

Application for the  
School Psychology Research Collaboration Conference 2003

Submitted by:  
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## **Personal Research Agenda: Developing Culturally-Responsive Educational Contexts**

### **Overview of Research Interests**

- The interrelationship of families, communities and schools for children of ethnic minority and low-income backgrounds and its impact on students' school adaptation and achievement
- Advancing a partnership-directed research approach (Fantuzzo & Mohr, in press; Nastasi et al., 2000) for developing system-level interventions to improve cultural-responsiveness of schools serving ethnic minority and socioeconomically disadvantaged children and families

### **Efforts in Research Areas**

*Development of Family Involvement Questionnaire – Elementary Version (FIQ – E; co-investigator John Fantuzzo)* as a complementary version for the FIQ – Early Childhood (Fantuzzo, Tighe & Childs, 2000) to allow for longitudinal examination of family involvement.

*Reading Partners Project (Co-Directed with Thomas Power, Ph.D.)* Manz, Power, Ginsburg-Block & Dowrick (2002) introduced a community partnership model for enlisting and preparing community residents to function as literacy tutors for preschool through first-grade students.

*Development of the Observation of Paraeducators and Teachers in Classrooms (OPTIC)* for examining (a) the various roles and responsibilities of paraeducator and teacher dyads, and (b) the relationship of these roles and responsibilities to the academic engagement of children with grade-expected and below-grade level achievement.

## **Research Goals**

1. To advance investigation of the reliability and validity of the FIQ-E for an urban population of predominantly African-American and Hispanic children and families.
2. To continue development of the community partnership model for integrating community members as paraeducators who work collaboratively with classroom teachers.
3. To examine the effectiveness of the community partnership model for (a) formulating productive relationships with families and increasing their involvement in education, and (b) enhancing learning opportunities and providing early intervention for preschool through first-grade students.

## **Immediate and Short-Term Plan for Research Activities**

- Replicate investigation of FIQ-E and expand investigation to include study of interrelationship of FIQ-E dimensions and indicators of student achievement<sup>1</sup>
- Development of an emergent literacy program for Head Start that includes classroom-based and home-based components (proposal submitted to SSSP General Purpose Award)<sup>1</sup>
- Determine the range of paraeducator roles and responsibilities and impact on the academic engagement of kindergarten and first-grade students with average and below-average ability.<sup>1</sup>
- Collaborate with colleagues in planning a multi-site examination of family involvement<sup>1 2</sup>
- Obtain funding for longitudinal investigation of family involvement and student achievement

- Submit University-Head Start Partnership (DHHS) proposal to develop emergent literacy program

### **Implications for Practice of School Psychology**

1. Provide a comprehensive understanding of the various dimensions of family involvement for two important populations.
2. Establish an effective approach for school psychologists and other personnel to foster important relationships among schools, families, and communities
3. Contribute to the national need to identify effective roles and responsibilities for paraeducators, establish methods for preparing them and examining their effectiveness in prevention and early intervention.

Examining and Enhancing Multiple Dimensions of Family Involvement in Education  
Through Community Partnerships

Patricia H. Manz, Ph.D.

Project Abstract

It is clear from federal initiatives such as the Goals 2000: Educate America Act that family involvement in children's education is a national priority. However, how to respond to this priority is unclear due to the paucity of empirically supported methods for examining and improving family involvement. This multi-site project aims to expand upon promising models for conceptualizing and enhancing family involvement in school systems and contribute to empirically supported practice, with a particular focus on families of low-income and ethnic minority backgrounds. A major focus of this project is to extend research examining family involvement for a large sample of urban African American families to low-income families representing diverse ethnicities and geographical locations. This will be accomplished by testing the replicability of the multiple dimensions assessed by the Family Involvement Questionnaire (elementary and early childhood versions) across diverse populations. In addition, longitudinal examination of family involvement and its effects on academic performance as children progress from early childhood programs through elementary school will be accomplished through periodic administration of the Family Involvement Questionnaire and concurrent examination of academic achievement indicators.

In addition to building upon an empirically-based conceptualization of family involvement and its emergence throughout children's preschool and elementary education experiences, this multi-site project will examine one approach for inspiring

system-level changes in school environments that foster family-school partnerships and enhance family involvement. Theories of child development highlight the importance of continuity in socialization processes and cultural values across home and school on children and their families' adjustment and involvement in school. Applied to children from ethnic minority backgrounds, these theories underscore the importance of school environments that are familiar to children and their families and represent values that are culturally consistent. Referred to as Schools United with Committed Communities to Educationally Support Students (SUCCESS), the proposed intervention program seeks to engage community members in paraprofessional roles in the school in order to provide familiar adults with whom families can form positive and trusting relationships that will foster greater family involvement in education. Evaluation of this program will entail comparison of the extent and nature of family involvement among families with children participating in SUCCESS programs and those in control conditions.

## **Multi-Site Research Proposal**

### **Examining and Enhancing Multiple Dimensions of Family Involvement**

#### **In Education Through Community Partnerships**

##### **Research Questions**

1. Do the multiple dimensions of family involvement that are assessed by both the early childhood and elementary school versions of the Family Involvement Questionnaire (FIQ) replicate across ethnic groups in various geographical regions?<sup>2</sup>
2. As children progress from preschool into elementary school, how does the nature of family involvement change across the three major dimensions and impact school performance?
3. Does the incorporation of community members into the school as paraeducators through the community partnership model foster the cultural responsiveness of the school and improve family involvement in children's education and student achievement outcomes?

##### **Context and Participants**

This multi-site project will target preschools and elementary schools in areas where there is a concentration of poverty. This project entails two categories of participants. First, consistent with a partnership-directed approach (Fantuzzo & Mohr, 2000; Nastasi et al., 2000), up to ten family, community and school members will collaborate with university staff in planning and implementing the project at each site. Second, families will participate in the large-scale and longitudinal assessment of family involvement (questions 1 & 2) and both families and children will participate in the examination of the community partnership model (question 3).

At each site, the large-scale assessment of family involvement will require a minimum of two groups of 400 families in order to examine the replicability of the three-factor solution of both the early childhood and elementary versions of the FIQ. The combined sample of approximately 800 families of preschool and elementary children will be targeted for the longitudinal study. However, given the reality of attrition, it is expected that the final sample for longitudinal sample will be reduced.

Examination of the effectiveness of paraeducator and teacher dyads, formed according to the community partnership model, will require six randomly selected children and their families for each targeted classroom. Based on an estimate of four participating classrooms in each year during years 2 – 5, the total number of newly involved children and families will be 24 per year at each site, with continuing follow-up assessments of participants from previous years.

### **Yearly Budget Estimate**

<u>Category</u>	<u>Budget per Site</u>	<u>Category</u>	<u>Budget per Site</u>
Personnel (4% increase each year)	90,000	Materials/Supplies	7,000
Community Stipends	8,000	Communication	2,000
Equipment	5,000	Travel	3,500

### **Advantages and Challenges of a Multi-Site Project**

The primary benefit of conducting a multi-site project is the process of testing the generalizability of findings derived on a localized sample to a larger, diverse population. This benefit is the purpose of the proposed multi-site study. Only through a multi-site investigation can we begin to understand the diversity of family involvement practices and their differential impact on children's school performance. Similarly, a multi-site study will illuminate fundamental elements of the community partnership model in

addition to those needing adjustment according to the unique qualities of specific populations.

Collaboration across multiple sites offers the benefits of integrating the unique areas of expertise among colleagues. At different points in my career I have had invaluable opportunities for mentorship or collaboration with colleagues who represent various areas of expertise, including community-based research methods, partnership-directed approaches, and academic interventions. The opportunity to incorporate differing areas of expertise in one project will not only yield an outstanding project, but it will greatly enhance my knowledge and skills for conceptualizing and conducting future research.

National dissemination of the project is an additional advantage of multi-site research. Each site is situated in a region where the research findings can be disseminated. Additionally, the involvement of multiple universities and geographical diversity in the project can enhance the appeal of presentations at national conferences and in scholarly journals.

The most difficult challenges of partnership-based research in diverse communities will be exacerbated in a project involving multiple sites and communities. One challenge is that formulating trusting and equal relationships with school and community members takes time. Time for activities that may appear unnecessary or inefficient, especially when the researcher is accountable to funders.

Conducting partnership-directed research in multiple communities introduces the additional challenge of balancing (a) the flexibility needed to adjust research objectives and activities to the unique perspectives of each community with (b) standards for

scientific rigor. Often in community-based research certain realities elicit modifications in methodology (e.g. measures, research design). In this multi-site project, we will need to consider such modifications with the goal of maintaining a standard project across the various locations.

### References

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## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> These activities have been initiated.

<sup>2</sup>An investigation of the generalization of the FIQ – Early Childhood version with a southwestern population, involving Hispanic and Caucasian families is currently underway (Ginsburg-Block, Christenson, Manz, Power & Roberts, 2002). Preliminary results demonstrated the 3-factor solution replicated through exploratory analyses. In addition similar interrelationships among the factors and child and family characteristics replicated across the original and replication samples.