HOME-SCHOOLING AS AN EXTREME FORM OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

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To my wonderful advisors, Kathy Hoover-Dempsey and Howard Sandler,
and to my family and friends, especially Ryan Ice. Thank you for all of your support.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to examine why parents decide to home-school. Defined as the education of school-aged children at home rather than in public or private school settings (Basham, 2001), home-schooling has been the subject of very little empirical work to date (Cizek, 1993). The scant research that has been done has focused on parents' reasons for home-schooling (Knowles, 1988; Knowles, Marlow, & Muchmore, 1992; Knowles, Muchmore, & Spaulding, 1994; Van Galen, 1988), the academic performance of home-schooled versus public-schooled students (Boulter, 1999; Ray, 2000; Rudner, 1999), and the legal implications of home-schooling (Arai, 1999; Reich, 2002). Because home-schooling is a growing trend in the U.S. (e.g., up from 850,000 students, or 1.7% of K – 12 students in 1999 [Bielick, Chandler & Broughman, 2002] to 1.1 million students in 2003, or 2.2% of K-12 students [Princlotta, Bielick, & Chapman, 2004; see also Lines, 2000; Ray, 2000]), it is important to develop more systematic knowledge of parents' motivations for home-schooling.

Home-Schooling and Parental Involvement

In order to understand parents' motivations for home-schooling, it is useful to consider home-schooling within the context of the parental involvement literature in general. For example, the parental involvement literature suggests that involvement is best understood as parents' investment of varied resources in children's education, including parent-child communication about schoolwork, supervision of homework, educational aspirations for children, school contact and participation, and provision of school supplies (e.g., Fan & Chen, 2001; Grolnick, Benjet, Kurowski & Apostoleris, 1997; Sheldon, 2002). Applying this definition to home-schooling parents, it is clear that home-school parents invest substantial resources (e.g., time, energy, income, knowledge, and skills) into teaching their children at home. The literature also focuses on why parents become involved in their child's education, and this work also has apparent parallels in the home-schooling population. For example, theorists and researchers have suggested that parental involvement is often motivated by an active role construction for involvement (e.g., Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995, 1997; Sheldon, 2002) and a relatively

strong sense of efficacy for helping the child succeed in school (e.g., Grolnick et al., 1997; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995, 1997; Kay, Fitzgerald, Paradee & Mellencamp, 1994). Home-school parents are also typically seen as being highly active in their child's education, as well as having a strong sense of efficacy yielding beliefs that they can teach their children and give them a full education outside of an organized school system (Van Galen, 1988).

In a parental involvement model that includes these factors (see Figure 1, next page), Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler (1995, 1997; Walker, Wilkins, Dallaire, Sandler, & Hoover-Dempsey, in press) suggest that psychological variables (such as efficacy and parent role construction for involvement in their child's education), life context variables (such as time & energy, as well as knowledge & skills), and perceptions of invitations to involvement are all reasons why public school parents become involved. When this model is applied to home-school parents, it becomes apparent that psychological motivators and life context variables have implications for home-school parents as well. However, the third set of constructs, invitations to involvement, is not applicable to the home-schooling population because these home-schooling parents are not in a position to receive invitations to involvement from public schools.

The scant body of research on home-schooling suggests the importance of another set of constructs which are not included in Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's model: parents' personal beliefs related to home-schooling. Basham (2001) and Van Galen (1988), for example, noted that the contemporary home-schooling movement in the U.S. (generally marked as beginning in the 1960's and 1970's, even though home-schooling was not legal until the mid-1980's) was grounded in parents' ideological (e.g., children should be taught certain ideas in school, such as religious values) and pedagogical beliefs (e.g., children should be taught in a relatively child-centered, unstructured way). In addition, Knowles (1988) suggested that some parents home-school because they have had negative experiences with public schools. Bielick et al. (2002) also identified parental concerns about appropriate education for their particular child's needs as a motivator for home-schooling.

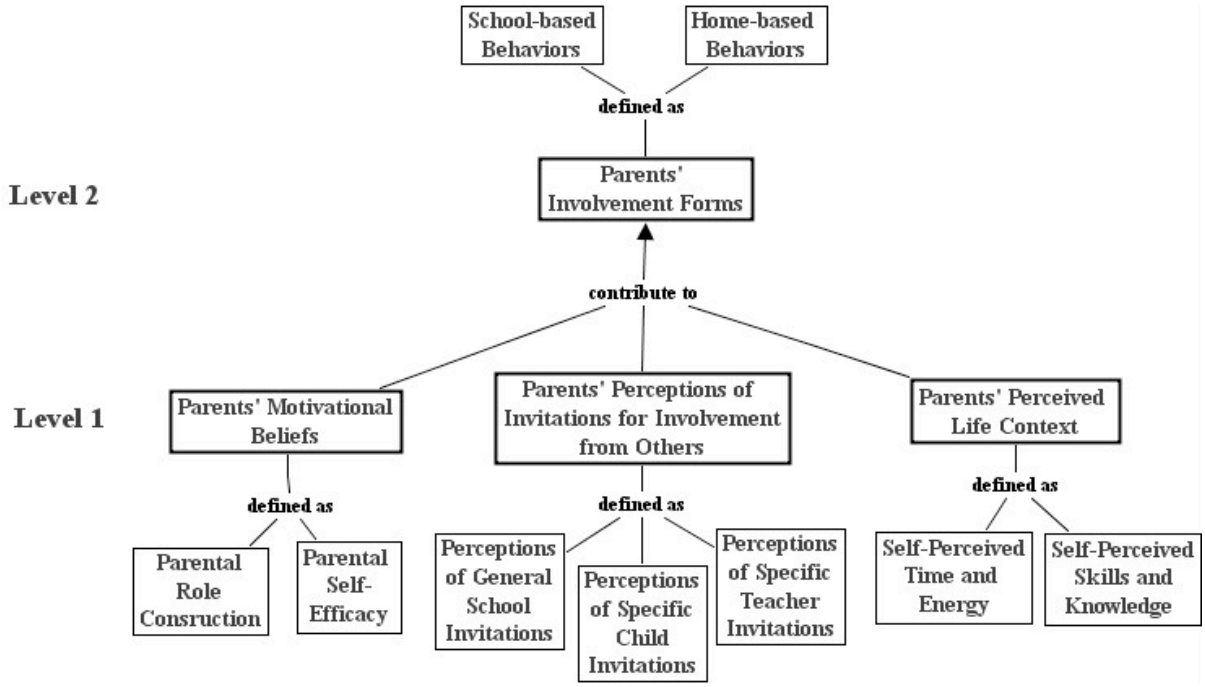

Figure 1. Revised version of levels one and two of Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1995, 1997) theoretical model of the parental involvement process (Walker et al., in press).

Clearly, both the parental involvement and home-school literature provide distinct and potentially valuable contributions to understanding why a parent might decide to home-school. Taken together, this literature suggests that a parent's decision to home-school may be explained in part by psychological variables (including parent efficacy for helping the child succeed in school and parental beliefs about their role in children's education), life context variables (including parental perceptions of the time, energy, knowledge and skills they have for helping their children), and parental beliefs and values related to home-schooling.

Purpose of the Study

This study was designed to examine why parents decide to home-school and to determine if this decision could be explained by Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1995, 1997; Walker, et al., in press) model of the parental involvement process, as augmented by consideration of parents' personal values related to home-schooling. It was hypothesized that, in general, parents' home-school for three major reasons: psychological motivators encourage them to do so, personal beliefs suggest the necessity of home schooling, and life context variables allow them to do so.

Constructs To Be Examined

Psychological Motivators of Involvement

Psychological motivators of involvement, comprised of parent role construction and parents' sense of efficacy for helping the child succeed in school, were drawn from Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1995, 1997; Walker, et al., in press) model of parental involvement.

Role Construction for Involvement

Parental role construction for involvement is defined as the beliefs and behaviors about what one is supposed to do, as a parent, in relation to the child's education (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). Hoover-Dempsey and Jones (1997) identified three major patterns of parental role construction: parent-focused (beliefs and behaviors indicating that the parent is primarily responsible for the child's educational outcomes), school-focused (beliefs and behaviors indicating that the school is primarily responsible for the child's educational outcomes), and

partnership-focused (beliefs and behaviors indicating that the parent and the school are jointly responsible for the child's educational success).

Because home-schooling parents decide to assume full responsibility for their children's education, I hypothesized that most will record very strong parent-focused role construction. Most parents who choose to home-school do so with little support from the local neighborhood community or school system (Holt, 1983; Knowles, 1989); therefore a partnership-focused role construction seemed less likely except in cases where parents home-school for ideological or value-related reasons (Van Galen, 1988; see below for further explanation). In addition, school-focused role construction did not pertain to this population because their involvement practices take them outside of the school system.

Self-Efficacy for Helping the Child Succeed in School

Parents' self-efficacy is defined as parent beliefs about personal ability to help children succeed in school (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). Parents with a strong sense of self-efficacy generally set higher goals and invest more work into realizing these goals than do parents with a low sense of self-efficacy for helping their children succeed (Bandura, 1977). Because parents who home-school often have strong beliefs that they can give their children a full education outside of an organized school system (Van Galen, 1988), I expected that parents who home-school would generally have a strong sense of self-efficacy for helping children learn.

Personal Beliefs Related to the Decision to Home-School

Based on the descriptive literature on home schooling, I suggested that parents who home-school hold at least one of four types of personal beliefs supporting the view that they should home school. These include value beliefs, ideological beliefs, pedagogical beliefs, and beliefs about the child's special needs.

Value Beliefs

Value beliefs reflect the religious, moral or family reasons a parent might decide to home-school. These diverse beliefs center on the parents' beliefs that that other school options cannot provide adequately for their child's religious, moral, or family needs. The role of such beliefs are supported by Cai, Reeve and Robinson (2002), who claimed that 75% of home-school

educators are conservative Christians who stress the Bible and related teachings, values, and doctrine for their children. As such, they are motivated to teach specific philosophies and religious values, develop close family ties, and control the child's exposure to social interaction partners (Ray, 2000). In general, they believe that the public school system cannot teach the philosophies, religious values, and family values that they feel their child needs. Home-school parents may also believe that the public school system allows children to behave in ways that are not ethically, morally, or religiously desirable.

Ideological Beliefs

Ideological beliefs refer to parents' beliefs that public school curricula cannot provide for their child's needs (Van Galen, 1988). Van Galen suggested that the curriculum of most formal schooling legitimates limited facets of knowledge (e.g., traditional teachings that exclude information pertaining to racial, religious, and ethnic minorities and women). This limited curriculum causes parents who decide to home-school to feel that their beliefs about appropriate curriculum are excluded from most public schools' offerings. In addition, parents may believe that public schools teach topics that are inappropriate in a public setting, such as sex education. Ideological beliefs therefore include parental beliefs about the public schools' ability to cover desired curriculum contents.

Pedagogical Beliefs

Pedagogical beliefs focus on parents' ideas about appropriate or ideal teaching practices. Many home-school parents believe that the way public schools teach cannot provide for their child's needs (e.g. Van Galen, 1988). For example, home-school parents who endorse such pedagogical beliefs criticize many public schools' labeling of children and subsequent ability grouping or tracking based on these labels. They suggest that such practices can relegate children placed in lower groups to an inferior education and prepare them for a limited future (Van Galen, 1988). In addition, home-schooling parents may believe that the public schools teach ineptly. For example, rather than focusing on traditional teaching methods that rely on extrinsic motivation to learn, parents who home-school often focus on methods that reinforce intrinsic motivation for learning (Knowles et al., 1994). Therefore, pedagogical beliefs,

including parental beliefs about teaching in ways that best match how children learn, may also motivate their decision to home-school.

Beliefs Regarding the Child's Special Needs

A final major reason many parents may home-school is related to their beliefs that their child has unique academic, behavioral, emotional, or physical needs that cannot be met well in public school systems. Bielick et al. (2002), for example, suggested that such beliefs account for 40% of the reasons parents decide to home school. Parents may see their children as having trouble in public schools, and feel that they have exhausted the school's resources for solving the problems (Van Galen, 1988). Beliefs regarding the child's special needs therefore include the belief that public schools cannot or will not address their child's individual needs with appropriate resources and support.

Life Context Variables Related to the Decision to Home-School

Consistent with Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1995, 1997) model of parental involvement, I also suggested that a parent's decision to home-school is motivated by life context variables, including time and energy, as well as knowledge and skills. In general, I hypothesized that home-schooling parents believe that they have the time, energy, content knowledge, and teaching skills sufficient educate the child at home.

Time and Energy

Home-schooling parents generally must also teach the child, supervise the child's schoolwork, and plan for the equivalent of extracurricular activities for the child. Often they also believe that they should communicate with other home-school parents in home school support groups -- and with the child about his or her learning -- in order to fully provide for the child's academic and social education. These tasks require that the home-schooling parent be able to devote a significant portion of the day to planning, teaching, and supervising the child's education. Therefore, I hypothesized that home-schooling parents will believe they have sufficient time and energy to complete all the tasks necessary to teach their child at home.

Knowledge and Skills

In order to home school, parents must also have the skills necessary for teaching their child, as well as knowledge about home-schooling. This includes knowledge about learning events that may enrich their child's education, teaching methods, and subject matter. In addition, these parents must know how to contact home-school support groups if problems arise. With few or no outside resources to offer assessment of the parent's ability to home-school (Marlow, 1994), these parents must assess their own knowledge and skills as adequate to the task of teaching their child. Therefore, I hypothesized that home-school parents will perceive their knowledge and skills as sufficient to assume full responsibility for their child's education.

Summary and Hypotheses

I hypothesized that parents who home-school make that decision in a manner consistent with Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1995, 1997) model of parental involvement as augmented by parents' personal beliefs pertinent to home-schooling. Specifically, I expected that: (1) parents will home-school for three major reasons: psychological motivators encourage them to do so, life context variables allow them to do so, and personal beliefs suggest the necessity of home-schooling, (2) home-school parents will have high scores (compared to a sample of public school parents) on psychological motivators and life context variables, suggesting that these variables may contribute to parent's decision to home-school, and (3) most home-school parents will have a parent-focused role-construction, and these parents will have higher levels of efficacy and knowledge and skills than home-school parents who endorse a partnership-focused role construction. Finally, (4) I hypothesized that home-school parents who endorse a parent-focused role-construction will hold pedagogical or special needs personal beliefs related to public schools' ability to teach their children, whereas parent's who endorse a partnership-focused role construction will hold ideological or value beliefs about the public school system.

CHAPTER II

METHODS

Participants

A sample of 136 home-schooling parents in middle Tennessee were recruited through targeted, non-probability sampling through curriculum fairs, umbrella schools, Christian and eclectic home-school groups, and national home education advocacy groups. To obtain the sample of 136, surveys were sent to approximately 250 home-school parents (reflecting a 54.4% response rate.) In order to ensure the sample was as representative of the population as possible, a small incentive was given to participating parents for use at a local bookstore. Other work has indicated such token payments are helpful in recruitment (e.g., Fletcher & Hunter, 2003). In addition, previously collected data from a sample of 358 public school parents (see Walker et al., in press) were also used to compare home-school parents with public school parents on variables of interest.

Data available from the Tennessee State Department of Education (Dr. Randy Hankins, personal communication, September 24, 2003) indicate that 4,500 home-schooling parents were registered with the state in 2003. However, Dr. Hankins estimated that up to 25,000 parents were actually home-schooling in Tennessee. While there are no systematic data available on demographic characteristics of this population, other research (Ray, 2000; Rudnor, 1999) suggests that the home-schooling population is generally white and middle-class. Indeed, this sample had characteristics similar to those described above: of the 136 home-school parents who filled out the questionnaire (96.4% of whom were mothers), only 5% of the sample were non-Caucasian. Fifty-eight percent of these respondents had a college degree, 20% of which held a degree in education. Most of the home-school fathers held jobs as "professional executives" (54%), and 56% of the fathers had a college degree. Family income was on average over $50,000, and 66% of the families included between 2 and 3 children.

The sample size of 136 was adequate to test my research hypotheses. To discriminate divergent validity measurements between unrelated scales, the smallest noticeable difference was a correlation of .20. (For example, I expected the unrelated scales of role construction and personal beliefs to have a low correlation [between .20 and .30] with each other.) For a sample size of 136, power equals 0.6, and precision will result in plus or minus 7.9% at a 95%

confidence interval. This sample size was both necessary and sufficient to evaluate the inter-correlation between the constructs.

Measures

Measures for the constructs were adapted from current parent involvement scales (e.g., Walker, et al., in press) or developed based on data derived from qualitative studies of home-schooling (e.g., Knowles, 1988; Van Galen, 1988). All measures underwent face and content validity evaluations by a panel of five persons who had expert knowledge of the constructs being evaluated. The experts were presented with the scales and a description of the constructs, and asked to evaluate how well the scale assessing the constructs matched the construct definitions. Satisfactory face and content validity were attained for all scales.

Psychological Motivators of Involvement

Parental role construction for involvement. An adapted form of the 10-item Role Activity Beliefs scale (alpha = .84) and the 6-item Valence Toward School scale (alpha = .90) were used to measure parental role construction for involvement (Walker, et al., in press). The two scales allow the derivation of four major types of parental role construction: parent-focused, partnership-focused, school-focused and disengaged. High activity and low valence are associated with a parent-focused role construction, high activity beliefs and high valence scores suggest a partnership-focused role construction, low activity and high valence suggest a school-focused role construction; and low valence and low activity indicate a parent who is disengaged.

The activity beliefs scale included 10 items scored on a 6-point Likert-type response scale. Possible scores ranged from 10-60; higher scores indicated that that the parent believes he or she should be highly active in the child's education; lower scores indicated that the parent believes he or she should not be highly active in the child's education. I adapted this scale for parents who home-school. For example, the question "I believe it is my responsibility to communicate with my child's teacher regularly" was modified to "I believe it is my responsibility to communicate with other home-school parents or teachers." I expected most home-school parents to have a high activity beliefs score.

The scale for the valence component of role construction did not need modification, as it is based on parents' previous school experiences. The scale contained six questions, scored on a

6-point Likert-type response scale. Possible scores range from 6-36. A lower valence score indicated that the parent is not attracted to the school system. A higher valence score meant that the parent is attracted to the public school system, and therefore more likely to entertain a partnership with schools or other parents or teachers affiliated with home schooling. I expected most home-school parents to have a negative valence score; meaning that they believe the public schools should not be a factor in their child's education.

In order to assess convergent validity of role construction as assessed with these two scales, an additional form of a role construction scale was used. A study by Reed, Jones, Walker, and Hoover-Dempsey (2000) tested a 14-item scale including parent-focused (alpha =.63), school-focused, and partnership-focused (alpha = .82) role construction on 250 parents. For the purposes of this study, the partnership and parent-focused subscales were adapted for home-school parents (as stated earlier, the school-focused role construction scale was irrelevant for this population.) The partnership-focused subscale as adapted reflected a partnership with the home-school community, rather than a particular school.

Self-efficacy for helping the child succeed in school. Efficacy was assessed with the Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler & Brissie (1992) measure of parent efficacy for helping children succeed in school. Drawn from the literature on personal efficacy and teacher self-efficacy (Ashton, Webb & Doda, 1983; Bandura, 1977, 1984, 1986; Dembo & Gibson, 1985), the scale was developed during a study of relationships among teacher efficacy, parent efficacy, and parent involvement in elementary schools (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 1992). It included 12 items and employed a 6-point Likert-type response scale. Administered to 390 public elementary students' parents, the scale achieved an alpha reliability of .81. Since efficacy measures how effective parents feel they can be in helping the child succeed in their schooling, the scale needed no modification for home-school parents. Possible scores on this scale ranged from 12-72. A high efficacy score meant that the parent feels able to help the child succeed in school, while a low efficacy score meant that parents do not feel very able to help their child succeed in school. Due to home-schooling parent's commitment to teaching their child, I expected most of them to report high efficacy scores.

In order to establish convergent validity with parental academic efficacy, a well-established efficacy scale by Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara and Pastorelli (1996), was also used. This parental academic efficacy scale included eight items on a five-point Likert-type

response scale (higher scores reflected stronger efficacy beliefs). Bandura et al. (1996) reported an alpha reliability coefficient of .81.

Personal Beliefs Related to the Decision to Home-School

The four types of personal beliefs described earlier were examined: value beliefs, ideological beliefs, pedagogical beliefs, and beliefs about the child's special developmental needs. In general, these scales assessed the extent to which respondents believe that the public schools can (or cannot) provide an adequate education for their children in each area. Because these personal beliefs sets related to home-schooling have not been measured in this literature before, I found no corresponding scales to assess convergent validity.

Value beliefs. I developed a 4-item scale *(e.g., "I believe that public schools do a good job of teaching character development,")* focused on religious, moral and ethical family beliefs that appear important to many home-school parents (Cai et al., 2002; Ray, 2000). The scale used a 6-point Likert-type response scale, yielding a possible range of 4-24. Lower scores meant that parents believe that public schools cannot respond well to these beliefs, whereas higher scores meant that parents are generally satisfied with the way public schools teach religious, moral and ethical family beliefs.

Ideological beliefs. A 4-item scale *(e.g., "I believe public schools have an appropriate curriculum")* was developed using a 6-point Likert-type response scale, which produced a range of 4-24. Lower scores meant that parents believe that public schools do not teach in a way that fits parents' ideas about appropriate curriculum, whereas higher scores reflected a satisfaction with traditional public school curriculum.

Pedagogical beliefs. A 6-point Likert-type response scale was developed for use with 4 questions *(e.g., "I believe public schools use teaching practices I agree with")* that assessed parent's belief about traditional school teaching methods. Possible scores ranged from 4-24. Lower scores meant that parents believe the pubic schools do not teach their children in a manner in which they best learn, while higher scores reflected satisfaction with traditional public school teaching methods.

Beliefs about the child's special developmental needs. Beliefs about the child's special developmental needs reflected a parent's ideas about his or her child's special academic, physical, or behavioral needs and beliefs about appropriate educational responses. This 4 item

measure *(e.g., "I believe public schools know how to deal with my child's individual need.")* used a 6-point Likert-type response scale to address whether the parent believes their child has a specific developmental need, and whether schools can meet such needs. Lower scores reflected dissatisfaction with the public schools' ability to meet these needs; higher scores indicated beliefs that public schools deal satisfactorily with the child's special needs.

Life Context Variables

Life context variables were evaluated by questions regarding the amount of time, energy, knowledge, and skills available to parents as related to their decision to home-school. These scales were based on the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler model of parental involvement and adapted for home-school parents

Time and energy. A scale to assess parents' perceptions of time and energy for involvement was based on the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler model as reported by Walker et al. (in press). Six common involvement behaviors were identified, including: communicating with the teacher, communicating with the child about the school day, helping the child with homework, supervising the child's homework, helping out at the school, and attending special events at the school. With a sample of 495 parents of children in grades 1-6, the time and energy scale achieved an alpha reliability of .84 (Walker et al., in press).

These common involvement behaviors were modified for the home-schooling population as follows: communicating with other home-school parents or teachers, communicating with the child about the school day, helping the child with schoolwork, supervising the child's schoolwork, and planning extra school activities. The scale consisted of 5 questions (e.g., "*I have enough time and energy to help my child with schoolwork*") using a 6-point Likert-type response scale, which yielded a range of possible scores from 5-30. Higher scores indicated parents believe that they have sufficient time and energy to complete all common involvement behaviors necessary to teach their child at home. Lower scores indicated that parents' do not believe that they have sufficient time and energy to home-school.

Knowledge and skills. This aspect of life context assessed parents' beliefs about their skills and knowledge for involvement in their children's education. The original scale was reported in Walker et al. (in press). The six common behaviors outlined above were assessed with three items focused on parents' knowledge of events (e.g., knowing about special events,

knowing the best ways to contact the teacher) and three items related to parents' knowledge or skills for events (e.g., skills to help at school, knowing how to communicate effectively with the child). With a sample of 495 parents of children in grades 1-6, the skills and knowledge scale achieved an alpha reliability of .83 (Walker et al., in press).

In order to make this scale applicable to the home-school population, three items were modified to assess parents' knowledge about outside resources (e.g., knowing about home-school support groups, knowing about field trip opportunities) and three items were modified to focus on parents' knowledge or skills for schooling events (e.g., skills needed for home-schooling, skills for communicating effectively with the child.) The scale included six questions (e.g., "*I know of educational activities outside of the home")* using a 6-point Likert-type response scale, which yielded a range of possible scores from 6-36. Higher scores indicated that parents perceive their knowledge and skills as sufficient to assume full responsibility for their child's education. Lower scores indicated that parents do not perceive their knowledge and skills as sufficient to home-school.

CHAPTER III

RESULTS

In this section, I present scale reliability and validity information. This is followed by descriptive analyses and results for each hypothesis. Briefly, the reliability and validity of the measures were satisfactory, and analyses generally supported the hypotheses.

Scale Reliability and Validity

Psychological Motivators of Involvement

Parental role construction for involvement. Role construction was assessed with two scales adapted from Walker and colleagues' (in press) Role Activity Beliefs scale and Valence Toward School scale. Face and content validity were established by a panel of five experts that scored items on relevance to the construct (see further explanation in Measures section). Alpha reliabilities for each scale with this sample were satisfactory (role activity beliefs: α = .87; valence toward schools: .93). A second role construction scale adapted from Reed and colleagues (2000) included two subscales used in this study: parent-focused (α with this sample = .76) and partnership-focused (α with this sample = .78) role construction. Convergent validity was established between the Role Activity Beliefs scale and the total Parent Role Construction scale (r = .77). Divergent validity was established by a low correlation between this scale and a similar but theoretically unrelated scale (the Personal Beliefs scale; r = -.23).

Efficacy. Alpha reliability for this scale with this sample was satisfactory (α =. 78). Face and content validity were ascertained through scoring of items on relevance to the construct by a panel of five experts as described earlier. In addition, a well-established parental academic efficacy scale (Bandura et al., 1996) was also used (α with this sample = .84). Convergent validity was achieved (r = .42). Divergent validity was established with a similar but unrelated scale (the Personal Beliefs scale; r = -.22).

Personal Beliefs Related to the Decision to Home-School

This scale had satisfactory alpha reliability with this sample for each subscale: parents' value beliefs (= .88), ideological beliefs (= .76), pedagogical beliefs (= .71), and beliefs about the child's special developmental needs (= .92). A panel of five experts scored items on relevance to the construct, as described earlier, and ascertained face and content validity. Divergent validity was established with an unrelated scale (e.g., role construction, r = -.23).

Because this was a new scale developed for this study, factor analyses were conducted on the measure. The scale loaded on three factors instead of the original four, suggesting that pedagogical beliefs and beliefs about special developmental needs are closely related. While this might have implications for future studies, the goal in this study was to develop a reliable measure for important parental beliefs related to public schools' ability to meet their ideas about important needs in schooling, so these results were acceptable.

Life Context

The two scales used to measure this construct recorded satisfactory alpha reliabilities: parental perception of time and energy (with this sample =. 84) and personal knowledge and skills pertinent to home schooling (with this sample =. 79). A panel of five experts scored items on their relevance to the construct to ascertain face and content validity, as described earlier.

Descriptive Analyses

In general, home-school parents recorded high means as well as a negative skew on psychological motivators and life context, and low means as well as a positive skew on personal beliefs related to home schooling (see Table 1, next page). Because skew was high, further analyses were done to assure that assumptions of normality were not violated. All assumptions held. In general these findings were consistent with general expectations for home-schooling parents: these parents recorded an active role construction (M = 5.57, SD = .41), high efficacy levels (M = 5.35, SD = .51), positive perceptions of their life context variables (time and energy: M = 5.32, SD = .54, and knowledge and skills: M = 5.32, SD = .50), and low evaluations of the public school's abilities to meet their beliefs about their children's educational needs satisfactorily (personal beliefs total: M = 2.25, SD =.72).

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

	Framework	***Psychological motivators***					***Personal Beliefs***					***Life Context***	
	Source	**Role Constructio**		**Reed et al. Role**		**Efficacy**	**Personal Beliefs**					**Life Context**	
	Scale	Role Acti	Valence	Parent	Partnersl	Efficacy	Total	Value	Ideology	Pedagog	Special N	Time & E	Know. &
Scale													
mean role activity		1											
mean valence		0.06	1										
mean parent role		0.73**	0.06	1									
mean partnership role		0.56**	-0.06	0.33**	1								
mean efficacy		0.29**	0.24**	0.37**	-0.01	1							
mean personal beliefs		-0.14	0.32**	-0.12	-0.24**	-0.22*	1						
sub: mean pb value		-0.10	0.20*	-0.14	-0.22**	-0.15	0.77**	1					
sub: mean pb ideological		-0.10	0.28**	-0.03	-0.20*	-0.26**	0.79**	0.53**	1				
sub: mean pb pedagogical		-0.15*	0.25**	-0.08	-0.20*	-0.17	0.86**	0.47**	0.60**	1			
sub: mean pb special needs		-0.12	0.33**	-0.13	-0.18*	-0.15	0.86**	0.51**	0.51**	0.77**	1		
mean time & energy		0.52**	0.19*	0.54**	0.30**	0.50**	-0.25**	-0.13	-0.23**	-0.23**	-0.21*	1	
mean knowledge & skills		0.41**	0.26**	0.40**	0.11	0.67**	-0.15	-0.03	-0.18*	-0.11	-0.17	0.61**	1
** p< .01, * p<.05													
	Mean	5.57	4.24	5.61	5.00	5.35	2.25	1.97	2.85	2.33	2.00	5.31	5.32
	SD	0.41	1.15	0.44	0.80	0.51	0.72	0.85	1.00	0.82	0.88	0.54	0.50
	Possible Range	1-6	1-6	1-6	1-6	1-6	1-6	1-6	1-6	1-6	1-6	1-6	1-6
	Actual Range	2.20	4.50	2.50	4.00	2.71	4.60	4.75	5.00	4.25	4.50	3.00	2.50
	Skewness	-0.99	-0.41	-1.32	-0.99	-0.97	1.05	0.99	0.47	0.71	1.01	-0.66	-0.60
	Kurtosis	1.17	-0.59	2.60	1.47	1.45	2.61	1.73	0.10	0.90	1.32	1.33	0.45

Hypothesis I: Parents home-school for three major reasons: psychological motivators encourage them to do so, life context variables allow them to do so, and personal beliefs suggest the necessity of home-schooling

In examining this hypothesis, factor analyses were run on the scales used to assess the three major constructs (psychological motivators, life context, personal beliefs). While portions of the original conceptual framework used in this study (psychological motivators [role construction; efficacy] and life context [time and energy; knowledge and skills]) were developed for public school parents, the factor analyses suggested that home-school parents may be better understood by a modified framework (see Table 2). Specifically, with this population the constructs seem to be better understood within this framework (see Figure 2, next page): (1) what a parent believes he or she *can* do to help the child succeed (efficacy; time and energy; knowledge and skills), (2) what a parent believes he or she *should* do in relation to schooling (his or her role in the child's education), and (3) what a parent has *experienced* in relation to different schooling methods (his or her personal beliefs related to home-schooling and attraction, or valence, to public schools). While the categorization of the variables do not conform to the original hypothesis, the hypothesis is supported in that all the variables contained in the original psychological motivators, life context variables, and personal beliefs constructs are relevant.

Table 2: Total Variance Within Factor Analysis of Constructs

Component	Initial Eigenvalues		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1. What a parent **can** do to help the child succeed. (time & energy, knowledge & skills, efficacy)	3.028	43.264	43.264
2. What a parent believes he or she **should** do to help the child succeed. (role construction)	1.439	20.563	63.827
3. What a parent has **experienced** in relation to different schooling methods. (valence and personal beliefs related to home-schooling)	1.092	15.596	79.424

Home-school parental involvement model

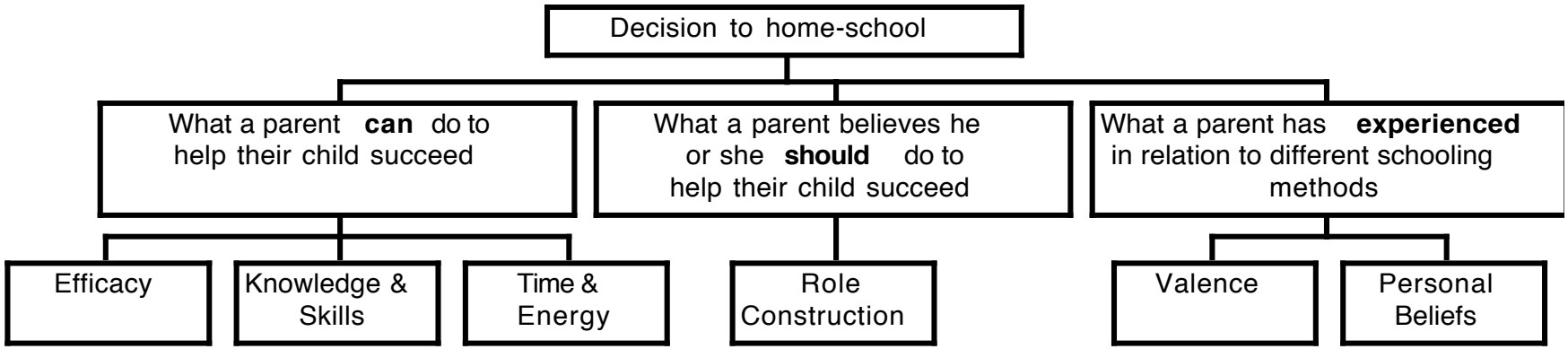

Figure 2: Model of home-school parents' parental involvement based on factor analyses

Hypothesis 2: Home-school parents will record high scores (compared to a sample of public school parents) on psychological motivators and life context variables, suggesting that these variables may indeed contribute to a parent's decision to home-school

Because factor analyses suggested a different configuration of constructs than initially envisioned in this hypothesis, this hypothesis was changed to the following: *Relative to a sample of public school parents, home-school parents will have high scores on beliefs that they can home-school (efficacy; time and energy; knowledge and skills) and should home-school (role activity). In addition, relative to this public-school sample, they will record low scores on their past experiences with public schooling (valence), suggesting that these constructs contribute to a parents' decision to home-school.*

The home-school sample was compared to a previously collected sample of 358 public school parents (Walker et al., in press) who had been surveyed on measures assessing role activity, valence, efficacy, time and energy, and knowledge and skills. First, independent-samples t-tests and effect sizes were calculated to establish that significant differences existed between home-school and public school parents on these variables as initially hypothesized (home-school parents would record higher scores on all variables, except for valence). The differences were statistically significant, as seen in Table 3 (next page), and support the research hypotheses. When compared to the sample of public school parents, home-school parents recorded large positive effects in role activity (d = 1.23), efficacy (d = .81), time and energy (d = 1.21), and knowledge and skills (d = .92). Public school parents recorded a medium-large effect size in valence towards public schools when compared to home-school parents (d = .67).

Table 3: Independent-samples t-tests and effect sizes

	Variable	School choice	M**	SD	Direction of effect	Difference	t-test	Sig. (2-tailed)	Cohen's d
What a parent **can** do to help the child succeed.	Efficacy	Home Public	5.35 4.69	.66 .51	1.00	.66	8.09	.000	.8144
What a parent **can** do to help the child succeed.	Time & energy	Home Public	5.32 4.35	.54 .87	1.00	.96	12.03	.000	1.2122
What a parent **can** do to help the child succeed.	Knowledge & Skills	Home Public	5.32 4.65	.50 .80	1.00	.67	9.14	.000	.9206
What a parent believes he or she **should** do to help the child succeed.	Role activity	Home Public	5.57 4.84	.41 .65	1.00	.73	12.21	.000	1.2297
What a parent has **experienced** in relation to different schooling methods.	Valence	Home Public	4.42 4.91	1.15 0.94	-1.00	-.67	-6.63	.000	.6676

Multiple hierarchical regression analyses were then conducted to examine how well these constructs predicted whether parents home-school or public school. Factors (consistent with factor analyses reported above) were entered in a stepwise fashion; block 1: beliefs about what a parent *can* do (efficacy, time and energy, and knowledge and skills); block 2: beliefs about what a parent *should* do (role activity); and block 3: previous experiences with public schools (role valence). (Personal beliefs related to home-schooling and role construction were not included in the analyses, as the matched sample lacked these measures.)

The results of this analysis indicated that parent perceptions of efficacy, time and energy, role activity beliefs and role valence accounted for a significant portion of the variance in whether a parent home- or public-schooled, adjusted $R^2 = .40$, $F = 80.762$ $p < .000$ (knowledge and skills were excluded due to an non-significant t-test, $p = .364$, which could be due to its high correlation with efficacy, $r = .67$). These results suggest that parents who home-school do so because they *can* (they believe they have the ability to, and they have sufficient time and energy) they believe that they *should* (activity beliefs), and they have had previous negative experiences with public schools (role valence). It should be noted that personal beliefs, which could not be compared across these two groups, might also contribute to the variance.

Hypothesis 3: Most home-school parents will have a parent-focused role-construction, and these parents will have higher levels of efficacy and knowledge and skills than parents who endorse a partnership-focused role construction.

As predicted, more home-school parents endorsed a parent-focused role construction (74%) than partnership-focused role construction (30%) when endorsement was defined as scoring 5.5 or higher on the role construction scale (parents were able to endorse both types of role construction). Correlations between role construction and the variables of efficacy, time and energy, and knowledge and skills were examined (see Table 1), which suggested that parent-focused role construction, as predicted, was correlated with time and energy ($r = .54$), knowledge and skills ($r = .40$), and efficacy ($r = .37$). These findings suggest that parents holding a parent-focused role construction believe they have the time, energy, knowledge and skills necessary for home schooling, as well as the ability to do so successfully. Parents who endorsed a partnership-focused role construction manifested a different pattern: they reported having the time and energy to home-school ($r = .30$), but had no significant correlations with knowledge and skills or

efficacy. This suggests that partnership-focused parents feel the need to seek help from others in acting on their beliefs about home-schooling their child.

Hypothesis 4: Home-school parents will hold at least one strong personal belief related to public schools. Specifically, parents who endorsed a parent-focused role construction would be more likely to endorse personal beliefs related to pedagogical and special needs. Parents who endorsed a partnership-focused role construction would be more likely to endorse value and ideological personal belief.

Results are given in Table 4, which examines correlations specific to personal beliefs and role construction. Contrary to predictions, parent-focused role construction was not highly correlated with the personal beliefs scale (total or subscales), suggesting that parent-focused home-schooling parents do not look to the public schools when making their decisions to home-school. Also contrary to our predictions, partnership-focused role construction was significantly correlated with all of the personal beliefs scales (r = -.24), suggesting that partnership-focused home-school parents are motivated to home-school because they believe that the public school system cannot meet their values related to their children's education, or meet their children's educational needs.

Table 4: Correlations specific to personal beliefs and role construction

	Personal beliefs: total	Personal beliefs: value	Personal beliefs: ideological	Personal beliefs: pedagogical	Personal beliefs: special needs
Role construction: parent-focused	Ns	Ns	Ns	Ns	Ns
Role construction: partnership-focused	-.24**	-.22**	-.20*	-.19*	-.18*

These results, while unanticipated, are sensible: Home-school parents who have a parent-focused role construction tend to believe that they have a strong personal role in their children's education. Therefore, they decide to home-school because they make a proactive decision to be personally responsible for their child's education rather than making a decision to home-school because of what public schools do or do not do. One parent who strongly endorsed a parent-focused role construction exemplified this when she explained why she home-schooled: "People who do not home-school tend to assume it is done in reaction against institutional schooling…. To me, home-schooling was a positive choice rather than a reaction against the school system."

In contrast, partnership-focused parents, who tend to believe that their child's education should be conducted in partnership with others, would be more likely home-school as a reactive decision. These parents might have been unable to work in partnership with the public school system because of disagreements with the school about the values and teachings their child should receive, and other school options were disliked or unavailable. One parent who strongly endorsed a partnership-focused role construction noted, "When we began home-schooling, we lived within a public school that was extremely poor… we could not afford private schools… someone suggested home-schooling, we researched it and opted to try it."

CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION

This study's results suggested that parents decide to home-school for reasons similar to those motivating many public school parents' decisions to become involved in their children's school-based education: parents believe that they should be active in their children's education, they believe have the ability to help their child succeed in school learning, and they perceive that contextual factors in their lives make involvement or home-schooling possible. This study's results also suggested that an additional set of personal beliefs and values contribute to parents' decisions to home-school. Specifically, these results suggested that parents who home-school are motivated not only by the psychological and life-context variables that contribute to many public school parents' decisions about involvement in their children's schooling, but also by their values about family and religious issues, ideological beliefs about the appropriateness of public school curricula for their child, pedagogical beliefs about the appropriateness of public school teaching practices for their child, and beliefs about the public school's ability to deal with their child's individual needs. These results suggested that parents' choose to home-school for reasons that are somewhat more diverse than implied in earlier home-school literature. For example, general unhappiness with all aspects of public schools appears to play a larger role than the pedagogical or ideological motivations first suggested by Holt (1983) and Moore (as described in Basham, 2001; see also Van Galen, 1988; Knowles, 1988). At the same time, several parents in this study also expressed positive reasons (not reactions) for choosing to home-school their children.

The study broadens our understanding of parental involvement in children's education, as it highlights a population that is clearly involved in children's education but in a very non-standard way. Because the psychological and life context constructs identified by Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995, 1997; Walker et al., in press) apply so well to this population, we can amend our understanding of parental involvement in education to include parents outside of public school systems. In general, these findings suggested that not only do these home-school parents have a strong desire to help their children in academic pursuits, but also feel themselves able to do so, especially with reference to their beliefs about their ability to help children learn

and their "supply" of time, energy, knowledge, and skills. In general, these findings suggest that constructs from the parental involvement literature appear useful in explaining parents' decisions to home-school. They also provide a base of useful descriptive information on home-school parents that should enable further and more detailed studies of parents whose involvement beliefs lead them to home-school.

Before identifying suggestions for further research, it is important to note briefly the limitations in this study. Because there was no sampling framework on this population, it was impossible to determine whether participating parents were representative of all parents who home-school. This makes it difficult to determine if the results would be generalizable to home-school parents as a whole. For example, it seems likely that parents who home-school in a more nontraditional forma (e.g., in a religious community setting) would be motivated to home-school for reasons different than those observed in the parents who participated in this study. Another limitation of the study emerges from a mono-method bias, as all data were collected through survey measures. This limitation may pose some challenge to construct validity because the range of constructs measured and participants' responses were limited by the survey design.

Further research should be done to clarify issues related to these limitations. For example, it would be useful to design a sampling framework of home-school parents in a state where parents are *required* to report to the state if they decide to home-school. Doing so would increase the generalizability of findings on home-schooling families. In order to reduce mono-method bias, future studies should complement survey measures with other methods, including structured interviews with parents and observations. For example, use of interviews would help provide a richer and deeper understanding of the constructs involved, and would allow further insight into how parents think about these constructs in making their decisions about home-schooling. It was interesting to note that most home-school parents who completed these surveys were happy to explain their reasons for home-schooling in some detail (using the comments section of the survey), and were very interested in ensuring that their views were clearly and accurately understood. A fuller and more systematic way of obtaining access to these parents' thinking would allow better explanations of motivations for home-schooling.

In addition, the link between the parental involvement literature and the home-school literature should be further explored. These systematic findings for a group of home-school parents may help us better understand all parents' thinking about their involvement in their

children's education. For example, a study examining public school parents' responses on the values and beliefs scales might offer important information about the role of these parental values and beliefs in parent's thinking about the best school setting for their children.

Further studies systematically examining other constructs related to home-schooling would also be a helpful contribution to the field. For example, examining involvement activities between home-schooling parents and children would provide a richer understanding of parent-child interactions among home-schoolers. Such a study might include examinations of home-school parents' teaching styles and children's perceptions of home-schooling in order to give the research community a richer understanding of the home-school processes and outcomes.

Finally, it is interesting to note that home-schooling has been and continues to be a controversial issue. Many educators and policy makers (e.g., the National Education Association, the National Parent Teacher Association, and the National Association of Elementary School Principals) are opposed to the practice despite its legal status. A Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup poll in 1985 found that only 16% of respondents said that home-schooling was a good thing. While that percentage has increased (e.g., rising to 28% in 1988, 36% in 1997, and 41% in 2001; Rose & Gallup, 2001) home-schooling continues to be a controversial practice. In light of this, I hope that this study will enhance understanding of why some parents choose to home-school, and that the results will provide a basis for productive discussions about the contributions of public, independent, and home-school approaches to educating children in the U.S.

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