of social support, viewing it as extending into actions and information as well as

interpersonal relationships. The four components specified by House (1981) and presented by Tardy (1985) are emotional support, appraisal support, instrumental support and informational support. An extended presentation of these components follows below.

Fifth, research on social support includes its sources (Tardy, 1985). Tardy highlights family, close friends, neighbors, co-workers, community, and professionals as providers of support. Some researchers examine sources in terms of their presence in the lives of others, while other researchers are concerned with the characteristics of those who comprise the networks. This conceptualization leaves out the characteristics or qualities of organizations, such as schools, that provide support. Different sources of support provide different components based on their roles in the life of the person being supported (Cauce & Srebnik, 1990). Specifically, Cauce and Srebnik note that sources of support vary in terms of their intimacy and their relevance to daily life. For instance, schools often have little intimacy with families but high relevance for daily life. On the other hand, friends have both high intimacy and high levels of relevance to daily life.

Model of Social Support

In this study, social support will be conceptualized in terms of House's 1981 book, *Work Stress and Social Support*. Tardy's 1985 model subsumes the content of House's model, but Tardy advocates for assessing more dimensions of the construct. In order to focus much needed attention on the content of the social support provided by the schools to parents, this study largely disregards direction, disposition, description and evaluation, and sources of support.

According to House, emotional support is the most important component of social support. He notes that emotional support pervades intuitive and empirically supported definitions of social support. Also, House states that emotional support is the only wholly positive component whereas the other components can have negative implications. For instance, instrumental support can lead to excessive dependence (Cobb, 1976). While emotional support is most central to the construct, instrumental, appraisal, and informational support are also essential (House, 1981).

House (1981) defines instrumental support as "behaviors that directly help the person in need." Instrumental support is most clearly differentiated from emotional support by its emphasis on actions rather than affect or cognition. Examples of instrumental support include giving others time or goods. Specifically, providing parents with transportation to school conferences or a school providing a child with school supplies are examples of instrumental support.

Informational support is the provision of information that helps others "in coping with personal and environmental problems" (House, 1981, p. 25). House differentiates informational support from instrumental support by stating that informational support allows parents to help themselves (1981). Examples of informational support include notifying parents about low cost summer camps or providing them with job skills training. Another example is a school informing parents about how to foster early literacy skills in their young child.

The final component of social support is appraisal support. Appraisal support includes information about an individual or an individual's performance (House, 1981). Specifically, it provides persons with information for self-evaluation or social

comparison. One example is supervisors providing employees with feedback about their job performance (House, 1981). In a school system, this support could include schools elucidating their expectations of parents and telling them how important they are for education.

Although the four types of support are clearly separate, natural divisions exist between emotional and appraisal and information and instrumental support (Thoits, 1982a). Viewing social support in this way simplifies the content and produces a potentially more parsimonious model. Further, previous scholars have noted this dichotomy. First, Thoits (1982a) argued convincingly that social support can be aggregated into socioemotional aid and instrumental aid. Also, House (1981) noted that emotional and instrumental support have the most weight as separate constructs. Thus, in this study, social support is theorized to include emotional support (which includes appraisal support) and instrumental support (which includes informational support).

Mechanisms of Social Support

Scholars posit that social support acts in two ways to support the health and wellbeing of individuals (House, 1981). In particular, social support is thought to act as a main effect and to buffer the relation between stress and adjustment.

Social Support as a Main Effect

Social support directly influences levels of stress or adjustment (House, 1981). Specifically, it can directly decrease the amount of stress and social support can increase perceptions or measured levels of adjustment. In addition to influencing the affective component of the situation, social support can also act in the coping process, managing the problem that is causing the distress (Cutrona & Russell, 1990).

To illustrate social support as a main effect, consider the example of a family experiencing financial pressure due to job loss. Social support can lower stress related to financial insecurity. It can also increase adaptive feelings like hope or optimism about the future. Finally, social support can help someone secure a new job. In an ideal world, social support would serve all three functions.

Many groups of researchers have examined social support as a main effect (e.g., LaRocco, House, & French, 1980 and Wenz-Gross, Siperstein, Untch, & Widaman, 1997). For example, Wenz-Gross, Siperstein, Untch, and Widaman (1997) examined how support from family, other adults, and peers influences child outcomes. They found that family support contributes directly to academic self-concept and liking of school (Wenz-Gross et al., 1997). Peer support has more varied results. Specifically, problem-solving support decreases social self-concept while companionship significantly increases social self-concept (Wenz-Gross et al., 1997). These findings illustrate the direct role social support plays in the adjustment of students. These results also suggest that domain is important, and that support is more likely to play a role when the source and type of support are closely aligned with the outcome measure.

Dubow, Tisak, Causey, Hryshko, and Reid (1991) offer another example of the direct effects of social support on adjustment. They conducted a three-year study of third through fifth graders. Using multiple regression, they showed that initial social support influenced academic achievement and that initial family support predicted teacher-rated child competency (Dubow et al., 1991). Dubow and colleagues also ascertained that increases in social support predicted improvement in behavior problems, teacher-rated

competency, and grades. Overall, this study suggests that support from parents, teachers, and peers significantly affects adjustment.

Recent conceptualizations of social support have examined it as a protective factor for all students, regardless of the presence or absence of stress (i.e., Demaray & Malecki, 2002). This fits with the current positive psychology and resilience movement, which examines factors that promote health and wellbeing in all people. For instance, Demaray and Malecki (2002) studied third through twelfth graders and found relationships between perceived social support and positive outcomes including social skills, self-concept, and adaptive skills. In particular, significantly different results emerged for students with low, medium, and high levels of support (Demaray & Malecki, 2002).

Social Support as a Buffer

A vast majority of research examines social support as a buffer or mitigator of distress (e.g., Cobb, 1976, House, 1981, Thoits, 1982a). This theory emerged from research suggesting that certain people were less affected by numerous life changes than others with similar patterns of stressors (Thoits, 1982a). Buffering relationships are hypothesized to occur when the relationship between an independent and dependent variables differs in the presence of a third variable. In particular, "a moderator interacts with a predictor variable in such a way as to have an impact on the level of a dependent variable" (Holmbeck, 1997, p. 599). This type of relationship is also known as moderation.

Most often, the relationship between a stressor and an adjustment outcome is examined with social support as the moderator. For example, House (1981) stated that

the harmful impact of stress on health is reduced as social support increases. He hypothesized that support has the greatest effect for people under stress and little to no effect in the absence of stress. As Cohen and Wills (1985) suggested, an interaction between stress and social support is hypothesized such that the high levels of social support moderate the negative effects of stress on adjustment.

Many studies examine social support as a buffer (e.g., Cobb, 1976; LaRocco, House, & French, 1980; Thoits, 1982a). Cobb initially posited this model. He examined social support in the medical literature, noting that social support acts as a protective factor against a variety of pathological states ranging from low birth weight to psychiatric illness. Cobb intentionally omitted studies examining social support as a main effect in his review of the state of the field.

LaRocco, House, and French (1980) examined social support as a buffer in the relationship between occupational stress and health. In a study of 636 men, they found that the relationship between the perceived job stresses (e.g., role conflict and future ambiguity) and the outcomes of depression, irritation and somatic complaints was strongly buffered by social support. Only in the outcome measure of anxiety did social support not act as a buffer. In addition, the relationship between the job-related strains of job dissatisfaction, boredom, and workload dissatisfaction and the health variables also revealed the buffering effects of social support.

Social Support Provided by the Schools Influences Family – School Relationships

As previously noted, the relationship between families and schools remains unclear within research on education and school psychology (i.e., Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994; Esler et al., 2002). Psychological theory, particularly the rich theory

sustaining the construct of social support, has the potential to elucidate this murky interaction. In particular, literature suggests that social support might be one mechanism explaining the relationship between homes and schools, and second, that this relationship has the potential to influence parent outcomes.

Three ideas from the social support literature suggest that school-provided support might influence family-school relationships. Specifically, LaRocco, House and French (1980) posit that specific types of stress or strain (e.g., parent stress with school) are likely to be affected by a limited set of closely related sources of support. Second, House (1981) opines that informal and non-professional forms of social support are important and perhaps even more important than formal sources of support. Third, Vaux (1988) found that social support provided by the schools influences child outcomes. Given this link, it is possible that social support also has the potential to influence family outcomes.

First, LaRocco, House and French (1980) offer a specificity of domain theory in social support. They hypothesize that specific types of stress are more likely to be reduced by a limited set of closely related resources. LaRocco, House and French extend this argument to suggest that both proximal stressors and proximal sources of support affect outcomes. Taken further, this could suggest parent stress about school would be reduced by social support that ameliorates school-related stressors.

LaRocco, House, and French's specificity of domain theory is indirectly supported by research and theory from Dubow, Tisak, Causey, Hryshko, and Reid (1991). Dubow and colleagues (1991) assert that schools and school personnel offer up specific types of support related to school. In particular, they note, "Teachers may be more often viewed as providers of informational and tangible support specific to school-

related concerns"(p. 585). Taken to its logical conclusion, this research suggests that support in the school domain will impact school-related outcomes.

The specificity of domain theory is also supported by Cutrona and Russell's (1990) theory of optimal matching. They hypothesize that desirability, controllability, duration of consequences, and life domain necessitate certain kinds of social support. Concerning desirability, Cutrona and Russell note that desirable events like a job change are associated with anxiety while undesirable events produce depression; further, more social support is necessary to cope with undesirable events. Second, controllable events, like moving, need instrumental support while uncontrollable events like a divorce or the transition to high school require emotional support. Third, duration influences matching; longer-term events require more long-term and tangible support. Finally, the domain affects what type of support is most necessary. Although Cutrona and Russell do not explicitly address schools, their theory can be extended to this area in suggesting that school-related support most influences school-related outcomes.

In summary, optimal matching theory suggests that certain types of social support are more important in the presence of certain specific stressors and that social support is most effective when matched by domain or by individual need. Extending this theory to the schools, I propose that the social support provided by the schools will influence parents' relationship with the schools.

House (1981) offers a second avenue of connection between family-school relationships and social support. In *Work Stress and Social Support*, he suggests that informal and non-professional forms of social support are important and perhaps even more important than formal sources of support. House offers three arguments to support

this assertion. First, House notes that when surveyed, people spontaneously list informal sources of support like family and friends over more formal sources like physicians, clergy or psychologists.

A second rationale for studying informal sources of support is that they are most consistent with a prevention focus (House, 1981). If friends, families, and schools offer adequate amounts of support, then outside providers like welfare services or social workers may not be necessary. House notes that relatively small expenditures of resources can pay off enormous dividends in terms of healthier group processes and by extension, families. In a school setting, improved social support could prevent parents from needing the support of community mental health or similar providers.

Third, House (1981) reports that informal sources of support can be very effective in reducing stress, improving health, and buffering the impact of stress on health. He hypothesizes that informal sources of support may be effective for two reasons. First, informal support may come with more equality, which makes it more palatable to the recipient. Second, informal support tends to be spontaneous rather than planned, which makes it seem more genuine and thus potentially more effective.

Overall, House (1981) argues that social support from colleagues and supervisors at work reduces stress, prevents health problems and helps people to adapt to stresses at work. Since schools are in a position to fulfill some of the same roles, they should be examined as a potential source of social support for parents. In addition, House's theory suggests that perhaps schools should strive to foster equality and spontaneity in the support they provide.

A third reason social support provided by the schools might explain the home-school relationship and influence parent outcomes is the socialization role schools play in the lives of children (Demaray & Malecki, 2002; Scott-Jones, 1995). Specifically, school policies and practices influence the social lives of children and it follows that the families of students might also be affected by their interaction with the school (Vaux, 1988).

As Vaux (1988) notes, "School policies often influence the social relationships of youth (p. 267)." Specifically, Vaux addresses how school policies influence child outcomes like independence and social integration. He notes that schools also "shape social networks and opportunities for social support (p. 268)." While Vaux argues convincingly that schools influence the lives of children, he neglects to mention how school practices and policies could affect parents. He examines the direct effect of school on children and work on adults, but neglects the more proximal component of how contact with the schools influences families. This is problematic because parent outcomes are more proximal to the home-school relationship than the more distal outcome variable of child adjustment (Dubow, Tisak, Causey, Hryshko, & Reid, 1991).

Broadening the Lens to Include Family Outcomes

As previously noted, one of the paradoxes within the field is that research on the home-school relationship has focused almost exclusively on child outcomes despite the fact that children comprise only one part of the equation. The home-school relationship also affects parents. In fact, parents are more central to the relationship than any other party, which suggests that parent perceptions of the relationship and parent-related outcomes should be examined. Although a few scholars have examined parent

perceptions of the school and parent outcomes (e.g., Goldring & Shapira, 1993; Griffith, 1997), these studies do not paint a complete picture of the home-school relationship.

Existing literature begins to explain outcomes of the home-school relationship but clearly more work remains. Most current research on parent outcomes related to school is housed under parents' satisfaction with schools resulting from school choice (e.g., Goldring & Shapira, 1993; Hausman & Goldring, 2000). In one study of school choice in Israel, Goldring and Shapira (1993) examined parent satisfaction with schools of choice in terms of eight areas including academic, social, and educational philosophy. In order, the factors that are most highly associated with parent satisfaction are parent involvement with the school, compatibility with expectations, parent empowerment, and parent education level. Their results also suggest that socioeconomic status is an important factor in this relationship.

James Griffith (e.g., 1997; 1998; 2000) also examines parent outcomes pertaining to their children's schools. Specifically, he used regression analyses to examine the predictive power of student and parent perceptions of the school (including things like instruction and climate) on student and parent outcomes including involvement and satisfaction (Griffith, 2000). In his study of one hundred and twenty-two elementary schools, his results indicated, "consensus among student and parent perceptions regarding the school environment was significantly and positively correlated with their evaluation of the school environment" (2000, p. 35). Based on the findings, Griffith recommends that researchers evaluate consensus between students and parents in order to influence parent outcomes. He also suggests that education researchers turn to the social psychology literature for support in establishing a supportive and warm school climate.

Testing a Conceptual Model of the Home-School Relationship

As noted earlier, Esler et al. (2002) created a model of home-school relationship with attitudes, relationships, and actions. While the actions component, or parent involvement as traditionally defined, has been well studied and is well-understood, family attitudinal and relational outcomes have been largely ignored. This gap poses a problem because the Esler model and other literature on home-school relationships indicate that attitudinal and relational outcomes are as important as actions.

Attitudinal and relational outcomes, while largely neglected, are crucial components of the home-school relationship and will be elucidated further below. In particular, the *attitudes* component will be represented by parent satisfaction with school, parents' appraisal of their child's school and their relationship with the school. The *relationship* component of the model will be assessed through parent trust of the school. *Actions* will be defined according to traditional definitions of parent involvement and will thus be measured as parent activities that support learning.

Family Satisfaction with School: Attitudes

Family satisfaction with school is a family's affective appraisal of their child's school life and experiences. It includes relationships with teachers and other staff members as well as a family's sense of the quality of their child's educational experiences (Griffith, 2000).

Family satisfaction with schools has been conceptualized and measured in a number of ways. For instance, Hausman and Goldring (2000) ask parents to assign their schools a letter grade ranging from A for highly satisfied to F for highly dissatisfied. James Griffith (2000) conceptualizes parent satisfaction with school in terms of four

components including the child's attitude towards learning, the quality of education, and "whether the parent would recommend the school to others" (p. 57). Goldring and Shapira (1993) offer a more wide-ranging definition of parent satisfaction centered around satisfaction in particular domains including academic and the general school atmosphere.

Little research examining family satisfaction with school exists and researchers tend to create and use their own measures of the construct. For instance, Goldring and Shapira (1993) examined the impact of education level, trust, congruence with expectations, and involvement on parent satisfaction with schools in Israel. Parent satisfaction was assessed using a new, eight-item, 4-point Likert-type scale that included academic, social, citizenship, general school atmosphere, values, educational philosophy, developing individual potential, and the curriculum. Three hundred and thirty-seven parents from four schools in Israel participated in the study. Results showed that together education, trust, congruence with expectations, and involvement accounted for 20 percent of the variance in parent satisfaction. Specifically, education level was negatively associated with satisfaction, while the other three variables are positively associated with satisfaction. Further, the researchers separated the sample by education and found that for parents with less education, involvement is the only variable that significantly predicts satisfaction. For more highly educated parents, compatibility, empowerment, and involvement were significantly associated with satisfaction. Based on these findings, Goldring and Shapira suggest that compatibility with their expectations is the most important factor in determining parent satisfaction, followed by empowerment and involvement. This relationship varies by SES with more wealthy parents experiencing

less satisfaction. This study aside, the construct of parent satisfaction with school has not been widely examined within the literature.

Parent Trust: Relationships

Parent trust is a new construct within the home-school collaboration literature. It has been examined as a process that facilitates collaboration (e.g., Godber & Christenson, 1999), as an outcome of the school climate (e.g., Soodak & Erwin, 2000), but not as an outcome of the relationship between families and schools. For this study, parent trust will be defined according to Adams and Christenson's 2000 study as "confidence that another person will act in a way to benefit or sustain the relationship, or the implicit or explicit goals of the relationship, to achieve positive outcomes for students" (p. 480). Adams and Christenson cite Rempel, Holmes, & Zanna's (1985) study in defining trust as a progression from predictability to dependability to faith between the two parties.

Smith, Atkins, and Connell (2003) examined how parent and child trust of teachers related to academic outcomes for African American children. Smith and colleagues defined parent trust solely in terms of racial-ethnic attitudes. Specifically, their two trust items for parents were summarized as "Trust friends of other races" and "Trust other races" (p. 166). This survey of 98 parents of fourth graders revealed that parent attitudes significantly affect child racial-ethnic attitudes and achievement. Path analysis results indicated that parent education was significantly related to child achievement and that racial-ethnic pride was related though not significantly. Overall, this study suggested that parent, child, and teacher trust influences child outcomes and deserves further study.

The best example of research on parent trust comes from Adams and Christenson (2000). They examine parent trust as a condition that contributes to collaboration. In their study, they described trust in elementary, middle, and high school students, examined factors that contribute to trust, studied whether amount of trust is mediated by the amount of contact between families and schools or by demographic information, and examined whether parental trust is related to child academic outcomes.

Adams and Christenson used surveys from 1,234 parents and 209 teachers in a predominantly Caucasian area to examine this phenomenon. Their data indicated that parent trust of the school is highest in elementary school and that parent trust of teachers is significantly higher than teacher trust of parents in both elementary and high school. Further, using an open-ended question, Adams and Christenson (2000) found that improving communication was recommended by both parents and teachers to improve levels of trust. The authors also noted that perceived quality of the relationship was a better predictor of trust than demographic information or level of contact. Finally, parent trust was significantly related to high school credits earned per year, GPA, and attendance, but not to standardized achievement test scores for younger students.

Parent Involvement: Actions

Since attitudes and relationships are explicitly addressed by the other two outcome measures, the actions component will be defined somewhat narrowly as traditional, parent-initiated involvement activities (Kohl et al., 2000). Grolnick and Slowiaczek (1994) define parent involvement as "the dedication of resources by the parent to the child within a given domain" (p. 238). This broad definition encompasses

parent personal, cognitive/intellectual actions and behaviors. This portion of the text will focus only on the behaviors component of their measure.

Grolnick and Slowiaczek (1994) define parent actions in terms of observable behaviors. To assess parent behaviors, they created a scale assessing school-related actions including attending parent-teacher conferences, open houses, and school activities. Their measure also asked if parents had met teachers. Grolnick and Slowiaczek hypothesized that parent behavior directly influenced child motivational variables including self-regulation, perceived competence, and control understanding and that parent behavior indirectly influenced school grades. Mother behavior was found to directly influence perceived competence, control understanding, and school grades. In short, parent actions were found to significantly influence child outcomes directly and indirectly through child motivational factors.

Research suggests that parent involvement with the schools has an appreciable effect on the academic lives of children. In particular, Marcon (1999) examined the relationship between parent involvement and the development and academic performance of inner-city preschoolers. She used analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) to examine how level of involvement and type of involvement relate to adaptive behavior, as measured by the Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scales, and academic performance, assessed through the district's Early Childhood Progress Report. Marcon's results indicated that increased and more active involvement was significantly associated with improved development and academics, particularly for preschool boys. Overall, Marcon's study suggests that parent involvement plays a large role in development and that special efforts should target the parents of preschool boys.

In summary, three parent outcomes corresponding with the three components of the Esler model (2002) will be examined. First, parent satisfaction with schools will represent the attitudes component of the model. Also, parent trust, which represents the relationship part of the Esler model will be included. Finally, parent involvement activities, which correspond with actions, will be defined somewhat narrowly as parent-initiated involvement activities focused on their children's school (Kohl, Lengua, & McMahon, 2000). Together, these three measures cover a broad spectrum of parent outcomes and also tie the current study in the with Esler model of family-school relationships.

Moderation: Introduction and Specific Moderators

Home-school and social support research suggests that family demographic information significantly affects the nature of the relationship between the home and the school (e.g., Malecki & Demaray, 2002; Desimone, 1999; Marcon, 1999). Specifically, research suggests that student age, parent race/ethnicity and educational attainment, and school location influences the relationship between home-school collaboration and parent outcomes through the mechanism of social support. Specific moderators will be presented below.

Child Grade Level

Child grade level affects the relation between home-school collaboration and parent outcomes. Specifically, home-school collaboration literature suggests that parent involvement plays a smaller role as children progress through school, while literature on social support tells a more complex story about it's influence as students progress through school.

First, research by Izzo, Weissberg, Kasprow, and Fendrich (1999) suggests that parent involvement declines as students move from kindergarten through third grade. The authors examined teacher perceptions of parent involvement for 1,205 children in lower elementary school for three consecutive years. Parent involvement was defined as parent-teacher contact, the parent-teacher relationship, and participation in activities at home and school. Study results showed that number of parent-teacher contacts, parent participation at school, and parent participation at home declined significantly over three years. Despite the decline, results indicated that involvement accounted for a significant amount of variance in year three educational performance, even after controlling for initial performance level (Izzo et al., 1999). Further, the researchers found that parent involvement was correlated with student social and academic functioning. Based on their findings, Izzo et al. suggest that attention be devoted to fostering learning at home because it predicts the widest range of student outcomes.

Cauce, Felner and Primavera (1982) also studied how social support varies by child grade. Specifically, they examined social support in high-risk adolescents, teasing apart the relationship between the structural components of support (family, formal, and informal support) and the outcomes of academic adjustment and self-concept. Two hundred and fifty ninth and eleventh graders in the Northeast participated in this study. Results showed differences in the perceived helpfulness of the support dimensions as a function of age, sex, and ethnic background, as well as in the relationship of each source of support and the adjustment indices. In particular, sources of informal support did not vary by age. Further, for family support, a sex by age interaction was found with younger males viewing their families as more helpful than older males while older

females rated their families as more helpful than younger females. In terms of formal support, older adolescents had significantly higher levels of social support than younger adolescents. Also, older Hispanic adolescents viewed formal supports as more helpful than younger Hispanic individuals. Based on the findings, the authors recommend that researchers use multi-dimensional indices of social support and that researchers further examine how social support varies by race, age, and gender (Cauce et al., 1982).

Taken together, research on child grade level suggests that it plays a varied role in the lives of students and families. Since the literature does not paint a clear picture, I intend to base my hypotheses pertaining to grade level on literature on parent involvement, which suggests that parents have more influence on the lives of younger children than older children. Thus, I hypothesize that the relationship between the home and school will have a greater effect on parent outcomes for children in lower elementary grades (kindergarten through second grade) than for children in upper elementary school.

Family Race/Ethnicity

A second variable that has the potential to moderate the relationship between home-school collaboration and parent outcomes is family race or ethnicity. As previously noted, ample research suggests that parent involvement varies by the race and ethnicity of families (e.g., Desimone, 1999) and that child academic achievement varies by ethnicity (Anderson & Keith, 1997; Desimone, 1999). Thus, the relationship between home-school collaboration and parent outcomes will be examined separately by family race and ethnicity.

For instance, Slaughter and Epps (1987) reviewed a number of qualitative and survey research studies on the educational attainment of African American students and

found that few studies examine class, race and ethnicity. Further, they found that African American parents affect their children's academic achievement directly through learning experiences at home and, "indirectly by their impact on the schools their children attend" (p. 18). In addition, Slaughter and Epps described the pressing need for more research on the unique processes that contribute to education for African American children.

In addition, Desimone (1999) suggests that family race affects the relationship between parent involvement and student achievement. Specifically, Desimone examined two hypotheses related to parent involvement and child achievement. First, she hypothesized that parent involvement explains more variance in achievement for White, Black, and Hispanic students than for Asian students. She also hypothesized that the parent-school relationships are more strongly related to the achievement of Black and Hispanic students than Asian or White students. Her results show that her model was a better predictor for White and Asian students than for Hispanic and Black students. In addition, her results suggest that parent involvement explains considerably less achievement for Asian students than for White, Hispanic and Black students.

Finally, Demaray and Malecki (2002) showed that social support also varies by student race. In particular, they examined child perceptions of overall social support and support from a parent, teacher, classmate, and close friend. Their study suggests that Native American students report significantly less overall social support than children from other racial and ethnic groups. In addition, Native American students report significantly less parent, teacher and classmate support than their White, African American, and Hispanic peers. Also, African American students report significantly higher parent and teacher support than White students. White students perceive

significantly greater teacher support than Hispanic students and significantly greater close friend support than Native American students. Together, this data suggests that student perceptions of social support vary dramatically by race and that these relationships should be examined separately by race.

Overall, these data lead to a number of hypotheses. First, I hypothesize that for African American, Hispanic and Asian parents, both types of school-provided social support will have a larger effect on parent outcomes than for Caucasian parents. Further, for African American, Hispanic, and Asian parents, I believe that instrumental support will play a larger role than emotional support in parent outcomes. Further, because of their close identification with the school culture, I believe that emotional support provided by the schools will have a greater effect than instrumental support on outcomes for Caucasian parents.

Parent Education Level

A third potential moderator in the relationship between home-school collaboration and parent outcomes is family education level, which will be assessed by asking parents to report their highest level of educational attainment. Ample research within the study of the home-school relationship suggests that parents with lower levels of education tend to be less involved than parents with more education.

Within the research on collaboration, a precedent exists for using education level as an indicator of parental disadvantage. In particular, Kohl, Lengua, and McMahon (2000) define parental risk using parent demographic variables including mother and father's educational level, maternal depression, and single-parent status. In a sample of Caucasian and African American participants, they found that all three components of

parent risk level were significantly related to the six dimensions of parental involvement (Kohl et al., 2000). In particular, parent education was related to parent-teacher contact, parent involvement in school, teacher perceptions of the parents' valuing of education, and parent involvement at home. Based on their findings, they suggest that researchers further examine school-based opportunities for involvement and that teacher attitudes be considered in future studies of involvement.

Marcon (1999) also examines how the home-school relationship affects development for children whose parents are lesser educated. Using an inner-city preschool sample with high levels of parental disadvantage and low educational attainment, Marcon found that a higher level of school involvement and more active types of involvement (like volunteering in the classroom and attending school events) are associated with more positive development and better academic achievement for students. Specifically, she found that this sample of preschoolers at high risk due to reduced SES was greatly influenced by parent involvement activities, even if the activities were school-initiated or mandated. This study suggests that the relationship between the home and school are strongly related to child outcomes for a high-risk population. Marcon cautions that as this study is correlational, determining the direction of influence between the parent involvement and child outcomes is impossible.

Third, Pettit, Bates, and Dodge (1997) examined whether early supportive parenting buffers the impact of early family adversity on children by the time they reach middle school. Their adversity variable included socioeconomic disadvantage (parent occupation and education level), family stress, and single parenthood. Pettit et al. (1997) found that "high levels of SP (supportive parenting) mitigated the effects of family

adversity on later behavior problems" (p. 908). Overall, this study suggests that family adversity, including parent education level, definitely affects child outcomes.

Based on the research noted above, I hypothesize that parents with a low level of educational attainment will benefit more from instrumental and emotional support than parents with more education. Also, I believe that instrumental support will account for more variance than emotional support. Conversely, I anticipate that parents with higher educational attainment will benefit more from school-provided emotional support than from instrumental support.

School Location

A final variable that has the potential to influence the relationship between home-school collaboration and parent outcomes is school location. In particular, location refers to geographic descriptors of a region like urban, rural, and suburban. For the purposes of this study, location will be measured at the school-wide level, and based on school neighborhood.

According to Eccles and Harold (1993), family neighborhood incorporates a variety of factors including neighborhood cohesion, social support, opportunity structures, norms, dangers, social controls, and role models that all influence parent and teacher beliefs and practices (p. 571). One challenge with location as a variable is that it could be confounded by related factors such as family race or educational attainment. However, the potential benefits of examining location effects on home-school relationships and parent outcomes are too great to pass up. Writing from a risk and resilience perspective, Masten, Best, and Garmezy (1990) note that certain ecological niches provide clear evidence of "cumulative risk" (p. 426). They note that these risks

co-occur and potentially increase an individuals' risk level exponentially (Masten et al., 1990). In particular, Masten and her colleagues point to differences between families from low-risk, middle class neighborhoods and families from high-risk, urban neighborhoods. Based on their review of the literature, they conclude that context always matters in development and that contexts can foster development strengths like interpersonal competence and good problem-solving skills. In addition, Masten, Best, and Garmezy note that schools can mitigate the effects of stressful contexts and can provide additional support for individual students by modeling problem-solving and teaching students how to interact appropriately with the world around them.

Thompson (2002) directly examines how school location and neighborhood disadvantage influences child outcomes in inner city Detroit. His measure of neighborhood disadvantage included amount of rent, age of neighborhood houses, house occupancy, and family income. His results indicated that neighborhoods could be grouped into low, moderate, and high levels of environmental stress (Thompson, 2002). The inclusion of neighborhood stress resulted in a three percent increase in the prediction of child achievement for the sixth graders in his study. Thompson argues that despite the small increase, neighborhood is an important factor for children and that perhaps different outcome measures would reveal a larger effect.

Research on family location suggests that it makes a difference, particularly when the context is negative. Thus, I believe that family location will influence which types of support account for the most variance in parent outcomes. In particular, I believe that instrumental support will account for the most variance for parents living in urban areas, and less for parents from rural and suburban areas. Further, I hypothesize that

instrumental support will account for somewhat less variance for parents from rural areas than urban areas. I believe that parents in suburban areas will benefit least from instrumental support. On the other hand, I believe that emotional support will account for the most variance for parents living in suburban areas. Also, I believe that emotional support will account for slightly less variance for parents living in rural areas than suburban areas. Finally, I hypothesize that emotional support will account for the least variance for parents living in urban areas.

Summary of the Literature Review

As shown by the preceding review of the literature on the home-school relationship, this field is marked by theoretical and empirical confusion and by subsequent gaps within the body of knowledge.

The first gap within the literature is the dearth of empirically supported theories of the home school relationship. As noted above, many scholars have explored this phenomena, studying parent involvement as a protective factor, outcomes associated with home-school collaboration, demographic factors that lead to involvement, and how schools can foster a closer relationship with families. Despite all of this knowledge, few researchers have offered a comprehensive theory of the home-school relationship with the notable exceptions of Epstein (1995), Scott-Jones (1995), and Esler, Godber and Christenson (2002). In order to address this gap within the literature, the model proposed by Esler et al. with actions, relationships, and attitudes will be adopted and examined through a close study of parent outcomes corresponding with attitudes (parent satisfaction with school), relationships (parent trust), and actions (parent involvement activities).

A second gap within the literature and one related to the theoretical tangle is the fact that research has not specified a psychological mechanism by which the home-school relationship influences family outcomes. One potential mechanism with considerable support within the psychological literature is social support. In this study, emotional and instrumental forms of social support are the predictor variables and are hypothesized to influence family outcomes.

A third gap within the literature on home-school relationships is that child academic outcomes have been studied almost exclusively. This poses a problem for two reasons. First, because families are proximal to this relationship, the lens should be broadened to examine how they are affected by their interactions with schools. Second, while academic outcomes are important, they only capture one facet of education. The Esler et al. (2002) model suggests that relationships, attitudes, and actions should be considered as well. Thus, this study examines parent outcomes including parent trust of schools, parent satisfaction with school, and parent school-oriented activities.

A final gap within the literature is that factors changing the nature of this relationship including child grade, parent race, parent educational attainment, and school location have not been examined in regards to parent outcomes. Research indicates that these variables have the potential to change the relationship between home-school collaboration and family outcomes. Thus, the relationship between home-school collaboration and parent outcomes will be examined separately for the parents of children in kindergarten through second grade and in third through fifth grade. Further, the relationship will be examined separately for African-American, Caucasian, Asian and Hispanic parents. In addition, the relationship will be separated for families with low and

high levels of educational attainment. Finally, the home-school relationship will be examined separately for parents of children in urban, suburban, and rural schools.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

After reviewing the available literature, a number of research questions and hypotheses have emerged. The first question addresses the relationship between home-school collaboration and parent outcomes. Which type of school-provided social support (emotional or instrumental) accounts for the most variance in parent satisfaction with school, sense of trust, and parent involvement activities? The rest of the questions pertain to potential moderating variables. How does child grade influence the relationship between home-school collaboration and parent outcomes? Next, does the relationship between home-school collaboration and parent outcomes differ for Caucasian, African American, Hispanic and Asian parents? Fourth, how does parent educational attainment influence the relationship between home-school collaboration and parent outcomes? Finally, does the relationship between home-school collaboration and parent outcomes vary by school location? Specific questions and hypotheses follow below.

Question One: Does emotional or instrumental support account for more variance in parent satisfaction, sense of trust, and parent involvement activities?

I hypothesize that emotional support will account for significantly more variance in parent satisfaction with school, parent trust, and involvement than instrumental support.

Question Two: How does child grade influence the relationship between home-school collaboration and parent outcomes?

I hypothesize that the relationship between parent perceptions of school-provided social support and all parent outcomes will change as a function of child grade. In particular, I believe that both types of support will have a greater effect on parent outcomes for children in kindergarten through second grade and a lesser effect on parent outcomes for children in grades three through five. Stated another way, the parents of early elementary students will experience more benefit from social support than parents of upper elementary students.

Question Three: Does the relationship between home-school collaboration and parent outcomes differ for Caucasian, African American, Hispanic, and Asian parents?

I believe that parent race causes the relationship between social support and parent outcomes to change. I hypothesize that for African American, Hispanic and Asian parents, both types of support will account for more variance in parent outcomes than for Caucasian parents. Further, I believe that instrumental support will play a larger role than emotional support in parent outcomes for these parents. In addition, I hypothesize that because of their close identification with the school culture, emotional support provided by the schools will have a greater effect on parent outcomes than instrumental support for Caucasian parents.

Question Four: How does parent education influence the relationship between home-school collaboration and parent outcomes?

I hypothesize that parent educational attainment will cause the relationship between parent perceptions of school-provided social support and parent outcomes to

change. In particular, I hypothesize that parents with less education will benefit more from both types of support than parents with more education. Also, I believe that instrumental support will account for more variance than emotional support for parents with less education. Conversely, I anticipate that parents with more education will benefit more from school-provided emotional support than from instrumental support.

Question Five: Does the relationship between home-school collaboration and parent outcomes vary by school location?

Finally, I hypothesize that the relationship between school-provided social support and parent outcomes will change as a function of school location. In particular, I believe that instrumental support will account for the most variance for parents living in urban areas, and less for parents from rural and suburban areas. Further, I hypothesize that instrumental support will account for somewhat less variance for parents from rural areas than urban areas. I believe that parents in suburban areas will benefit least from instrumental support. On the other hand, I believe that emotional support will account for the most variance for parents living in suburban areas. Also, I believe that emotional support will account for slightly less variance for parents living in rural areas than suburban areas. Finally, I hypothesize that emotional support will account for the least variance for parents living in urban areas.

Chapter Three: Methodology

This chapter presents the methods used in carrying out the study, giving special emphasis to the recruitment of participants, data collection, and measure selection. In particular, the research contexts will be presented, followed by an introduction to the parent participants. Following that, the procedures used in data collection will be elucidated, followed by the study measures.

The General Perspective

This study examines how the home-school relationship affects parents and how that relationship differs by child grade, parent race and ethnicity, parent education level, and school location. In particular, the purpose of the study is to generalize information about the perceptions of parents in this sample to the larger population of parents in Mid-Michigan (Babbie, 1990).

Data was collected using survey methodology. This method was selected for a variety of reasons. First, anonymous surveys allowed parents to respond candidly about their perceptions of the schools. Also, families were able to complete the surveys at their convenience, which potentially increased response rates. Third, survey methodology is a cost-effective form of research befitting the researcher's limited funds for data collection (Creswell, 2003). Also, this method allowed for relatively rapid turnaround in data collection (Creswell, 2003).

Survey methodology was also appropriate because parent perceptions of social support were the focus of this study rather than the actual enactment of social support (Tardy, 1985). Since social support is a phenomenological construct, participant perceptions are the only way to capture this occurrence.

Various researchers have argued that perceptions of support are important and perhaps even more important than the enactment of support. First, Thoits (1982a) argued that research on social support should focus on the *functional* or perceived amount and adequacy of the support from one's network. Tardy (1985) also argued that disposition or availability of support is important separate from its enactment. Disposition refers to the "quantity or quality of support to which people have access" while enactment refers to "the actual utilization of those support resources" (p. 188). Third, Demaray and Malecki (2002) suggest that participant appraisals of support are as important as enactment. Specifically, they ask participants to rate the amount and types of support as well as its importance to them in their measure of perceived social support. This suggests that participant perceptions are highly important in the lives of individuals. In sum, survey methods are justified in this study for theoretical as well as pragmatic reasons and participant perceptions are an important part of the research on social support.

The study was comprised of a cross-sectional survey. All of the data collected during a two-month period to ensure that the home-school relationship was at a similar point in each school. Cross-sectional research allowed the researcher to capture a snapshot of the home-school relationship at that point in time.

Research Context

The principals of three public elementary schools in mid-Michigan were contacted regarding data collection. The principals agreed to participate and to oversee data collection and the distribution of materials. Please see Table One for the demographic information on the participating schools and Michigan averages.

Table 1

Demographic Information for Participating Schools

School	Grades	Students	Lunch Status*	Racial Profile	Achievement **
School A	K-4	387	13%	91% Caucasian 4% African-Am. 3% Hispanic 2% Asian 1% Native Am.	Math: 60% Reading: 80% Writing: 31%
School B	2-5	383	13%	84% Caucasian 5% African Am. 5% Asian 4% Hispanic 1% Native Am.	Math: 73% Reading: 86% Writing: 55%
School C	K-5	205	90%	39% African Am. 33% Hispanic 21% Caucasian 3% Asian 3% Native Am.	Math: 44% Reading: 48% Writing: 16%
Michigan Average	K-5		36%	74% Caucasian 18% African Am. 5% Hispanic 2% Asian 2% Native Am.	Math: 65% Reading: 73% Writing: 47%

*Lunch Status: percentage of students who receive a free or reduced-cost lunch.

**Achievement Data: percentage of fourth graders who meet or exceed state achievement standards (2003)

Research Participants

Parents are the unit of analysis in this study because I am interested in how parent perceptions of the home-school relationship influence parent outcomes rather than school practices for improving the relationship. Since parents are the most proximal part of this relationship, they are the most logical source of data. Further, as previously noted, parent outcomes have largely been ignored within the literature on the home-school relationship.

In order to attain a 95% confidence interval, an alpha level of .05, a power level of .80, and the ability to detect a small effect size of .25, I attempted to recruit at least 199 parents (Howell, 2002). Potential sample sizes range from 199 (the most liberal) to 346 if I wanted a more conservative sample size and a greater ability to detect true significant differences.

Two hundred and fifty parents returned surveys and consent. One hundred and twenty one parents from school A, 73 parents from school B, and 56 parents from school C participated. 83.1% of the responding parents were mothers. Most parents who returned surveys were Caucasian although parents from a range of racial and ethnic groups also participated. In particular, 73.7% (n = 182) of the sample was Caucasian, 10.2% (n = 26) was Hispanic, 7.1% (n = 18) was Asian, 6.1% (n = 15) was African American, and 2.4% (n = 6) selected "other" as their race/ethnicity and tended to specify

being multi-racial and Native American. Two point eight percent (n = 7) did not report their race.

Participating parents also varied in educational level. Zero point four percent of parents (n =1) completed no high school, 9.4% (n = 24) of parents completed some high school, and 14.6% (n = 37) completed either high school or a GED. Eighteen point nine percent (n = 48) completed some college, 9.4% (24) attained an Associates degree, 22.8% (n = 58) completed a Bachelors degree, 5.9% (n = 15) completed some post-college courses, and 15.4% (n = 39) completed a graduate degree. Three point one percent (n = 8) did not report their education levels.

Participating parents also provided demographic information about their children. Forty-nine point eight percent of their children were boys and 20.4% of the children received special education services. The students' grades ranged from kindergarten to fifth grade. Nineteen point six percent of the students were in kindergarten (n = 48), 19.6% were in first grade (n = 48), 18.0% were in second grade (n = 44), 18.0% were in third grade (n = 44), 13.9% were in fourth grade (n = 34), and 11.0% (n = 27) were in fifth grade. The decrease in parent responses is consistent with literature on parent involvement across elementary school. In addition, this was compounded by the fact that the largest school, School A, only included kindergarten through fourth graders. Please see Table Two for information regarding the participating schools.

Table 2

Demographic Information for Participating Parents

School	Parent Participants	Percent Participating	Parent Education*	Racial Profile of Participants**
School A Suburban Public	73	19%	5.5% Less 94.5% More	87% Caucasian 5% Hispanic 5% Asian 3% African American 1% Other
School B Suburban Public	121	31%	15.0% Less 85.0% More	92% Caucasian 3% Hispanic 3% Asian 3% Other
School C Urban Public	56	27%	75.5% Less 24.5% More	33% Hispanic 22% African American 22% Caucasian 18% Asian 6% Other

* Less Education includes the categories: No High School, Some High School, GED, or a High School Diploma. More Education includes: Some College, Associates Degree, Bachelors Degree, or an Advanced Degree.

** Percentages may not add up to 100% because of rounding

Procedures

Data collection included a number of steps and procedures. Steps included pilot testing the study survey and revising the newly created Parent Perceptions of School-Provided Social Support (PPSSS). Further steps included gaining principal consent and University Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects (UCRIHS) approval. Then, data collection commenced followed by data entry into an SPSS data set. Finally, incoming data were checked for response bias using wave analysis.

First, the study survey including the PPSSS, was pilot tested with ten parents. These parents were selected because they were accessible to the researcher and because their children attended schools that were similar to potential data collection sites. Parents were asked to complete the surveys and also to rate the surveys for clarity. In particular, they were asked to respond to each PPSSS item with the questions, "Is this question clear? Does it make sense?" Parents were asked to respond by selecting, "No," "Somewhat," and "Yes." In addition, parents were asked to provide written feedback on the readability, visual interest, wording, clarity, and length of the survey. One parent noted that some items were not equally applicable to all parents because of poverty and education. Another parent suggested making the response choices more consistent. This change was made prior to actual data collection.

PPSSS items with low clarity ratings (at or below a response two-thirds of the way between "Somewhat" and "Yes") were examined. Five of the 24 items on the scale had clarity ratings below the cutoff. The lowest clarity item had a score of 2.44. Two of the five items were deemed unclear by the researcher and her advisor, and thus were reworded. The item, "My child's school lets me know that the things I do help my child

learn" was replaced with "My child's school thinks parents are important for learning." Also, the item, "My child's school tells me how I'm doing compared to other children in my child's classroom" was replaced with, "My child's school has clear expectations for my participation in my child's learning."

Prior to rewording the items, the reliability of the original PPSSS and its subscales was calculated. The Cronbach's alpha of the original PPSSS was 0.77. However, this is likely a low estimate because it only included the five cases with complete data. The Socioemotional scale had an alpha value of .94 and the Instrumental Scale had a value of .78. Both alpha values were sufficiently high for data collection to commence (Howell, 20002). Actual data collection began with the revised PPSSS featuring the two reworded items.

Following pilot testing, three elementary school principals were contacted regarding participation. These principals were selected because of their willingness to engage in research and because of their relationships with the students and faculty of the School Psychology program at Michigan State University. After a telephone conversation, the principal for school A agreed to participate in the research. The principal for school B asked that an application to conduct research be completed with the assistant superintendent of the district. Following approval from the assistant superintendent and a meeting, the principal at school B agreed to participate in the research. Both principals completed letters of intent to participate for inclusion with the UCRIHS application. The principal at school C was enthusiastic about participating but needed approval from the school board prior to participation. After obtaining permission from his school system, the principal at school C gave permission.

Following pilot testing and principal assent, University Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects (UCRIHS) approval was sought. The UCRIHS committee approved the study survey as part of a larger study, One Pastor One School, on February 23, 2005. The reviewers did not suggest any revisions to the original documents. Following initial approval, the researcher revised the consent form and changed some of the items of the study survey. Re-approval was granted on March 28, 2005.

After final UCRIHS approval, the introductory letters for parents and teachers were dropped off in the school offices at schools A and B. Please see Appendices One and Two for the complete documents. One week later, the Home-School Relationship Survey packets were dropped off at schools A and B for distribution by the classroom teachers. Included in each parent packet was the study survey (Appendix Three), the consent form (Appendix Four), and a postage-paid mailing envelope. The study survey included an introductory paragraph that explained the study and gave parents directions for completion and for returning the forms. Two weeks later, a reminder letter was sent home with parents (Appendix Five). Three weeks after the reminder letters were sent home, a second set of survey packets was sent home to the parents at school A who did not return the initial surveys. The principal for school B opted not to send out a second wave of surveys because she was participating in another research project and did not want to overwhelm staff and parents. The principal at school C also thought it best to distribute one wave of surveys rather than two because of time constraints pertaining to the close of the school year.

Parents completed and returned the surveys and consent forms. Parents at schools A and B returned the surveys to the researcher via postage-paid envelopes. Parents from

school C returned the surveys in sealed manila envelopes to their school office because of time constraints and in order to increase parent participation.

In order to avoid multiple data points from the same family and a potential reduction in variance, two requests were made of parents. First, only one parent was asked to complete the survey. Second, parents were asked to complete the survey for only one child per elementary building. In the case of multiple students from the same family within a school, parents were asked to complete the survey on the youngest child in kindergarten through fifth grade.

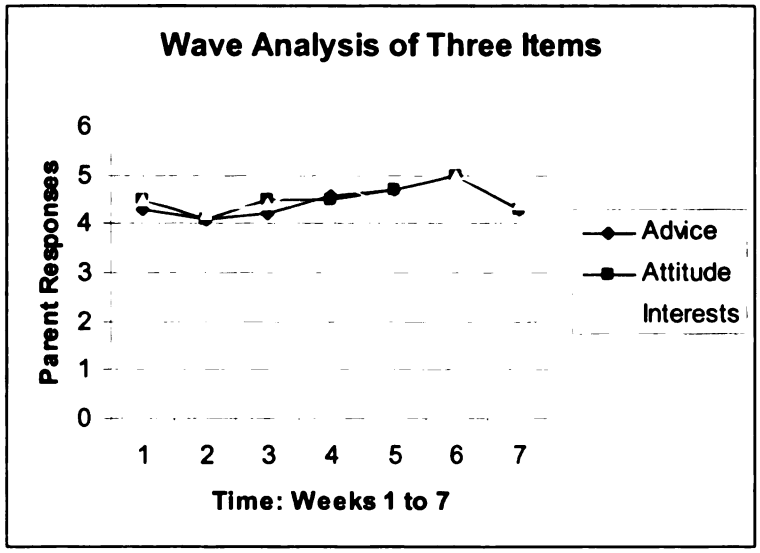
Data from parents was entered into an SPSS dataset. This statistical program was selected because it offers ample flexibility in data analysis and because it is a user-friendly program. It is also well equipped to handle large datasets consisting of many variables and participants.

Wave analysis was also conducted to test for response bias. Response bias occurs when participants who respond earlier to surveys have more positive views than participants who respond later in data collection. In particular, wave analysis involves examining the returns on three randomly selected items week by week to determine if the average response changes over time (Creswell, 2003). Three questions were selected using a random number table to select items. The three questions selected were, "My child's school gives me advice about my child's learning and development," "I trust that my child's teachers are doing a good job encouraging my child to have a positive attitude towards learning," and "I trust that teachers have my child's best interests at heart." Then, a crosstabs function was used to display the three variables with scores by date. Next, the dates were grouped into weeks one through seven. The means for each week

were then calculated and are presented below. Please see Figure One for complete details. Visual analysis reveals no or slight downward trends in parent responses to the three questions.

Figure 1

Wave Analysis Results for Parent Responses Over Time



Measures Used in Data Collection

Four measures were used in the data collection process. The predictor variable was a newly created measure called the Parent Perceptions of School-Provided Social Support (PPSSS). The outcome variables were the Trust Scale from the Family School Relationship Survey (Adams & Christenson, 2000), a composite parent satisfaction with school scale, and the Parent Report of Involvement from the Parent Teacher Involvement Questionnaire (Kohl et al., 200). The moderator variables were Child Grade, Parent Race/Ethnicity, Parent Educational Attainment, and School Location. Please see Appendix Three and the complete Home-School Relationship Survey for the complete scales and items.

Predictor Variable

Parent Perceptions of School-Provided Social Support

A new measure was created to assess parent perceptions of school-provided social support. It was created by modifying Malecki and Demaray's (2002) CASSS (Child and Adolescent Social Support Scale). Author permission was obtained for the use and adaptation of the existing CASSS. The newly created scale is called Parent Perceptions of School-Provided Social Support (PPSSS). This scale retains the four categories of emotional, appraisal, instrumental and informational support initially specified by House (1981). Some items from Malecki and Demaray's CASSS were retained and modified for use in the PPSSS.

In accordance with social support theory, a socioemotional support and an instrumental support subscale were developed and each subscale was examined separately as a predictor. Parents were asked to respond to 12 questions about emotional support, which included appraisal support, and 12 questions about their perceptions of instrumental support, including informational support, from their child's school. An example of emotional support includes, "My child's school understands my child" and an example of instrumental support is "My child's school helps me find resources (like information about after-school programs or summer camps.)" Parents responded on a five-point Likert-type scale with one corresponding with "Not at All" and five with "Definitely." As noted above, the PPSSS was pilot tested with a small group of parents prior to wide-scale administration.

Outcome Variables

Parent Trust of School

Adams and Christenson's Trust Scale from the Family-School Relationship Survey (2000) was used to assess parent trust of school. Author permission was obtained for the use and potential modification of this scale. The scale was used as written except for two modifications. First, the stem for the questions was changed from "I am confident that teachers..." to "I trust that teachers..." to more explicitly address the idea of parent trust. Second, the response choices were changed to reflect a five-point Likert-type scale rather than a four-point Likert-type scale. The original scale was developed to reflect basic components of trust including predictability, dependability, and faith as specified by Rempel, Holmes, and Zanna (1985). Sample items from this scale include "I trust that teachers respect me as a competent parent," "I trust that teachers are doing a good job teaching my child academic subjects," and "I trust that teachers are friendly and approachable" (Adams & Christenson, 2000; p. 485). Parents were asked to respond to these items by marking a response from one to five.

Parent Satisfaction with School

Parent satisfaction with school was assessed using a newly created parent satisfaction with school scale. The satisfaction scale was comprised of a global assessment of satisfaction (Kohl et al., 2000) and parent satisfaction with specific domains of school (Goldring & Shapira, 1993). The measure from Kohl and colleagues was the Parent Endorsement of School (PES) subscale from the Parent Teacher Involvement Questionnaire (PTIQ). The domain-specific measure was an adaptation of Goldring and Shapira's eight-item scale.

Permission has been obtained for the use and adaptation of Kohl, Lengua, and McMahon's (2000) PTIQ in this study. The PES subscale was used as written with slight modifications in wording to increase parent comprehension of the questions. The original scale includes four items tapping into parent's affective appraisal of the school. Items within the study survey include, "School staff is doing good things for my child" and "I have confidence in the people at my school." Other items address the school's fit for the child and how the school is preparing the child for the future. As with the original scale, parents were asked to rate their agreement with the items on a five-point Likert type scale and again response options again ranged from "Not at All" to "Definitely."

The second measure of satisfaction was loosely adapted from Goldring and Shapira's (1993) article, "Choice, Empowerment, and Involvement: What Satisfies Parents?" The authors examined parent satisfaction with eight areas of school functioning including, "academic, social, citizenship, general school atmosphere, values, educational philosophy, developing individual potential, and the curriculum" (p. 403). The original satisfaction scale was composed in Hebrew without an English translation and thus the original measure was not used for this study. However, Ellen Goldring granted the researcher permission to create new satisfaction items based on the eight categories of satisfaction. Sample items include, "How satisfied are you with the school's promotion of your values and beliefs?" and "How satisfied are you with the school's friendliness?" The global satisfaction scale and the domain specific scales were combined to create one 12-item measure of satisfaction.

Parent Report of Involvement Activities

The parent involvement scale was an adaptation of Kohl, Lengua, and McMahon's (2000) measure of involvement from the parent form of the PTIQ. As noted above, permission has been obtained for the use and adaptation of this measure. The Conduct Problems Prevention Research Group originally developed this questionnaire, which is based on Grolnick and Slowiaczek's (1994) conceptualization of involvement, which hypothesizes that parent behavior at school and at home influences children's academic achievement.

The existing measure was adapted in a number of ways. First, only parent perceptions of the relationship were assessed; teacher perceptions were not examined since they have already been the focus of numerous studies (i.e., Izzo, et al., 1999). Also, only selected subscales of the PTIQ were included because of potential overlap with the trust and satisfaction measures. In addition, the item format was revised.

Subscales included in the present study included: Parent-Teacher Contact, Parent Involvement at School, and Parent Involvement at Home. Parent-Teacher Contact examined parents' relationship building with their child's teacher. Ideas in this section included calling a teacher and attending parent-teacher conferences (Kohl et al., 2000, p. 512). The Parent Involvement at School subscale included volunteering at school and visiting "school for special events" (p. 512). Parent Involvement at Home included the questions, "Do you read to your child?" and "Do you take your child to the library" (p. 513)? All of these items were put into the present tense with the stem, "How often do you..." For example, one item from the study survey is "How often do you write notes

or email to your child's teacher?" Parents were asked to respond to these 11 questions using a five-point Likert-type scale with options ranging from "Never" to "All the Time."

Moderators

Demographic information pertaining to child grade level, parent race or ethnicity, parent education level, and school location were collected from the participating parents. Information related to parent gender, child gender, and special education services was also collected.

Child Grade

Participants indicated their child's grade level by responding to the question, "In what grade is your youngest child in this building?"

Family Race

Parent race was assessed. Parents were asked, "What is your race/ethnicity?"

Parent Education Level

Parent education level was assessed using the following item: "Please circle your highest educational level."

School Location

School location was assigned to schools based on their geographic location. Two university-affiliated raters were asked to assign schools to one of the three categories (urban, rural and suburban). The raters had 100% congruence in categorizing the three schools.

Summary of the Methodology

Survey methodology was used to examine how the home-school relationship influences parent outcomes through the mechanism of social support. First, pilot testing

was conducted and UCRIHS approval was sought and granted. Following scale development and UCRIHS approval, 250 parents were recruited from an urban and two suburban schools. The independent variables were the newly created socioemotional and instrumental subscales of the PPSSS. The dependent variables were scales addressing parent trust of school, satisfaction with school, and parent involvement activities. Also, information on child grade, parent race, parent education level, and school location was collected to study potential moderation effects.

Chapter Four: Results

This chapter included two main sections. In the first section, the psychometric properties of the measures were examined, data transformation procedures were detailed, and descriptive statistics were analyzed. In the second section, the five hypotheses were examined using correlation and multiple regression analyses. The hypotheses were organized by the potential moderators of child grade, parent race, parent education, and school location.

Measure Preparation

Psychometric Properties of the Measure

The first aim of this study was the creation and validation of the Parent Perceptions of School-Provided Social Support scale (PPSSS). The PPSSS was validated in two ways. First, Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated for the scale items. This procedure determines the strength and direction of linear relationships between two variables. The 24 items were significantly and somewhat highly intercorrelated with Pearson correlation values ranging from .52 to .84. Confirmatory factor analysis was also performed. Factor analysis uses a mathematical model to account for the most variance in a pattern of correlations and is used to group related variables. A principal component factor analysis procedure with Varimax rotation was used to examine the psychometric properties of the scale. The results confirmed a strong unitary factor with only one eigenvalue over one (16.80), which accounted for 69.99% of the variance. All items loaded onto a single factor (all factor loadings above 0.532). The Cronbach's alpha value for this scale was .98.

Consistent with research and theory on social support, original plans included examining the socioemotional and instrumental support as separate predictors. Unfortunately, the items in the two scales were too highly correlated (.84) for separate analyses. Thus, the PPSSS was used in its entirety as the predictor.

The second new measure was the aggregate satisfaction scale including global and domain-specific satisfaction. The 12 items were somewhat highly intercorrelated with Pearson correlation values ranging from .60 to .91. The validity of the scale was also explored using a principal component factor analysis procedure with Varimax rotation. The results confirmed a strong unitary factor with only one eigenvalue over one (9.01), which accounted for 75.08% of the variance. All items loaded onto a single factor (all factor loadings above 0.795). The Cronbach's alpha value for this scale was .97.

In addition to the PPSSS and the satisfaction measures, the Cronbach's alpha values for the other, existing scales were computed. Since these scales had already been validated within the literature, another factor analysis was not performed. Please see Table Three below for details.

Table 3

Summary of Reliability for Existing Measures

Construct	Title	Items	Published α	Current α
Trust	Family School Relationship Survey: Trust Scale	19	.96	.98
Satisfaction: Global	PTIQ: Parent Endorsement of School subscale	4	.92	.97
Satisfaction: Specific	Satisfaction in specific school domains	8	.88	.95
Parent Involvement	PTIQ: Parent Teacher Contact; Parent Involvement at School; Parent Involvement at Home	11	.67 to .89	.77

Data Transformation

Following scale development, the data were visually and statistically examined. All but the parent involvement scale revealed significant negative skewness and kurtosis. The skewness values were -1.55 (*SE* = .15) for social support, -2.06 (*SE* = .15) for parent trust, and -1.58 (*SE* = .15) for parent satisfaction with school. Kurtosis values were also computed prior to transformation. Kurtosis scores for social support were 2.19 (SE = .31); scores for trust were 4.33 (*SE* = .31), and scores for satisfaction were 2.02 (*SE* = .31). In addition, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov values and Shapiro-Wilk values for support, trust, and satisfaction were all significant, which indicated a lack of normality.

Because the data were significantly negatively skewed and kurtotic, logarithmic transformations were computed using the SPSS algorithm on the social support scale, the

parent trust scale, and the parent satisfaction scale. In addition, the predictor and three parent outcomes were centered to prepare for the regression analyses. Also, when data were missing, the participant was excluded on a case-wise basis.

Throughout the text, presented results account for the change in direction attributable to the logarithmic transformation of the social support, trust, and satisfaction variables.

Another issue emerged during the initial inspection of the data. Following data entry, it became clear that significant co-variation existed between race and school location. In particular, the two suburban schools were primarily comprised of Caucasian families. The third school has large Hispanic, African American, and Asian populations. Because parents were largely separated by race between schools, it was impossible to separate race from school location in analyses. Thus, the question of race was not examined separately in this study. For further discussion of this decision, please see the hypothesis pertaining to the potential moderator of parent race.

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics were computed for the newly transformed measures. The means, standard deviations, skewness, and kurtosis were computed. In addition, the data was visually examined; a normal curve was overlaid over each scale's distribution to check for normality. Please see Table Four for details.

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics for Social Support, Parent Outcomes, and Moderators Prior to Transformation

Scale	Scale Mean	Standard Deviation	Items	Mean	Skewness	Kurtosis
Social Support						
Total	99.79	22.04	24	4.16	-1.55	2.19
Parent Outcomes						
Trust	82.86	16.86	19	4.36	-2.06	4.33
Satisfaction	52.41	9.68	12	4.37	-1.58	2.02
Involvement	38.46	6.42	11	3.50	-0.11	-0.17

Table 5

Descriptive Statistics for Social Support, Parent Outcomes, and Moderators After Transformation

	Scale Mean	Standard Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
Social Support [a]	0.00	(1.00)	-0.17	-1.13
Parent Outcomes				
Trust [ab]	0.00	0.61	0.07	-1.35
Satisfaction [ab]	0.00	0.53	0.11	-1.34
Involvement [b]	0.00	6.42	-0.11	-0.17
Moderators				
Child Grade [c]	0.41	0.49	0.35	-1.89
Parent Education [c]	0.54	0.50	-0.14	-2.00
School Location [c]	0.76	0.43	-1.25	-0.44

Note. Parent race was excluded from this table because it was not used in the final analyses.

[a] Variable was centered.

[b] Variable was logarithmically transformed.

[c] Variable was dummy coded.

Data Analysis Strategy

The data were examined using a variety of statistical techniques. First, the item means were examined prior to transformation. In addition, a correlation matrix was constructed to examine the strength of the relations between social support, parent

outcomes, and the interactions. Also, multiple regression was used to examine to the relative contribution of social support to the three parent outcomes and to test for moderation by child grade, parent race, parent education, and school location.

The first method used to examine the data was a visual analysis of the item means prior to transformation. The item means indicated that parents felt supported by their child's schools. The average social support score was a 4.16 out of five, which corresponds with "I agree mostly" with most of the social support items. Further, the socioemotional support scale had an average value of 4.22 out of five, while the instrumental scale had an average response of 4.12 out of five. A paired samples t-test was used to determine that parents perceive receiving significantly more socioemotional support than instrumental support ($t(247) = 3.87$; $p = .000$). However, this difference is likely a result of the study's sample size rather than a practically significant difference.

The parent outcome variables revealed high levels of parent trust, satisfaction, and involvement. Parents rated their trust of their child's school as 4.36 out of five, which corresponds with "I agree mostly" with the trust items. The satisfaction average score was 4.37 out of five. The parents reported generally lower levels of involvement and their average involvement score was a 3.50 out of five. However, this is encouraging because it suggests that parents did not display a positive response bias, selecting mostly high marks in rating themselves and their child's schools.

The second method used to analyze the data and to test the hypotheses was correlation analysis. Bivariate correlations were calculated between the continuous variables of social support, trust, satisfaction, and involvement. Point-biserial correlations were calculated between the categorical dummy-coded moderators of grade,

education, school location, and the interactions of those moderators with social support. Please see Table Six for details. Only correlations that were significant at the .01 level were examined in order to maintain a family-wise error rate of .05.

Table 6

Correlations Between Measures

Measure	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Social Support [ab]	--	.085	.025	-.028	.797**	.759**	-.151*
2. Grade		--	.125*	.072	.118	.117	-.068
3. Education			--	-.523**	0.36	0.48	.365**
4. Location				--	.009	-0.25	.351**
5. Parent Trust [ab]					--	.788**	-.161*
6. Parent Satisfaction [ab]						--	-.091
7. Parent Involvement[ab]							--

[a]Variable was centered.

[b]Variable was logarithmically transformed.

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

Some of these correlations bear mentioning yet were not addressed by specific hypotheses. First, the moderators of parent education and school location were strongly positively correlated ($r = .52, p < .001$) with lower levels of education associated with urban schools. Parent education was also correlated with parent involvement activities ($r = .37, p < .001$). Again, higher levels of education were correlated with higher levels of involvement. Further, school location was correlated with parent involvement with parents with parents at suburban schools demonstrating more involvement than those at urban schools. Finally, the outcomes of parent trust and satisfaction with school were also strongly positively correlated ($r = .79, p < .001$) with higher levels of trust associated with higher levels of satisfaction.

Following an examination of the correlations and prior to conducting regression analyses, statistical strategies were employed to test the assumptions for regression analyses. The four main assumptions in multiple regression are adequate sample size, low multicollinearity, the exclusion of outliers when necessary, and an adequate distribution related to normality, linearity, homoscedasticity, and independence of residuals (Pallant, 2001).

Sample size was calculated using Tabachnick and Fiddell's formula (1996, p. 132). The formula is: $N > 50 + 8m$ (m = number of independent variables). Thus, I needed at least $50 + 8(4)$ or 82 participants and my sample size was 250 parents.

The issue of multicollinearity was also addressed. As noted above, the social support subscales were combined because of high multicollinearity. Another potential challenge is the relatively high correlations between social support and parent trust, and parent trust and parent satisfaction. More conservative authors suggest that a correlation

about .7 might be problematic (Tabachnik & Fiddell, 1996) but others suggest that multiple regression is relatively robust to violations of these assumptions (Howell, 2002). In addition, the Tolerance column under the Collinearity Statistics had a value of 1.00. Since low values (near zero) indicate potential collinearity, the multicollinearity was likely not problematic (Pallant, 2001).

Outliers were examined by inspecting the residuals scatterplot and Mahalanobis distance values. A visual inspection did not reveal any outliers. Outliers were also tested using the Mahalanobis distances. A chi-square critical value of 7.88 was used, which was determined by using a chi-square distribution table and an alpha of .005 with one degree of freedom because there was one independent variable (See Pallant, 2001 for more information). Since the most extreme distance value was 3.28, well below the cut-off for problematic values of 7.88, outliers were not a concern (Pallant, 2001).

Fourth, the distribution was examined for normality, linearity, homoscedasticity, and independence of residuals through a review of the normal probability plot and the residuals scatterplot. The points in the normal probability plot lay in a relatively straight diagonal line with a relatively even cigar shape from bottom left to top right which suggests normality, linearity, and homoscedasticity. In addition, the scatterplot of the residuals suggested that the residuals were relatively linear, independent, and evenly distributed about predicted dependent variable scores.

Examination of Hypotheses

Question One: Does socioemotional or instrumental support account for more variance in parent satisfaction with school, sense of trust, and parent involvement activities? I hypothesized that socioemotional support would account for significantly more variance in the three parent outcomes than instrumental support.

Due to the high multicollinearity ($r = .92, p < .001$) between the centered and logarithmically transformed socioemotional and instrumental support subscales, this question could not be answered. This high correlation between the variables suggests that dividing social support into four types or even two larger types is not statistically appropriate with the parents of elementary school students. As evidenced by the high means in parent reports of social support, parent perceptions of school-provided social support are important, but the particular type of support is not as relevant. In summary, parents certainly perceive receiving support but do not necessarily differentiate between the various types.

Instead, the socioemotional and instrumental scales were combined to make one social support variable accounting for emotional, appraisal, informational, and instrumental support. This combined variable acted as the predictor in the multiple regression equations with trust, satisfaction, and parent involvement as the outcome measures.

Social support accounts for a large amount of variance in parent trust and satisfaction and a much smaller amount of variance in parent involvement. Social support explains 63.5 % of the variance in parent trust ($\beta = .80, F(1, 247) = 427.38, p <$

.000). Social support also accounts for 57.7% of the variance in satisfaction (β = .76, $F(1, 247) = 335.27, p < .000$). Social support accounts for only 2.3% of the variance in parent involvement (β = .15, $F(1, 244) = 5.66, p = .018$). In short, social support accounts for the most variance in parent trust, followed closely by satisfaction and then by involvement.

Question Two: How does child age influence the relationship between home-school collaboration and parent outcomes?

I hypothesized that the relationship between parent perceptions of school-provided social support and the three parent outcomes would change as a function of child grade. Specifically, I believed that socioemotional and instrumental support would have a greater effect on parent outcomes for children in kindergarten through second grade and a lesser effect on parent outcomes for children in grades three through five. The combination of socioemotional and instrumental support will not influence this hypothesis since I did not specify which type of support would have more effect.

In order to examine the relationship between social support and the parent outcomes as a function of child age, regression analyses were run. An interaction term was created by multiplying the dummy code for child grade (with kindergarten through second grade as the reference group) by the social support variable (Aiken & West, 1991). This term was entered following social support and the dummy code for child grade (Baron & Kenny, 1986). Regression results indicated that the interaction term was non-significant for all three parent outcomes. The standardized regression coefficient for trust was .06 (t = 1.07, p = .29), the standardized regression coefficient for satisfaction was .03 (t = .58, p = .56) and the standardized regression coefficient for involvement was

-.04 (t = -.41, p = .68). In summary, social support does not play a different role in the parent outcomes for parents of younger children than for the parents of upper elementary students. Please see Table Seven for further details.

Table 7

Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Social Support and Child Grade in Predicting Parent Trust, Parent Satisfaction, and Parent Involvement

Parent Trust	F	Sig.	ΔR^2	B	β	T	Sig.
Step 1	211.98	.00	.64				
Social Support				.48	.79	20.39	.00
Grade				.06	.05	1.25	.21
Step 2	141.78	.00	.00				
Social Support				.46	.75	14.12	.00
Grade				.06	.05	1.23	.22
Social Support x Grade				.05	.06	1.07	.29

Parent Satisfaction	F	Sig.	ΔR^2	B	β	T	Sig.
Step 1	166.13	.00	.58				
Social Support				.40	.75	18.04	.00
Grade				.05	.05	1.17	.24
Step 2	110.57	.00	.00				
Social Support				.39	.73	12.72	.00
Grade				.05	.05	1.16	.25
Social Support x Grade				.03	.03	.58	.56

Parent Involvement	F	Sig.	ΔR^2	B	β	T	Sig.
Step 1	3.61	.03	.03				
Social Support				1.01	.16	.25	.02
Grade				.74	.06	.90	.37
Step 2	2.45	.06	.00				
Social Support				.85	.13	1.50	.13
Grade				.85	.13	1.50	.38
Social Support x Grade				.34	.04	.41	.68

Question Three: Does the relationship between home-school collaboration and parent outcomes differ for Caucasian, African American, Hispanic and Asian parents?

I hypothesized that parent race would cause the relationship between social support and parent outcomes to change. In particular, I hypothesized that for African American, Hispanic and Asian parents, both types of school-provided social support would have a larger effect on parent outcomes than for Caucasian parents. Further, I believed that instrumental support would play a larger role than emotional support in parent outcomes. Also, I hypothesized that because of their close identification with the school culture, socioemotional support provided by the schools would have a greater effect on parent outcomes than instrumental support for Caucasian parents.

As noted above, socioemotional and instrumental support were combined because of high multicollinearity so that part of the question cannot be answered. However, the issue of for which parents perceptions of support play a larger role remains.

However, this question could not be answered either. Racial or ethnic status and school location were confounded because of the three participating schools. Specifically, schools A and B were predominately Caucasian while school C was comprised primarily of Hispanic and African American parents. Thus, it was impossible to separate the effects of parent race and ethnicity from school location. My data reflect differences in both race and education level. Because educational attainment is more closely aligned with the school-related outcomes in this study, educational attainment was examined in this study and the analyses of parent race will be dropped. Further, less research has been conducted on the importance of school location than on race or educational level.

Question Four: How does parent education level influence the relationship between home-school collaboration and parent outcomes?

I hypothesized that parent education level would cause the relationship between social support and parent outcomes to change. In particular, I believed that parents with less education would benefit more from social support than parents with more education. Also, I believed that instrumental support would account for more variance than socioemotional support. Conversely, I anticipated that parents with more education would benefit more from school-provided socioemotional support than from instrumental support.

With regards to this hypothesis, I was unable to determine which types of support were more important for parents because of combining socioemotional and instrumental support. On the other hand, I was still able to determine how parent education influenced the parent trust, satisfaction, and involvement.

Regression analyses suggested that parent education moderated the relationship between social support and parent satisfaction. First, an interaction term was created by multiplying the dummy code for parent education (parents whose highest completed degree was a high school diploma/GED or below comprised the reference group) by the social support variable (Aiken & West, 1991). This term was entered following the social support variable and the dummy code for education level. Presented values reflect the true relationship between the variables, accounting for differences in direction related to centering and logarithmically transforming certain variables.

Regression results indicated that the interaction term was significant for parent satisfaction (standardized $\beta = .146$, $t = 2.47$, $p = .01$). Because the interaction term was significant, regression equations were plotted for parents with less education and more education (Aiken & West, 1991). Low, mean, and high average values of social support were plotted for both groups of parents. Parents with less education experienced more satisfaction as a result of high social support than parents with more education. At the same time, when parents perceived low levels of social support, those with less education experienced less satisfaction than parents with more education. Please see Table Eight for further details. Please see Figure Two for a graphical representation of the interaction.

The results indicated that parent education does not moderate the relationship between social support and parent trust and parent involvement; the standardized regression coefficient for trust was .02 ($t = .36$, $p = .72$) and the standardized regression coefficient for involvement was .02 ($t = .29$, $p = .77$).

Table 8

Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Social Support and Parent Education in Predicting Parent Trust, Parent Satisfaction, and Parent Involvement

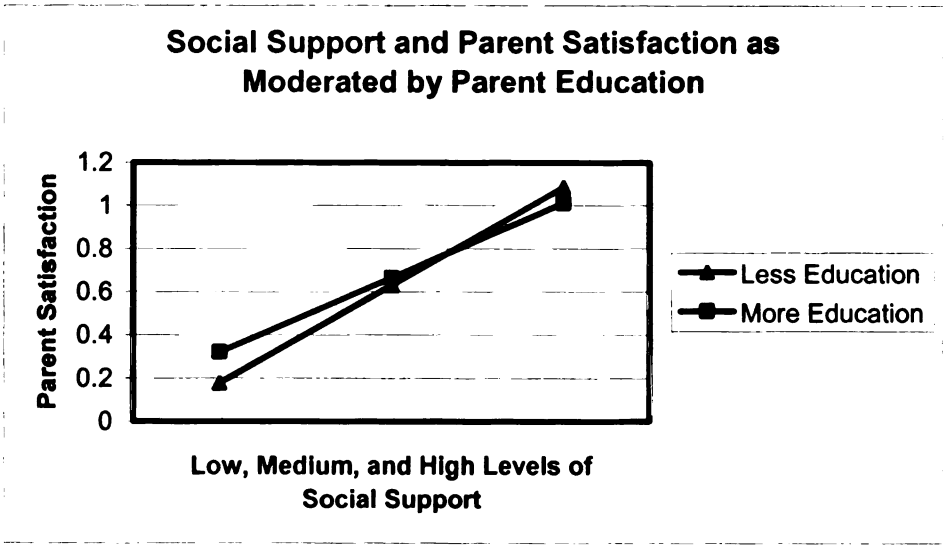
Parent Trust	F	Sig.	ΔR^2	B	β	T	Sig.
Step 1	210.19	.00	.63				
Social Support				.48	.80	20.49	.00
Education				.02	.02	.49	.62
Step 2	139.67	.00	.00				
Social Support				.49	.81	14.60	.00
Education				.02	.02	.49	.62
Social Support x Education				.02	.02	.36	.72

Parent Involvement	F	Sig.	ΔR^2	B	β	T	Sig.
Step 1	22.72	.00	.16				
Social Support				1.10	.17	2.90	.00
Education				4.69	.37	6.17	.00
Step 2	15.12	.00	.00				
Social Support				1.21	.19	2.25	.03
Education				4.69	.36	6.15	.00
Social Support x Education				.22	.02	.29	.77

Parent Satisfaction	F	Sig.	ΔR^2	B	β	T	Sig.
Step 1	165.28	.00	.58				
Social Support				.40	.76	18.15	.00
Education				.04	.03	.81	.42
Step 2	114.53	.00	.01				
Social Support				.45	.86	14.62	.00
Education				.04	.03	.81	.42
Social Support x Education				.11	.15	2.47	.01

Figure 2

Social Support and Parent Satisfaction as Moderated by Parent Education



Question Five: Does the relationship between home-school collaboration and parent outcomes vary by school location?

Finally, I hypothesized that the relationship between school-provided social support and parent outcomes changed as a function of school location. In particular, I

believed that instrumental support would account for the most variance for parents living in urban areas, somewhat less variance for parents in rural areas, and the least for parents from suburban areas. On the other hand, I believed that socioemotional support would account for the most variance for parents living in suburban areas, followed by rural areas and then urban areas.

As noted above, race/ethnicity and school location were confounded in this study because of the three data collection sites. Specifically, this was not a pure comparison of the effects of location because of its relationship with race and education. On the other hand, it accurately represented the separation that exists in mid-Michigan area schools.

This study was designed to examine the differences in the home-school relationship and parent outcomes as a function of different school locations. However, due to time and logistical constraints, data collection did not occur at a rural location. Thus, only urban and suburban schools were compared. In addition, as noted previously, the socioemotional and instrumental support comparisons were dropped because of high multicollinearity.

However, this study still examined how social support influences trust, satisfaction, and involvement for parents living in urban and suburban areas. Results indicate that location does moderate the relationship between social support and parent satisfaction. Again, an interaction term was first created by multiplying the dummy code for school location (suburban schools comprised the reference group) by the social support variable (Aiken & West, 1991). This term was entered following the social support variable and the dummy code for school location. Again, values presented reflect

the true relationships between the variables, taking into account differences in direction related to centering and logarithmically transforming variables.

Regression results indicated that the interaction term was significant for parent satisfaction (standardized $\beta = .18$, $t = 2.12$, $p = .04$). Because the interaction term was significant, regression equations were plotted for parents living in suburban and urban areas (Aiken & West, 1991). Low, mean, and high average values of social support were plotted for both groups of parents. With higher levels of social support, suburban parents experience more satisfaction than urban parents; with lower levels of support, suburban parents experience less satisfaction than urban parents. Please see Table Nine for further detail and please see Figure Three for a graphical representation of the interaction.

School location does not moderate the relationships between social support and parent trust and parent involvement. The standardized regression coefficient for trust was .01 ($t = .11$, $p = .91$) and the standardized regression coefficient for involvement was .17 ($t = 1.38$, $p = .17$). See Table Nine for further details.

Table 9

Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Social Support and School Location in Predicting Parent Trust, Parent Satisfaction, and Parent Involvement

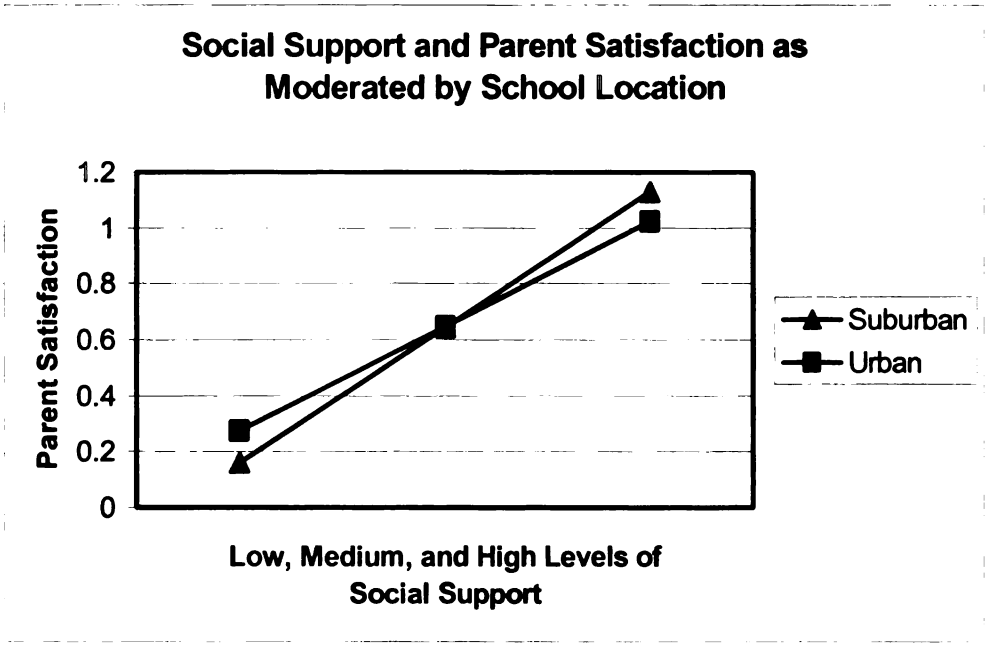
Parent Trust	F	Sig.	ΔR^2	B	β	T	Sig.
Step 1	210.85	.00	.63				
Social Support				.48	.80	20.54	.00
Location				.05	.03	.86	.39
Step 2	140.00	.00	.00				
Social Support				.49	.80	9.99	.00
Location				.05	.03	.86	.39
Social Support x Location				.01	.01	.11	.91

Parent Involvement	F	Sig.	ΔR^2	B	β	T	Sig.
Step 1	19.65	.00	.14				
Social Support				.96	.15	2.50	.01
Location				5.22	.34	5.66	.00
Step 2	13.79	.00	.01				
Social Support				.01	.00	.02	.99
Location				5.29	.34	5.74	.00
Social Support x Location				1.25	.17	1.38	.17

Parent Satisfaction	F	Sig.	ΔR^2	B	β	T	Sig.
Step 1	164.52	.00	.57				
Social Support				.40	.76	18.12	.00
Location				.00	.00	.04	.97
Step 2	112.74	.00	.01				
Social Support				.48	.92	10.67	.00
Location				.00	.00	.07	.95
Social Support x Location				.11	.18	2.12	.04

Figure 3

Social Support and Parent Satisfaction as Moderated by School Location



In conclusion, this study's results revealed that a number of findings. First, the PPSSS and the global satisfaction measures are statistically valid. Further, this study suggests that social support accounts for a sizeable amount of variance in parent trust and satisfaction and a statically significant though small amount of variance in parent involvement. The data also revealed that both parent education and school location moderate the relationship between parent perceptions of school-provided social support and parent satisfaction.

Chapter Five: Discussion

While research suggests that families are important in student achievement, the literature supporting this connection is underdeveloped, unwieldy and conflicting. This study sought to develop knowledge in this area and to untangle this complex relationship.

The current study yielded three major outcomes. First, this study offered some evidence for social support as a psychological mechanism by which the home-school relationship operates. However, the newly created measure of parent perceptions of school-provided social support did not reveal a two or four part structure as suggested by the psychological literature. In addition, this study indicated that parent perceptions of the home-school relationship may consist of two factors rather than three as hypothesized by Esler, Godber, and Christenson. Finally, this study shed light upon how the relationship between social support and parent outcomes changed in the presence of moderators including child grade, parent educational attainment, and school location.

Social Support as a Psychological Mechanism

As noted above, the first outcome of this study offered a novel explanation for the relationship between families and schools. Namely, this study examined social support as a psychological mechanism for the home-school relationship. This study tested the theory that social support acts as a main effect, directly influencing parent outcomes.

Social support, a prominent psychological construct in the developmental and clinical literatures, was conceptualized according to House's (1981) theory to include emotional, appraisal, instrumental, and informational support. In this study, social support was considered as a single construct because of high intercorrelations between the two major components, socioemotional support and instrumental support. These high

intercorrelations suggest that the four types of school-provided support are closely related and that addressing the types of support separately is not appropriate in an elementary-school parent population. Rather, parent perceptions of school-provided social support should be viewed as a single construct that is theoretically but not empirically comprised of four subtypes.

A number of reasons exist for why the content of social support consisted of one factor rather than four as hypothesized by House (1981) or two as hypothesized by Thoits (1982). First, this could be related to the level of measurement. Parents were asked to rate their perceptions of the school as a whole including the teachers, principal, and staff. When they consider the school as a whole, parents may not perceive receiving different types of support. For instance, a teacher may provide emotional support while a principal or school psychologist provides informational support. Another explanation is response bias. It is likely that the most engaged and involved parents in each school responded to the survey. This subset of the parent population tends to be involved regardless of school-provided social support and may not perceive as many types of support because it is not a determining factor in their involvement.

This single-component conceptualization of social support lends credence to Sidney Cobb's early model of social support. In "Social Support as a Moderator of Life Stress," Cobb defines social support solely in terms of information. The content of that support is that the individual is loved, esteemed or valued, and that the individual "belongs to a network of communication and mutual obligation" (Cobb, 1976, p. 300). In short, Cobb hypothesizes that social support is one factor with a variety of components. Although theoretically similar, Cobb's research did not include specific measures of

social support. Rather, he summarized numerous studies examining loose measures of social support including wanted versus unwanted pregnancy and in-home versus hospital care following surgery. In short, Cobb's early single-factor conceptualization of social support was re-affirmed in this study though the definitions varied dramatically.

This study suggests that social support might offer a reasonable explanatory mechanism for the relationship between families and schools. Successful home-school relationships rest upon two factors. First, schools provide support to parents by conveying that they are respected and important and offering them assistance and information. In addition, parents perceive the schools' support. As perceived support increases, parent trust and satisfaction increases.

This study's finding that parent perceptions of social support are related to parent outcomes lends credence to social support as a psychological mechanism underlying the home-school relationship. In particular, these results suggest that LaRocco, House, and French (1980) were correct in asserting that specific types of stress or strain, like parent stress pertaining to education, are likely to be affected by a limited set of closely related sources of support. In this case, parent trust and satisfaction, two measures that capture parents' affective relationship with the school, are directly related to the social support provided by schools. In addition, this study confirms House's assertion that informal, high relevance forms of support are important and perhaps even more important than formal sources of support. Although schools are being asked to play increasingly complex roles in the lives of families, they were not created to support parents and are thus informal sources of support. Schools are also of high relevance to parents because of their frequent contact and importance in the lives of children.

Understanding the home-school relationship in terms of school-provided social support has a number of implications for school practice and policy. As Lareau (1987) noted, "When home-school relationships are evaluated exclusively in terms of parental behavior, critical questions are neither asked nor answered" (p. 74). In keeping with this observation, educators and researchers should seek to understand and influence the schools' role rather than focusing on parents. In particular, schools should seek to provide parents with social support in all its forms.

In order for school personnel to provide socioemotional support, they should examine their attitudes about parents. The literature on the sociology of education suggests that three factors are essential. First, school personnel should assume that all stakeholders have the child's best interest in mind (Lewis & Forman, 2002). This basic premise reminds parents and school staff that all parties are committed to supporting and educating children. Second, school personnel should assume that all parents value education and believe it is important for later success in life (Lott, 2001). Even though parents may show their support of education in different ways, parents as a whole hold this belief as fundamental. The third assumption school personnel should adopt is more pragmatic: involvement at school is not a reflection of how much parents value education (Lareau, 1987). Involvement is related to a variety of external and internal demands and constraints (Lewis & Forman, 2002). Taken together, these attitudes and assumptions make it possible for schools to provide parents with the socioemotional support they need to feel like real partners in the home-school relationship.

Schools should also be cognizant of providing parents with instrumental support in the form of information about education. Research on cultural capital, "the cultural

experiences in the home (that) facilitate children's adjustment to school and academic achievement" highlights parents' need for information about education (Bordieu, 1977 as cited by Lareau, 1987). Lareau noted that working-class parents tend to have less information about schooling. This results from their social networks, which are comprised of family members rather than other parents, and from the fact that their children tend to be less involved in after-school activities, which results in fewer opportunities for parents to become socialized to the culture of education (Lareau, 1987).

Schools can also improve instrumental support by asking parents what factors prevent involvement and seeking to alleviate them. Lewis and Forman (2002) offer a simple example of a school in a working class neighborhood offering free babysitting for parent meetings at school. School meetings and phone conferences during non-business hours also lessen some of the time constraints experienced by parents.

In short, social support has a direct influence on the relationship between parents and schools. When schools conceptualize and structure their interactions with families to provide socioemotional and instrumental support, families benefit and the home-school relationship improves.

Examination of the Parent Perceptions of School-Provided Social Support Scale

Along with a novel explanation for the home-school relationship, this study included scale development as an outcome. Specifically, this study included the creation of the Parent Perceptions of School-Provided Social Support (PPSSS) scale based on Malecki and Demaray's Child and Adolescent Social Support Scale (2000). The PPSSS is a 24-item scale designed to capture parent perceptions of emotional, appraisal, instrumental and informational social support. While empirical examination with a

diverse sample of parents suggests that this measure consists of one factor and is highly reliable, the PPSSS failed to capture the four components of social support specified by House (1981). All four parts were highly correlated and even a two-part conceptualization, with socioemotional and instrumental support, did not yield separate components statistically. As noted in the previous section, this could be related to scale language; the PPSSS asked parents to consider the school as a whole, which eliminates nuance in which members of the school community provide which types of support. Also as noted above, it is likely that only the most active parents took the time to complete and return the survey. Again, these parents are likely to be involved and perceive support regardless of school efforts, which could eliminate the distinction in perceived types of support.

This measure represents an important step forward in this literature because it offers an initial attempt to capture school-provided social support. However, future iterations of the measure should include substantive changes. In particular, the items should be reworded to more explicitly capture the four types of support. Further, the issue of source of support should be reconsidered (Tardy, 1985). Sources of support should be separated into teachers, administrators, and other school professionals. As research in this area progresses, participants should also include parents living in rural areas as well as parents of children in middle through high school. Additionally, the concurrent and predictive validity of this measure or future versions of this measure should be further examined.

Examination of a Theoretical Model of Home-School Relationships

Second, as noted above, this study suggests that Esler, Godber, and Christenson's 2002 model may not best account for the structure of home-school relationships. In particular, high multicollinearity between the attitudes and relationships components suggest that they may not be separate factors. Instead, it may be more appropriate to conceptualize parent perceptions of the home-school relationship in terms of affective and behavioral components.

Data analyses revealed a significant, positive relationship between support and satisfaction (attitudes) and trust (relationships). Specifically, social support accounted for the most variance in trust, followed by satisfaction. This finding suggests that parent perceptions of school-provided social support are important in parent trust and satisfaction and vice versa. More specifically, schools that are intentional about supporting parents have parents with more trust in their child's teachers and parents who experience more satisfaction with their child's school. Further, the weak correlations between parent involvement and social support, parent trust, and parent satisfaction might indicate that actions are a separate factor in the home-school relationship at the elementary level.

While attitudes and relationships have different practical significance, they were not separate from a statistical standpoint in this parent population. Two possible explanations exist for this finding. One explanation relates to the issue of the level of analysis. The perceived social support measure and the parent satisfaction outcome measure both asked parents to rate their perceptions of the school as a whole. At this

level of analysis, perhaps attitudes and relationships are indistinguishable to parents. This leads to the second possible explanation for the gap between theory and data. The data collected in this study only assessed parent perceptions of the home-school relationship and parent outcomes of the relationship. This emphasis on parents leaves out school personnel perceptions of the relationship, which may include both attitudes and relationships. Given that Esler, Godber, and Christenson's model was created from a school perspective rather than a parent perspective, this gap makes sense.

Although the three-part model was not supported by data in this study, using the Esler model as a framework still added richness to this study and advanced thinking about the home-school relationship. This model called attention to the affective or intangible component of the relationship between families and schools and reaffirmed a nuanced approach to home-school collaboration. As noted in the review of the literature, ample research exists detailing strategies to change school actions or strategies pertaining to the home-school relationship (e.g., Baker, 2000). However, this atheoretical though well-intentioned approach is not likely to be effective because it does not address the processes underlying home-school relationships. In particular, schools can offer numerous opportunities for parents to become involved but if parents do not see themselves as critical for student learning or trust school staff, then the home-school relationship will flounder. Esler, Godber, and Christenson's theory serves as a reminder that the affective parts of the relationship are as important, if not more so, than actions.

Moderators of the Home-School Relationship

The third major outcome of this study is that it showed how the relationship between parent perceptions of support and parent satisfaction changed according to

parent education and school location. In particular, satisfaction with school varies more for lesser-educated parents relative to how much social support they perceive. In particular, when lesser-educated parents perceived low amounts of social support, they reported lower satisfaction on average than did more-educated parents. When they perceived greater social support, lesser-educated parents experienced more satisfaction on average than did more-educated parents. This finding suggests that the satisfaction of lesser-educated parents is more variable and that their satisfaction might be more influenced by the efforts of schools to provide social support.

School location also acted as a moderator in this study. Parents whose children attended suburban schools experienced lower mean levels of satisfaction than urban parents when they perceived low levels of social support. Suburban parents perceived higher mean levels of satisfaction than urban parents when they perceived high levels of social support. This finding suggests that parent satisfaction with school might be more open to school influences in suburban than urban parents. Again, suburban schools have a unique opportunity to influence parent outcomes and their efforts to provide social support are directly related to parent satisfaction.

Given the small amount of research on school location and parent education as related to the home-school relationship, a new body of research was sought to make sense of the findings. In particular, research on the sociology of education helps to explain the interaction relationships between support and satisfaction for lesser-educated and suburban parents (Lewis & Forman, 2002; Gorman, 1998; Lareau, 1987). This work suggests that schools shape their interactions with parents and that school perceptions of parents are vitally important (Lewis & Forman, 2002; Lott, 2001). First, a case will be

made for the overlap between working class parents in this literature and the lesser-educated and urban parents in this study. Then, the intersection of middle class schools and working class families will be presented. Finally, an example of how schools can reframe their perceptions will be presented.

Literature on the sociology of education examines how working class parents interact with the culture of education. These parents are typically those who live in urban areas and those without advanced degrees. In particular, Lareau (1987) and others (e.g., Gorman, 1998) label families as working class based on the communities where they reside. Further, Lareau notes that working class parents tend to have a high school diploma or not to have graduated high school. These descriptions suggest that the working class label encompasses urban participants in this study and those with less education.

Given the congruence between working class parents and parents in this study, this literature can shed light upon the findings of this study. In particular, research on the sociology of education suggests that there is a disconnection between schools and working class parents, but that it can be ameliorated through how schools perceive and work with families.

First, schools are middle class institutions. As such, middle class beliefs color their relationships with working class parents (Lareau, 1987). One school-held belief is that working class parents do not foster educational achievement (Lott, 2001). While this stereotype is true in some regards, Gorman's 1998 research indicated that about half of the working class parents he interviewed held middle class ideas about the value of

education and attaining a college degree. Those parents who do not conform to these beliefs will require more targeted efforts on the part of schools.

On the other hand, when schools change their perceptions of parents and involvement, this relationship can be highly successful. One example of schools tapping into parent strengths rather than focusing on unmet expectations is redefining involvement in terms of quality versus quantity. While schools often focus on the amount of time parents spend in schools, this is a tiny fraction of involvement (Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994). Schools are correct in noting that working class parents respond less to teacher requests for participation in elementary schools (Lareau, 1987; Lewis & Forman, 2002). This decreased quantity is related to a variety of factors like rigid work schedules, significant family demands, and the necessity of having multiple wage earners per family. Despite these constraints, the quality of involvement is similar for working and middle class parents (Lewis & Forman, 2002). When they volunteer at school, parents from the working class engage in the same types of activities with similar amounts of success (Lewis & Forman, 2002). In fact, Lewis and Forman (2002) found that far more struggles erupted at an upper class school than at a working class school over issues including "resources, autonomy, respect, and authority" (p. 73).

This example suggests that how schools conceptualize the home-school relationship and their expectations of parents might play a role in parent satisfaction with school. When their efforts are noted and appreciated, parents are likely to be more satisfied. Further research should be done on how parent perceptions of how their involvement is received contribute to satisfaction. Schools too should make every effort to recognize the class differences and to seek to reduce them through valuing parent

efforts and by reaching out to parents, and particularly those who belong to the working class. Specific strategies are detailed below.

Implications of the Study as a Whole: Affective and Behavioral Strategies for Improving the Home-School Relationship

As noted above, literature on the sociology of education suggests that the relationship between parents of different classes and schools is complex. Research also indicates that schools strongly influence the parents of their students (Goldring, 1990; Ball, Bowe, & Gewirtz, 1995; Lott, 2001; Lewis & Forman, 2002). Given the influence schools have on parents, schools offer a promising route to improving the home-school relationship. One way to organize these intervention strategies is through the affective and behavioral framework suggested by the parent outcome data.

Affect comprises the heart of the home-school relationship (Esler et al., 2002). In order for schools to engage more effectively with families, they should be intentional about the affective strategies they use. Two examples of affective strategies include a strengths-based perspective and expanding the definition of family.

The first step schools should take to improve the affective side of their relationship with families is to highlight student and parent strengths. Much communication between schools and parents focuses on student behavioral challenges and academic weaknesses (Jones & Jones, 2001). In particular, schools are most likely to contact parents when their children are not meeting expectations (Lott, 2001). This can sour the relationship between families and schools by building up negative associations. When schools communicate student strengths and growth, parents feel encouraged and successful. Schools can also note when parents have been particularly effective in

contributing to a child's learning. In addition to helping parents feel valued, this can help schools to shift their focus from deficits and remediation to strengths and success.

Schools can also improve the home-school relationship by expanding their definition of family. All important adults in a child's life should be welcome at school open houses, student conferences, and educational meetings. This policy turns working class family networks into a valuable educational asset. It also relieves parents of some of the burdens of time constraints and rigid schedules and acknowledges that not all parents are available during regular business hours. This policy also allows school personnel to form relationships with a larger proportion of the influential people in a child's life. As one caveat, parents should be responsible for designating which adults can attend school events and meetings so that the safety of students and staff is ensured.

In addition to targeting the affective side of the relationship, schools can change their behaviors to support families. In particular, two actions might be effective in improving the home-school relationship. First, schools can assist parents in forming organizations related to educational issues (Goldring, 1990). As Goldring notes, "parents are more likely to be influential in the school organization if they are formally organized as interest groups" (1990, p. 5). Parent outreach and curriculum development are two examples of where parents could be influential. These organizations allow parents to develop real power in the school and to feel as if they are more than stakeholders. Parent participation in these organizations also allows parents to see that they are necessary for successful education and somewhat reduces the power differential between school personnel and parents. Finally, forming groups helps parents to create networks with

other parents, which helps them to navigate the culture of school and to feel more integral to its functioning (Lewis & Forman, 2002).

A second action schools can take to improve family-school relationships is to become community social service centers (Lott, 2001; Zigler & Gilman, 1991). Zigler and Gilman conceptualize these twenty-first century schools as educational, childcare, and family support centers. In particular, Zigler notes that numerous services exist to support parents and families and that these services are highly fragmented. Further, Zigler and Gilman assert that having schools coordinate services would prevent duplication of services, would ensure that families had access to relevant services, and would help to improve relationships between families and schools. This model has already been adopted in some areas with some success (Lott, 2001; Zigler & Gilman, 1991). While this action requires policy shifts and substantial investment of resources, it has the potential to improve parent perceptions of the schools and service delivery to parents and children. First, school-based community centers could make schools seem more caring (Lott,2001). By meeting the basic needs of families, these centers convey to parents that they are important beyond their role as home caregiver. In addition, these centers would help schools to expand their view of children beyond mere learners. In other words, these centers could help schools to better understand the risk and protective factors in their students' lives (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998). Finally, these centers would help families to receive seamless coverage without service duplication or gaps.

In short, school strategies are vital in determining the success of the home-school relationship. Through affective strategies such as highlighting strengths, welcoming important adults, and bringing families into schools as well as behavioral strategies such

as helping parents to form organizations and becoming community service centers, schools can engage parents and contribute to their satisfaction.

Limitations and Additional Research

Some limitations exist pertaining to the selected schools, the participants, and the methods in this study. The first challenge was that the three schools in this study were clearly divided into two categories: suburban and urban. Within these schools, parent race and education were confounded. Hence, the race analysis was dropped from the study, which makes it harder to determine whether the close relationship between school location and parent education are widespread or are related to the particular schools in this study. Future research including more heterogeneous parent populations might clarify these results.

A second limitation pertained to the parent participants. Parents who are willing to read, complete, and return a five-page survey are likely the most involved and organized parents in the school. Since no more than thirty-one percent of the parents at any of the schools responded, most parent perceptions were not represented. The results of this study would likely differ if the other seventy percent of the parents had responded. This was also evident in the fact that there was a positive response bias in the survey responses with many parents selected the highest mark for perceived school-provided social support, trust, and satisfaction. More parent perspectives might have been included had the researcher attended parent-teacher conferences or followed up survey distribution with phone calls. However, the researcher wished to respect parent privacy while conducting this research. Attending conferences and adding parent phone calls should be included in future data collection.

A third area of possible limitations pertained to the study method. The survey was structured so that parents would consider the school as an organization. While this is consistent with the literature, grouping the "teachers, principal, and staff" obscured individual contributions to parents' experiences. This was highlighted in some of the comments parents wrote in the margins of their surveys. In the parent trust questions, a parent marked low trust scores and wrote, "This information is about my child's teacher this year. Had I filled the survey out the last two years, I would have marked a lot more 4s and 5s." Another parent called to suggest that I separate questions pertaining to the principal, the current teacher, and the school staff. She noted that her responses would differ dramatically based on whom she was rating.

A final limitation is that this study only captured parent perceptions at one point in time. This snapshot did not allow for the detection of causal relationships between the constructs. Thus, it was impossible to determine whether parent perceptions of school-provided social support actually caused increased trust and satisfaction and whether the moderation relationships were directly related to school efforts to enhance the home-school relationship.

Future Directions

While this study shed light on the home-school relationship, a number of new questions were raised in the course of the research and in reflection on the limitations. These questions and limitations point to both conceptual and methodological directions for future research.

The first conceptual challenge related to the theoretical framework for this study. In particular, this study indicated that the attitudes, relationships, and actions framework

proposed by Esler and colleagues (2002) was not an effective basis for the home-school relationship. In particular, only an affective and a behavioral component seemed to exist. Future measures of the home-school relationship should take into account these two factors and it should be used to guide scale development.

A second conceptual issue is that only parent perceptions of the home-school relationship were assessed in this study. Given that Esler, Godber, and Christenson (2002) write from a within-school perspective, one that stresses the interaction between families and schools, this is a glaring omission. In future studies, the perspectives of school personnel, and particularly teachers and administrators, should be assessed. This would help to determine how school perceptions fit with parent perceptions and where discrepancies lie. School perspectives on the outcomes of the relationship should also be measured. Again, given that schools and families are the two largest stakeholders in this relationship, it should be captured from multiple perspectives.

In addition, three methodological issues could be addressed in future research. First, future research in this area should expand beyond a quantitative framework. Converting the *Home-School Relationship Survey* into a structured interview or an open-ended questionnaire would allow parents more flexibility and would more accurately capture parents' voices. First, parents could clearly specify about whom they are responding. In addition, more flexible questions about their perceptions of support might more clearly delineate what types of support parents value and if this changes with demographic factors. Parent responses could also add richness to the theory supporting parent perceptions of school-provided social support. One drawback with an open-ended format is that parents might be less inclined to complete the questionnaires since it would

require more effort and increased literacy. Also, interviews require a larger time commitment than Likert-type questions and can be more intrusive.

Second, future efforts should examine support provided by different members of the school community. The PPSSS scale used in this study asked parents to rate support from their "child's school (including the teachers, principal, and staff)." This was intentionally worded in general, inclusive terms so parents could define school in their own terms. As noted above though, parent participants indicated that members of the school community offered different types and levels of support.

One challenge is that separating out different members of the school community might cause parents to reflect on individuals rather than the school as an institution. This could cause parent perceptions of the school and its staff to vary dramatically from year to year and to be highly affected by the personalities of involved individuals. Information about the school as a whole needs to be balanced with information about how different school personnel in particular roles contribute to their relationship with families. Parents might expect different types of support from different staff members and more specificity about parent expectations and perceptions might help to tailor more specific interventions.

Finally, collecting data at two points in time would allow for the detection of changes in the home-school relationship and for the determination of whether school efforts influenced parent perceptions of support or parent outcomes. It would also indicate whether school interventions caused changes in parent perceptions of social support and if an increased sense of support contributed to changes in parent outcomes.

Overall, this study suggests that school-initiated actions influence the satisfaction of parents with school. Thus, schools should make every effort to reach out to parents and to support them in ways that maximize their cultural capital. These supportive attitudes, relationships, and actions have the potential to influence parent satisfaction. Further, schools should target lesser-educated and suburban parents in their efforts since their satisfaction varies more with their perceptions of support. In short, schools are responsible for supporting parents such that the home-school relationship is maintained and student learning is enhanced.

Appendix One: Teacher Letter

Dear Teachers,

You are invited to participate in a research study with the School Psychology Program at MSU.

What is the purpose of the research?
This research is designed to help us understand how the school's relationship with parents affects parent satisfaction with school, trust of the school, and involvement in school activities.

What would you like me to do?

- **Send home** the surveys with your students
- **Remind** students to have their parents complete the surveys
- **Send home** duplicate surveys when necessary

Thank you so much for your participation! Please email or call Jana Aupperlee (AUPPERL3@msu.edu or 485-4865) or Jean Baker (jbaker@msu.edu or 432-0843) if you have any questions about your participation or the study.

Sincerely,
Jana Aupperlee

Appendix Two: Parent Letter

Attention Parents

You are invited to participate in a research study with the School Psychology Program at MSU! We will be working together for the rest of the school year to examine how the relationship between families and schools influences parents.

What is the purpose of the research? This research is designed to help us understand how support from the school affects parent satisfaction with school, trust of the school, and involvement in school activities.

What will I do? In a few days, your child will bring home a packet from school. You will be asked to complete a short survey about your relationship with your child's school. Then, you will return the survey to the researchers in the provided envelope.

What about privacy? No one will see your answers to the questions except the researchers. Also, your personal information and responses to the questions will be separated and destroyed when the survey is completed. You and your child will not be identified in any way.

How can I be included? You can only be included if you sign and return the permission slip with the survey in the provided envelope.

Thank you! Please e-mail or call Jana Aupperlee (AUPPERL3@msu.edu or 485-4865) or Jean Baker (jbaker@msu.edu or 432-0843) if you have any questions about your participation or the study.

Please mail the survey and peach permission slip by April 7, 2005.

Appendix Three: Home-School Relationship Survey

Dear Parent,

Please complete the peach-colored consent form and the following survey and return them both in the postage-paid envelope. As you complete this survey, please think about one of your children. If you have two or more children in this school, please think about your **YOUNGEST** child in kindergarten through fifth grade.

Thank You!
Jana Aupperlee

Home-School Relationship Survey

- In what grade is your youngest child in this building? **Kindergarten 1st 2nd 3rd 4th 5th**
- What is your gender? **Male Female**
- What is the gender of the child you're thinking about for this survey? **Male Female**
- Does your child receive special education services? **Yes No**
- What is your race/ethnicity?
  - **Caucasian**
  - **African American**
  - **Hispanic**
  - **Asian**
  - **Other: _____**
- Please circle your highest education level:
  - **Some high school**
  - **High school graduate or GED**
  - **Some college**
  - **Associates degree**
  - **Bachelor's degree**
  - **Some post-college courses**
  - **Graduate degree (including: M.A., M.D., Ph.D., etc.)**

Please rate your response to the following statements about your child's school:

I agree... **1(Not at All) 2(A Little) 3(Somewhat) 4(Mostly) 5(Definitely)**

My child's school (including the teachers, principal, and staff)...

- cares about me (Not at All) **1 2 3 4 5** (Definitely)
- understands me (Not at All) **1 2 3 4 5** (Definitely)
- listens when I need to talk (Not at All) **1 2 3 4 5** (Definitely)
- treats me with respect (Not at All) **1 2 3 4 5** (Definitely)
- understands my child (Not at All) **1 2 3 4 5** (Definitely)
- respects my contributions to my child's learning (Not at All) **1 2 3 4 5** (Definitely)
- answers my questions (Not at All) **1 2 3 4 5** (Definitely)
- gives me helpful advice about my child's learning and development (Not at All) **1 2 3 4 5** (Definitely)
- explains things I don't understand (Not at All) **1 2 3 4 5** (Definitely)
- helps me solve problems by giving me information (Not at All) **1 2 3 4 5** (Definitely)
- shows me how to do things (Not at All) **1 2 3 4 5** (Definitely)
- gives me information about programs and services (Not at All) **1 2 3 4 5** (Definitely)
- appreciates my help at school and in the classroom (Not at All) **1 2 3 4 5** (Definitely)
- lets me know I'm doing a good job as a parent (Not at All) **1 2 3 4 5** (Definitely)
- has clear expectations for my participation in my child's learning (Not at All) **1 2 3 4 5** (Definitely)
- thinks parents are important for learning (Not at All) **1 2 3 4 5** (Definitely)
- appreciates my work with my child at home (Not at All) **1 2 3 4 5** (Definitely)

My child's school (including the teachers, principal, and staff)...

- gives me feedback about my child's learning, behavior, and social interactions
  (Not at All) **1** **2** **3** **4** **5** (Definitely)
- spends time with me when I need help (Not at All) **1** **2** **3** **4** **5** (Definitely)
- provides programs to make sure my child learns
  (Not at All) **1** **2** **3** **4** **5** (Definitely)
- makes sure that my child has the things they need to learn (like books or school supplies)
  (Not at All) **1** **2** **3** **4** **5** (Definitely)
- helps me make decisions about my child's education
  (Not at All) **1** **2** **3** **4** **5** (Definitely)
- provides programs to help parents do a better job
  (Not at All) **1** **2** **3** **4** **5** (Definitely)
- helps me find resources (like information about after-school programs or summer camps
  (Not at All) **1** **2** **3** **4** **5** (Definitely)

Please rate your agreement with the following statements about your child's teacher(s):

I agree... **1(Not at All) 2(A Little) 3(Somewhat) 4(Mostly) 5(Definitely)**

I trust that teachers...

- are doing a good job teaching my child academic subjects
  (Not at All) **1** **2** **3** **4** **5** (Definitely)
- are doing a good job teaching my child to follow rules and directions
  (Not at All) **1** **2** **3** **4** **5** (Definitely)
- are doing a good job helping my child resolve conflicts with peers
  (Not at All) **1** **2** **3** **4** **5** (Definitely)
- are doing a good job keeping me well informed of my child's progress
  (Not at All) **1** **2** **3** **4** **5** (Definitely)
- are doing a good job encouraging my participation in my child's education
  (Not at All) **1** **2** **3** **4** **5** (Definitely)
- are doing a good job disciplining my child (Not at All) **1** **2** **3** **4** **5** (Definitely)
- are doing a good job encouraging my child's sense of self-esteem
  (Not at All) **1** **2** **3** **4** **5** (Definitely)
- are doing a good job encouraging my child to have a positive attitude toward learning
  (Not at All) **1** **2** **3** **4** **5** (Definitely)

I trust that teachers...

- are doing a good job helping my child understand his/her moral and ethical responsibilities
  (Not at All) **1** **2** **3** **4** **5** (Definitely)
- are friendly and approachable (Not at All) **1** **2** **3** **4** **5** (Definitely)
-
- are receptive to my input and suggestions (Not at All) **1** **2** **3** **4** **5** (Definitely)
- are sensitive to cultural differences (Not at All) **1** **2** **3** **4** **5** (Definitely)
- respect me as a competent parent (Not at All) **1** **2** **3** **4** **5** (Definitely)
- care about my child (Not at All) **1** **2** **3** **4** **5** (Definitely)
- have my child's best interests at heart (Not at All) **1** **2** **3** **4** **5** (Definitely)
- are worthy of my respect (Not at All) **1** **2** **3** **4** **5** (Definitely)
- will do what is best for my child in the classroom
  (Not at All) **1** **2** **3** **4** **5** (Definitely)
- are easy to reach when I have a problem or question
  (Not at All) **1** **2** **3** **4** **5** (Definitely)
- keep me aware of all the information I need related to school
  (Not at All) **1** **2** **3** **4** **5** (Definitely)

Please rate your agreement with the following statements about your child's school:

I agree... **1(Not at All) 2(A Little) 3(Somewhat) 4(Mostly) 5(Definitely)**

- This school is a good place for my child (Not at All) **1** **2** **3** **4** **5** (Definitely)
- The school staff is doing good things for my child
  (Not at All) **1** **2** **3** **4** **5** (Definitely)
- I have confidence in the people at this school
  (Not at All) **1** **2** **3** **4** **5** (Definitely)
- This school is preparing my child for the future
  (Not at All) **1** **2** **3** **4** **5** (Definitely)

Please rate your agreement with the following statements about your child's school:

1(Not Satisfied) 2(Somewhat Satisfied) 3(Satisfied) 4(Mostly Satisfied) 5(Very Satisfied)

How satisfied are you with...

- the school's beliefs and attitudes about learning?
  (Not Satisfied) **1 2 3 4 5** (Very Satisfied)
- the school's friendliness? (Not Satisfied) **1 2 3 4 5** (Very Satisfied)
- the school's promotion of your child's learning and academic development?
  (Not Satisfied) **1 2 3 4 5** (Very Satisfied)
- the school's promotion of your child's ability to get along with others?
  (Not Satisfied) **1 2 3 4 5** (Very Satisfied)
- the school's promotion of your child's knowledge of how to be a good citizen?
  (Not Satisfied) **1 2 3 4 5** (Very Satisfied)
- the school's development of your child's learning potential?
  (Not Satisfied) **1 2 3 4 5** (Very Satisfied)
- the school's curriculum or what it is teaching your child?
  (Not Satisfied) **1 2 3 4 5** (Very Satisfied)
- the school's promotion of your values and beliefs?
  (Not Satisfied) **1 2 3 4 5** (Very Satisfied)

Please rate how often you participate in the following activities:

1(Never) 2(Rarely) 3(Sometimes) 4(Often) 5(All the Time)

How often do you...

- read to your child? (Never) **1 2 3 4 5** (All the Time)
- take your child to the library? (Never) **1 2 3 4 5** (All the Time)
- play educational games with your child? (Never) **1 2 3 4 5** (All the Time)
- visit school for special events? (Never) **1 2 3 4 5** (All the Time)
- attend PTO (Parent-Teacher Organization) meetings?
  (Never) **1 2 3 4 5** (All the Time)
- send things to class for your child (books, snacks, etc.)?
  (Never) **1 2 3 4 5** (All the Time)

How often do you...

- volunteer at your child's school? (Never) **1** **2** **3** **4** **5** (All the Time)
- call your child's teacher? (Never) **1** **2** **3** **4** **5** (All the Time)
- write notes or email to your child's teacher? (Never) **1** **2** **3** **4** **5** (All the Time)
- stop to talk to your child's teacher? (Never) **1** **2** **3** **4** **5** (All the Time)
- attend parent-teacher conferences? (Never) **1** **2** **3** **4** **5** (All the Time)

Appendix Four: Parent Consent

Parent's Name: _____Child's Name: _____Grade: _____

PARENT/GUARDIAN CONSENT FORM

As a parent at **insert school name here,** you are invited to participate in this study called "Home-School Relationships." This study examines how the relationship between families and schools influences parent trust of school, satisfaction with school, and involvement.

1) The reason for this research is to understand how the relationship between the families and schools contributes to parent outcomes. From this research, we hope to understand what types of support are important to parents and how schools can better support families.

2) If you choose to complete this study, you will be asked to complete a short (15 minute) survey about your perceptions of your child's school.

3) Your participation is completely voluntary. You may choose not to participate at all, you may refuse to answer certain questions, or you may discontinue your participation at any time without penalty. No discomforts or stresses are foreseen.

4) We do not anticipate that you will be stressed or uncomfortable as a result of their participation in this research. However, if you do so, we are prepared to refer you to a knowledgeable professional.

5) The results of your participation will be confidential, and will not be released in any individually identifiable from without your prior consent, unless otherwise required by law. No one will be able to identify your results from this study. Refusal to participate or withdrawal from participation will not in any way penalize you. You may have the results of the participation, to the extent that they can be identified as yours, returned to you, removed from the research records, or destroyed at any point prior to the end of the study.

The investigators will answer any further questions about the research, now or during the course of the project. You are encouraged to ask questions. You may talk with anyone on the research team during the study, or you may contact the researchers:

- Jana Aupperlee, B.A.; Michigan State University, Department of Counseling Psychology, Educational Psychology, and Special Education, East Lansing, MI, 48824. Telephone: (517) 485-4865. E-mail: aupperl3@msu.edu

- Dr. Jean A. Baker; Michigan State University, Department of Counseling Psychology, Educational Psychology, and Special Education, East Lansing, MI, 48824. Telephone: (517) 432-0843. E-mail: jbaker@msu.edu

If you agree to participate in the research, please sign below and return this form, with your questionnaire, in the attached postage-paid envelope.

Signature of Parent/Guardian Date	Signatures of Investigators Date

Research at Michigan State University involving human participants is overseen by the University Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a participant, or are dissatisfied at any time with any aspect of the study, you may contact – anonymously, if you wish – Peter Vasilenko, Ph.D., Chair of the University Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects by phone: (517) 355-2180, fax: (517) 432-4503, e-mail: ucrihs@msu.edu, or regular mail: 202 Olds Hall, East Lansing, MI 48824.

Appendix Five: Reminder Letter

Dear Parents,

Last week, you received a manila envelope containing the Home-School Relationship Survey. Have you signed the peach-colored consent form and returned the survey yet? If not, please do so today!

Remember, this research will help us understand how support from the schools influences parent feelings about their child's school and their involvement with school activities!

If you have any questions about your participation or the study, please call or send us an e-mail:

- Jana Aupperlee:
  (517) 485-4865 or AUPPERL3@msu.edu
- Jean Baker
  (517) 432-0843 or JBAKER@msu.edu

Thank You,
Jana Aupperlee

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