

## **INFORMATION TO USERS**

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps. Each original is also photographed in one exposure and is included in reduced form at the back of the book.

Photographs included in the original manuscript have been reproduced xerographically in this copy. Higher quality 6" x 9" black and white photographic prints are available for any photographs or illustrations appearing in this copy for an additional charge. Contact UMI directly to order.

# **UMI**

A Bell & Howell Information Company  
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346 USA  
313/761-4700 800/521-0600

PREVIEW

**Educators' Perceptions  
of Parental Roles**

**by**

**Betsy Lawrence**

PREVIEW

**A Doctoral Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Doctor of Psychology in the Department of Psychology  
at Pace University**

**New York**

**1994**

**UMI Number: 9525245**

PREVIEW

---

**UMI Microform 9525245**

**Copyright 1995, by UMI Company. All rights reserved.**

**This microform edition is protected against unauthorized  
copying under Title 17, United States Code.**

---

**UMI**

**300 North Zeeb Road  
Ann Arbor, MI 48103**

(Please type all information)

NAME: Betsy Lawrence

TITLE OF PROJECT: Educators' Perceptions of Parental Roles

DOCTORAL PROJECT COMMITTEE:

PROJECT ADVISOR: Barbara A. Mowder, Ph.D.  
(Name)

Director, Graduate Psychology Programs, Pace  
(Title) (Affiliation)

PROJECT CONSULTANT: Florence L. Denmark, Ph.D.  
(Name)

Robert Scott Pace Distinguished Professor  
and Chair, Psychology Department, Pace University  
(Title) (Affiliation)

FINAL APPROVAL OF COMPLETED PROJECT:

I have read the final version of the doctoral project and certify that it meets the relevant requirements for the Psy.D. degree in School-Community Psychology.

Barbara A. Mowder  
(Project Advisor's Signature)

12/22/94  
(Date)

Florence L. Denmark  
(Project Consultant's Signature)

1/5/95  
(Date)

I would like to acknowledge with gratitude the support of those who helped me to complete this doctoral project:

Dr. Barbara Mowder, who was my advisor on this project, and Dr. Florence Denmark, who was my consultant.

Steve Salbod, who provided much needed statistical assistance.

Lourdes Feyjoo, whose computer knowledge made it possible for me to draw up and complete my statistical tables and figures.

Finally, I thank my husband and children for their concern, flexibility, and patience during the past four years.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
Acknowledgments.....	iii
List of Tables.....	v
List of Figures.....	vii
Abstract.....	viii
I. Introduction.....	1
II. Literature Review.....	9
Role Conflict	
History of Home School Relationships	
III. Methodology.....	52
IV. Results.....	56
V. Discussion.....	99
Overview	
Educators	
Parents and Educators	
Implications for Parents, Educators and Psychologists	
Implications for Research	
References.....	119
Appendices.....	129
A. Parent Role Questionnaire	
B. Parental Descriptors	

## List of Tables

Table 1	Percentage of Educators' Inclusion of Parental Role Characteristics
Table 2	Percentage of Educators' Ratings of the Parent Role Questionnaire
Table 3	Mean Ratings of Extent of Characteristics Inclusion in Parental Role: Educators
Table 4	Mean Ratings of Importance of Role Characteristics at Different Stages of Child Development: Educators
Table 5	Ranked Mean Ratings of Characteristics at Different Child Development Stages: Educators
Table 6	Mean Ratings of Frequencies of Parental Role Characteristics at Different Stages of Child Development: Educators
Table 7	Mean Ratings of Extent of Characteristics Inclusion in Parental Role: Parents and Non-Parents
Table 8	Mean Ratings of Importance of Role Characteristics at Different Stages of Child Development: Parents and Non-Parents
Table 9	Ranked Mean Ratings of Importance of Characteristics at Different Child Development Stages: Parents and Non-Parents
Table 10	Mean Ratings of Frequencies of Parent Role Characteristics at Different Stages of Child Development: Parents and Non-Parents
Table 11	Mean Ratings of Extent of Characteristics Inclusion in Parental Role: Male and Female Educators
Table 12	Mean Ratings of Importance of Role Characteristics at Different Stages of Child Development: Male and Female Educators
Table 13	Ranked Mean Ratings of Importance of Characteristics at Different Child Development Stages: Male and Female Educators
Table 14	Mean Ratings of Frequencies of Parent Role Characteristics at



Table 15	Mean Ratings of Extent of Characteristics Inclusion in Parental Role: School Levels of Educators
Table 16	Mean Ratings of Importance of Role Characteristics at Different Stages of Child Development: School Levels of Educators
Table 17	Ranked Mean Ratings of Importance of Characteristics at Different Child Development Stages: School Levels of Educators
Table 18	Mean Ratings of Frequencies of Parental Role Characteristics at Different Stages of Child Development: School Levels of Educators
Table 19	Mean Ratings of Extent of Characteristics Inclusion in Parental Role: Educators and Parents
Table 20	Mean Ratings of Importance of Role Characteristics at Different Stages of Child Development: Educators and Parents
Table 21	Ranked Mean Ratings of Importance of Characteristics at Different Child Development Stages: Educators and Parents
Table 22	Mean Ratings of Frequencies of Parent Role Characteristics of Different Stages of Child Development: Educators and Parents

## List of Figures

- Figure 1    Mean ratings of importance of role characteristics at different stages of development
- Figure 2    Mean ratings of frequencies of parent role characteristics at different stages of development

PREVIEW

## Abstract

There is a growing need to identify ways to foster collaboration and to minimize conflict between educators and parents. Since conflict may arise from differences in the expectation of educators and parents concerning parental roles, this project investigates the perception of educators and parents regarding parental roles. This descriptive study examines the responses of 67 male and female educators to the Parent Role Questionnaire (PRQ), an instrument which considers the parent role in terms of six characteristics (i. e., bonding, discipline, education, general welfare and protection, responsivity, and sensitivity). These responses are contrasted to the responses of 1109 parents from the same school system in New Hampshire. The questions investigated are: What are the views of educators concerning parental roles? Do the views of educators differ from parents? Also, do educators who are parents differ from educators who are not parents in terms of parenting perspectives? Do educators vary at the elementary, junior high, and high school levels regarding parenting? Finally, are there differences that stem from the gender of the educators?

The results of a multivariate analysis of the data indicate that significant differences between the perceptions of parents and educators occur in all six characteristics, and that these differences are found to exist primarily in the early and later years of the child's life span. Apparently, educators view education as more important than parents, particularly in the years that the educator has the child in school (K-12). That is, educators tend to focus narrowly on one facet

(educating, guiding, training) of the parenting role to the relative exclusion of other variables, whereas parents view the parenting role as one which requires the balancing of many complex variables. Findings further suggest that educators as a whole are unable to consider parents in their complex role beyond the year that they have the child in school, and it is possible that this time frame limits their ability to understand and to collaborate effectively with parents.

Significant sex differences in terms of educators' parenting perspective were found. Male educators more than female educators believe that parents need to discipline their children throughout the life span. Of interest is that male educators more than female educators view the protective role as extending into the later years (college and adulthood). In general, educators from all school levels (elementary, junior high, and high school) have similar views concerning the parenting role, but some significant differences emerge indicating that elementary educators recognize that the parenting role includes more than meeting the educational needs of children. Apparently, this understanding stems from the need of elementary educators to work closely with the parents of young, dependent children. The study also indicates that educators who are not parents value discipline and education more highly than educators who are parents, and it is possible that the lack of experience with the parenting roles makes educators who are not parents less able to appreciate the complexities of the parenting role. Implications exist for the future training of educators, psychologists and child care workers. And, additional research with educators of different age groups is indicated as well.

## Chapter I

Currently there is a great deal of literature worldwide on the formulation of effective partnerships between parents and educators. Debate exists concerning the involvement of parents in the education of our children but there is a growing interest in collaboration (Chavkin & Williams, 1987; Cronin, Slade, Bechtel, and Andersen, 1992; Davies, 1987; Epstein, 1987, 1990; Flaxman, 1992; McAfee, 1987; Moles, 1982; 1987; Ramsay, 1992; Sonnenschein, 1981; Swap, 1993). This interest stems from social and legal changes in our society, and has led to the need for modification in the relationship which exists between parents and educators and the roles that they have traditionally played in the raising of our children.

Until recently, school content was limited to academics and the role of the teacher was to provide an education to children. The traditional family was responsible for the social, moral and emotional development of children as well as their physical care. The disintegration of the traditional family, however, as well as changing economic forces have altered home-school relations. Over the course of this century there has been a major increase in married women's rate of participation in the labor force. In 1977, Pleck wrote on the difficulties mothers and fathers encountered with child care. He studied the work and family role system and noted that employed mothers and fathers faced considerable problems and

experienced a great deal of strain when both parents were at the workplace. In 1982, Ziegler called attention to a child care crisis by reporting that more than 70% of the women of school aged children work outside the home. He observed that economic necessity required both husband and wife work to provide a decent standard of living for their children. He stated that he feared mothers could no longer provide their children with necessary home care. Gill (1991) wrote that the provision of child care was even more difficult for the single parent family and blended family as the economic problems for these groups were frequently severe.

These authors underscored the observation that most working parents do not have the time to devote to their families, and have turned to the school for help in raising their children. In response to this need, the role of the school has been expanded and altered to include such services as after school day care, homework and tutoring services, after school programs, as well as summer and special camps during school holidays. In addition, schools now provide physical care services such as school breakfasts, and even dental and eye examinations.

The parental role has also been altered in response to altered societal conditions. Due to the growing evidence of the disastrous conditions that threaten many of the nation's public schools many parents are holding schools more accountable for better educational results. Gill and Greenberger (1989) report that the government should promote and pay

for home care for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers, as well as provide extensive after school services.

Research indicates that parents and educators want more parental involvement in the educational system (Cutwright, 1984; Moles, 1982). Oliver Moles, commenting on reports from the U.S Department of Education, points out that a recent national poll suggests that over 90% of teachers at all grade levels want more home-school interaction. In addition, there are indications that parents are seeking participation in the formulation of financial plans, the development of school wide curriculum and even instruction in the classroom. The author encourages fostering strategies to involve parents in the growth and development of children. Thomas (1991) notes that parents can work successfully as part of school teams in the creation and implementation of school curriculum and financial planning.

There is also growing evidence that parental involvement leads to increased academic achievement in our children. A large number of empirical studies indicate many other benefits from parental involvement, such as improved attitudes and aspirations for the future (Chavkin & Williams; Davies; Epstein, 1984, 1987; Flaxman, 1992), although differences apparently exist across socioeconomic levels and levels of schooling (Epstein, 1990).

In addition, for the past two decades parents have been given legitimate and even legalized responsibility and input concerning the education of their children. Epstein (1984) discussed two decades of federal programs that have supported and provided mandates for parental involvement. Beginning in 1965, Head Start programs made provisions for parental involvement in the preschool. Parents of young children were included as active members of the Head Start Program and worked with the staff as aides, advisors, and home tutors. It was assumed that the parents of young children have primary care and influence over their young children and that this expertise should be brought into the school environment. Follow Through Programs from 1967 to 1971 continued to supply educational support in the elementary years for these Head Start children, and to encourage continued parental participation in the program's activities.

Recent legislation to benefit the handicapped child has also modified the previous relationship that existed between parents and educators. Indeed, legislation not only encourages parental participation in a child's educational program, it requires it. The 1975 amendment to Public Law 94-142 (Education of all Handicapped Children Act), as well as Public Law 99-457 (The Education for all Handicapped Children Act), which in 1986 mandated parental inclusion in the educational planning and developmental goals for special students. These laws underscore the critical need for



parents and professionals to cooperate in the provision of services to children.

Public Law 94-142 calls for the formulation of an Individualized Education Program (IEP) for children. Among the provisions of Public Law 99-457 are guidelines that give credence to, and stress the importance of family focused services and the development of an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP). Under these plans, parents can aid in the definition of progress for their child by helping in the evaluation of needs, the setting of goals and the selection of strategies, and school placement for the child. In addition, Amendments to Title I (1974) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, and to Chapter 1 (1981) of the Education Consolidation and Improvement Act, further confirm the necessity for parental inclusion in district planning of school programs for children.

Despite the apparent value placed on parent-teacher interaction and parent involvement, research also indicates that conflict and negative feelings are the frequent results of collaborative attempts (Epstein, 1992; Galinsky, 1988, 1990; Heleen, 1992). Actual parent involvement is low and interaction between parent and teacher is often strained and hostile. Many studies report the barriers to parental involvement that teachers and parents experience (Moles, 1987). While research notes the existence of conflict between parents and teachers, the dynamics of parent-teacher interaction have not been studied. Galinsky points out the

misunderstandings in scheduling and role responsibility that occur, as parents join the work force and turn to educators for after school care. And, friction and competition have been used to describe the relationship that exists between the two groups (Heleen, 1992). What is missing from the literature is an exploration of the role conflict that is experienced by educators and parents. This conflict of role, in terms of parental role expectations or teacher expectation of parental roles, responsibilities and rights, is alluded to (Elksnin & Elksnin, 1989) but has not been extensively studied.

The most recent research on parenting role and parenting development is the Parent Role Development Theory formulated by Mowder (1990). It is an organizational approach for examining how the parent role changes and adapts over time. In 1991, Mowder utilized the Parental Role Questionnaire (PRQ) to define six aspects of the parental role: bonding, discipline, education, protection and general welfare, responsivity, and sensitivity. She examined these six roles within six age groups from birth through adulthood.

There is, however, very little research on educators' perceptions of parental roles. Since conflict may arise in the expectations of educators and parents concerning parental roles, this project examines the perceptions of educators regarding parental roles, and the degree to which educators feel that parents should be involved in their children's education. An

investigation of this nature offers insight into the resolution of conflicts that might arise from differences in the expectation of educators and parents concerning parental roles. This insight could be utilized by parents, educators and other professionals to support children in their growth and development. We need to see if educators share similar perceptions and expectations, and we need to provide ways for educators and professionals in related fields to be informed concerning the ways parents conceptualize their roles. It is also important that parents and educators have a better understanding of the parental role and how it changes over time. If educators' views differ from those of parents, it may prove difficult for the two groups to form a consensus on issues or to cooperate in making plans for children. Finally, increased information about the parental role may lead to greater insight about why parents and educators, despite good intentions, have difficulty working together.

Based on social role theory, this investigation assumes that people's behavior is influenced by their expectations for their own as well as other people's roles. Thus, this study is designed to answer questions such as: What are the expectations of educators concerning parental roles at six developmental stages? That is do educators views of parent roles differ at the infancy-toddler, preschool, elementary, adolescent, late adolescent and adult years? This study is also interested in exploring the existence of gender differences in the perception of parenting roles. That is, do male

educators view the parenting role differently than female educators? This study also investigates the importance of the grade level at which the educator teaches (elementary, junior high and high school). In addition, this study explores the perceptions of educators who are parents with those who are not parents. In general, this study attempts to determine how educators differentiate and conceptualize the parental role and in what ways those perceptions vary from parents.

PREVIEW

## Chapter II

As this investigation is based on social role theory, a definition of concepts precedes the discussion of the current literature and research in the area. A clear understanding of the social assumptions and formulations concerning role, parenting role, role conflict and role resolution is necessary since this study examines how parents and educators view parent roles.

According to social role theory (Michener, DeLameter and Schwartz, 1991), parenting is a social role which can be defined as the behavior which is associated with a particular position in a social system which is comprised of groups and organizations. Social theory maintains that a sizable portion of observable behavior is in fact due to the activities of people carrying out their roles in society.

A social role implies that the person who holds this particular position enacts the associated behavior. This role carries with it expectations held by others concerning the behavior that is appropriate for the occupant of the position. These expectations, or norms, specify rules and ultimately dictate a person's behavior. For example, a teacher who prepares lessons and grades homework is occupying a particular social position and performing activities that are expected, and in accordance with prevailing group norms. That is, the principal of the school and the parents of the children in the classroom anticipate, and count on, these

kinds of school behaviors from teachers.

A role, moreover, requires a relationship between two people or groups of people. For example, an educator needs students in order to teach and a parent needs children in order to parent. In addition, educators work with individual parents (mother or father) as well as parent groups (parents teacher organizations, such as the PTA).

Social role theory implies that a person's behavior is predictable according to the role that is played. And, this theory maintains that roles define people's attitudes and beliefs. That is, individuals are socialized to bring their attitudes and beliefs into congruence with role expectations. This understanding implies that attitudes and beliefs can be altered through changes in one's role expectations. Thus, one could alter educator's beliefs concerning the role of parents, as well as other professionals in the field, through changes in educators' perceptions and understandings of the roles that parents play.

According to Mowder (1991, 1992), parenting is a complex social role that is not well understood or clearly defined. Training for the parental role is informal and lacks adequate guidelines (Gecas, 1976). Many experts offer advice on the subject although this advice is often contradictory, confusing and inherently critical of the new parent. Most parents depend upon their past experiences with their own parents to serve as a parenting model. But this informal training for parenting proves

inadequate in some cases, particularly for those parents whose own family was dysfunctional. These parents have a need for more appropriate and effective parenting models. This group of parents would benefit from a more formalized approach to parenting and parent development.

As editors of a collection of articles on family structure, Carter and McGoldrick (1989) describe in detail the impact of changing life cycle patterns on the roles that parents and family members traditionally play. Pleck (1977) writes about the traditional model in which women are the primary caretakers of the children, and men are the main providers of economic resources and support. This division of family labor was controlled by sex role norms in which the women, if they worked outside the home at all, had a less demanding job role than men who were the primary wage earner in the family.

Recent factors such as a shift in the economic base, a longer life expectancy, and changing demographics play an increasing part in affecting the roles that parents play in their children's lives. In addition, an increasing high rate of divorce and remarriage, as well as the creation of nontraditional families (blended, single parent, and mixed), have altered male and female roles. In response to these changes, Fulmer (1987) studied family role structure and its relationship to social class in New York City. He found that differences exist in professional families and minority families. An essential difference was the age at which each

woman became a mother. Professional mothers delay having a child until their professional training is complete while minority mothers, bear their children at a much younger age and are forced to find a job out of economic necessity. Both groups of mothers, however, suffer distress with the management of the dual role of mother and worker.

Many other studies focus on the difficulties parents face when they first become parents. The transition to parenthood is particularly challenging as new parents adjust to their parental role (Gage and Christensen, 1991). The transition is abrupt and unplanned for most couples and most parents enter parenthood with inadequate preparation for the role. Many new parents also feel unsure how to enact the parental role and find the advice offered by parenting experts to be contradictory and confusing. Some theorists explain this difficulty in transition as stemming not only from a lack of role clarity but also from conflict with preexisting roles (Rossi, 1986; Steffensmeier, 1982). For example, employed parents find it hard to balance the expectations and demands of their two roles. They feel unprepared to face problems that necessitate providing child care during working hours, or in securing appropriate medical attention when a child is sick and cannot go to school.

Many studies exist on gender differences in the parenting experience. Although the research on the family life cycle suggests that the transition to parenthood is difficult for both parents as they attempt to adjust to their