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## Exploring the Relationship Between Teacher Personality Traits and Teachers' Attitudes and Practices Towards Family-School Partnerships

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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TEACHER  
PERSONALITY TRAITS AND TEACHERS' ATTITUDES AND PRACTICES  
TOWARDS FAMILY-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO  
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL  
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

PROGRAM IN SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY

BY

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CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

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For my loving parents and husband

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## ABSTRACT

The primary purpose of this study is to determine if there is a relationship between teacher personality traits and teachers' reported attitudes and behaviors towards family-school partnerships. A secondary purpose of this study was to: 1) explore how various teacher demographic impacted attitudes and practices towards partnership, 2) examine if a cultural match between teachers' and students' backgrounds impacts teachers' reported attitudes and practices, and 3) to compare the personality profile of teachers as measured by the Five Factor Model (FFM) to that of the general population.

The participants were 243 practicing teachers in the state of Illinois who completed an on-line survey that contained two partnership measures based on Epstein and Salina's *School and Family Partnerships: Survey of Teachers of Elementary and Middle Grades* (1993), a FFM personality inventory (Costa & McCrae's (1992) NEO-Five Factor Inventory), and demographic information. Results of the study indicate several significant findings: First, the trait of Agreeableness was found to significantly predict teachers' attitudes and practices towards family-school partnerships. In addition, the traits of Conscientiousness and Extraversion also interact with Agreeableness to predict teachers' partnership practices. Second, certain teacher demographic variables were found significantly impact teachers' attitudes and practices. Third, a cultural match between a teacher and student was not found to impact a teacher's attitudes or

practices towards partnerships. Finally, the FFM personality profile of teachers differs significantly from the general population.

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

The importance of family-school partnerships has received considerable attention in the past few decades, and it is now widely accepted that children are more likely to succeed when families and schools work together (e.g., Ditrano & Silverstein, 2006). Schools that have excelled in this area typically see significantly enhanced academic and social/emotional outcomes for their students (e.g., Cox, 2000; Sheldon & Epstein, 2002; Sheldon & Epstein, 2005).

It is widely noted in the literature that school psychologists are frequently called upon to take on leadership roles within schools, and to assist schools in facilitating strategies that promote collaborative relationships between families and schools (e.g., Christenson, 1995; Christenson, Hurley, Sheridan, & Fenstermacher, 1997; Ysseldyke et al., 2006). Additionally, school psychologists are in a unique position within schools to help foster these beneficial relationships. Moreover, the training school psychologists receive in assessment, child development, and consultation uniquely prepares them to foster and promote these partnerships (Pelco, Jacobson, Ries, & Melka, 2000), as does the training school psychologists receive in problem solving and educational and psychological processes. Understanding the factors associated with effective collaboration is therefore particularly important for school psychologists because it is likely they will be called upon by schools to promote these beneficial relationships.

Despite widespread agreement on the importance of schools reaching out to families and forming collaborative partnerships, numerous studies documenting the benefits children reap when families and schools work together, and federal initiatives to promote these beneficial relationships, there continues to be a disconnect between families and schools (Christenson, 2004). Although a considerable amount of agreement exists on the importance of forming family-school partnerships, there is little agreement on the best approach to bridge the gap that currently exists. Furthermore, while we know these relationships are extremely beneficial, we do not have a clear understanding of the factors involved in the development of these relationships (Ditrano & Silverstein, 2006). Currently, there is little evidenced-based information available on what the best methods are to facilitate these partnerships. Since we know students have more optimal outcomes when families and schools work collaboratively, it is essential to have a better understanding of how to best facilitate these relationships.

The disconnect that currently exists poses an ongoing challenge for school psychologists who seek to foster these relationships and makes understanding the factors involved in effective collaboration a priority. In order to understand the most effective way to bridge the gap between families and schools, there are numerous factors to consider. One factor that has yet to be explored is the role teachers' personality may play in the attitudes teachers have towards collaboration and the practices teachers engage in to collaborate with parents/primary caregivers. Dauber and Epstein (1993) found one of the strongest predictors of effective family-school partnerships are the practices teachers use to engage and encourage parents. Since

Dauber and Epstein found teachers' practices to play such a pivotal role in the development of effective family-school partnerships, it is essential to explore the potential ways in which teachers' personality traits impact the way teachers perceive families as partners in the education of children and the manner in which teachers reach out to parents/caregivers.

It is well documented that personality traits can explain individual differences and predict and explain behavior (e.g., Barrick & Mount, 2005; John & Srivastava, 1999; McCrae & Costa, 1990). Personality has been conceptualized from a variety of theoretical perspectives and according to numerous sources (e.g., John & Srivastava, 1999; Kroes, Veerman, & De Bruyn, 2005), one of the most widely accepted and comprehensive theories of personality is McCrae and Costa's (1999) Five-Factor Model (FFM) of personality. The FFM is a trait-based theory of personality and is based on the Big Five factors of Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism, and Openness. Each of these dimensions of personality encompasses a wide range of traits. By understanding which traits may predispose teachers to naturally collaborate, school psychologists can better target their efforts to teachers who may need more support in facilitating effective collaborative relationships with families.

#### *Statement of Purpose*

The purpose of this study is to fill a gap in the literature related to the factors involved in effective collaboration practices between families and schools. While we know students reap numerous benefits when families and schools work together, there continues to be a documented disconnect between families and schools. More research

is needed to better understand the factors involved in the development of family-school partnerships. The more we understand the process by which these relationships are created, the better able school psychologists and other educators will be able to help promote partnerships between families and schools.

Aforementioned, one factor that could potentially play a significant role in the development of collaborative relationships between families and schools that has yet to be explored with practicing teachers is teacher personality. This study seeks to explore the relationship between teachers' personality traits and teacher attitudes and practices related to family-school partnerships. Moreover, this study seeks to provide a greater understanding for school psychologists of the factors involved in the development of collaborative relationships since they are frequently called upon by schools to promote these beneficial partnerships.

Lastly, while the main focus of this study is exploring the potential link between teacher personality and attitudes and practices towards family-school partnerships, the researcher is also interested in exploring secondary research questions to serve as a possible springboard for future research in this area. Specifically, the researcher is interested in exploring the potential relationship between various teacher demographic traits and reported attitudes and practices towards family-school partnerships. Also, because partnerships are less likely to be formed with parents from minority groups (e.g., Souto-Manning & Swick, 2006), the researcher is interested in the potential role a match between a teacher and student's background may play in the development of a partnership. Finally, the researcher is interested in exploring how teachers' personality,

as measured by the FFM, compares to that of the general population. The following are the research questions guiding this study:

*Research Questions*

1. Are any of the personality dimensions of the Big Five correlated with attitudes and behaviors towards family-school partnerships?
2. Are demographic traits of teachers (e.g., gender, years of experience, educational level, grade level taught...) associated with collaboration?
3. Is a match between a teacher's and student's background associated with the development of a partnership?
4. What is the personality profile of practicing teachers as measured by the FFM and how does this compare to that of the general population?

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of the literature review is to provide an overview of the topics previously discussed in the introduction. Specifically, this section will detail relevant information from both the family-school partnerships and personality literature bases. Aforementioned, this study seeks to explore the possible link between teachers' collaborative attitudes and practices towards families and the teachers' personality traits. Therefore, it is necessary to provide an overview on each of these respective topics in addition to exploring the literature in regards to research currently available on the link between these two areas.

#### *Overview of Family -School Partnerships Literature*

The purpose of this section of the literature review is to provide an overview of collaborative relationships between families and schools and explain why these partnerships are essential in the education of children. When discussing collaborative practices and relationships between schools and families, there are many topics that must be explored. First, it is necessary to define relevant terms. Second, it is important to present a brief history of how families and school have worked together in the past, as this sets the context for these relationships in the present. Third, it is necessary to understand and discuss the components of effective collaborative practices. Fourth, the benefits children reap when families and schools work together will be explored to

demonstrate why family-school partnerships are so important in the education of children. Finally, teachers' perceptions and beliefs in regards to collaborating with families will be discussed because teacher practices are one of the strongest and most consistent predictors of the development of collaborative relationships between families and schools (Dauber & Epstein, 1993).

#### *Definition of family-school partnerships*

Before defining collaboration, it is necessary first to make the distinction between parental/primary caregiver involvement and collaboration between families and schools (also referred to as home-school collaboration), as they are indeed distinct concepts but are many times misunderstood to be the same thing. Christenson, Rounds, and Franklin (1992) explain that family-school partnerships encompass much more than simply involvement on a parent/caregiver's part. Family-school partnerships focus on a two-way relationship in which both parties, the educators and family members, are working towards a shared goal. It is much more than just parental/primary caregiver involvement and requires there to be a two-way exchange of information (Raffaele & Knoffe, 1999). Christenson, Rounds, and Franklin state, "The underlying philosophy of home-school collaboration is the recognition that two systems working together can accomplish more than either can accomplish separately, and that both parents and educators have legitimate roles and responsibilities in the partnership" (p. 21).

That being said, Phelps (1999) defines a true partnership as a relationship between individuals that requires equal involvement, consultation, and interaction. Likewise, Mattessich and Monsey (1992) state,

Collaboration is a mutually beneficial and well-defined relationship entered into by two or more organizations to achieve common goals. The relationship includes a commitment to; a definition of mutual relationships and goals; a jointly developed structure and shared responsibility; mutual authority and accountability for success; and sharing of resources and rewards. (p. 11)

Based on the aforementioned definition, it seems clear collaboration involves working together to achieve common goals. Moreover, it is clear the goal of collaborative relationships, specifically between families and schools, is working together to achieve optimal outcomes for all students (Christenson, Rounds, & Franklin, 1992) which is in perfect alignment with the broader definition of collaboration set forth by Mattessich and Monsey (1992).

Epstein (1995) goes even further than the previously mentioned definitions of collaboration and partnerships and explains students must be located in the center of family-school partnerships. Epstein states, “Partnership activities may be designed to engage, guide, energize, and motivate students to produce their own successes” (p. 703). Therefore, family-school partnerships can be defined as two-way relationship in which both the family and school work together and share responsibility in order to achieve the most favorable outcomes for a student.

Research over the years conducted by Epstein (1995) indicates there are six typical ways schools and families collaborate and form partnerships. Epstein explains each type of involvement has implications for partnership practices and explains how each one of the types of involvement practices can act as a catalyst in the development of a comprehensive partnership program that would ultimately be beneficial to students,

parents/caregivers, and the entire school community. Below each type of involvement is listed and an example of the role the school could play is described:

- Type 1: Parenting- Help all families establish home environment to support children as students.
- Type 2: Communicating- Be flexible in the scheduling of meetings and have translators available if necessary.
- Type 3: Volunteering- Recruit and organize parent help and support.
- Type 4: Learning at Home- Provide information and ideas to families about how to help students at home with homework and other curriculum-related activities, decisions, and planning.
- Type 5: Decision Making- Include parents in school decisions, developing parent leaders and representatives.
- Type 6: Collaborating with Community- Identify and integrate resources and services from the community to strengthen school programs, family practices, and student learning and development.

It is also important to discuss here the rationale for why schools and families should work together. While the roles of parents and teachers in a child's life are different, it is impossible to fully separate the education of children from their family lives. Before being socialized in school, children are socialized in their families. Berger (1995) states, "Separation of the child from the family is impossible, because every child is socialized into a family culture...Children bring the ideas, feelings, strengths, and weaknesses of the home into their life at school" (p. 121). Along these same lines,

Christenson et al. (1992) explain clear-cut boundaries between a child's school and home environments do not exist. These two domains, along with other domains such as the community as a whole, overlap and are not mutually exclusive. Lastly, it is impossible for our schools to meet the needs of all children in isolation given the vast number of children at-risk of school failure for a number of reasons (Christenson et al., 1992).

Therefore, in order to help children in the most efficient and effective ways, it is essential for schools to adopt an ecological perspective (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Adopting an ecological perspective means schools need to be aware of and sensitive to the various social environments or microsystems (e.g., family, school, community,...) their students are a part of. Additionally, schools need to be cognizant of how these environments interact with the student and influence his/her development both in academic and social arenas. Epstein (1995) refers to families, schools, and communities as overlapping spheres of influence in a child's life. According to Epstein, in a partnership approach, the student is located in the center of these respective spheres and each sphere interacts with one another and affects the learning and development of the student. Moreover, in a partnership approach, all three spheres interact and collaborate with one another with the students' best interests always in the forefront.

It seems clear there are many different ways schools can involve families in the education of their children, and striving to build relationships with families should be an important priority for schools. However, it is apparent effective partnerships between schools and families must be two-way relationships allowing both the family and the

school to have a voice that is respected and valued. For example, it is not considered collaborative if a school simply hands a parent/caregiver an information sheet filled with tips on how to help their child with school work at home. Instead, a school would certainly need to have this information available if a parent/caregiver expressed interest in gaining this sort of information, but the exchange of information should allow the school staff to talk with the parent directly and present the information requested and the parent/caregiver should then be permitted to ask any questions or seek clarification. Additionally, the school staff should follow through with the parent after a short time has passed to determine how things were going and if the parent has any questions.

#### *Brief history of family-school partnerships*

Relationships between families and schools have changed dramatically over the years. For example, Souto-Manning and Swick (2006) state research indicates collaboration between families and schools has increased in the past 20 years. It is now more common for parents, schools, and communities to work together than it has been in the past. Cutler (2000) agrees that while parents and teachers have interacted since formalized schooling started, the relationship between families and schools has changed dramatically over the years. Additionally, the roles that teachers and parents are expected to fulfill have changed over the years (Adams & Christenson, 2000), and Barbour and Barbour (1997) explain both families and schools have, at given points in time, had the dominant role in the education of children. Below is a discussion of how roles of parents and educators have evolved over time.

When discussing the historical relationship between families and schools, it is important to keep in mind that politics have always played a role in the relationship between families and schools. Fuller and Olsen (1998) explain parents/caregivers relationships with schools parallel the economic history of the United States. Before industrialization, parents/caregivers were very involved in schools and the education of their children and had a great deal of influence on how schools were run. However, as the United States became more urbanized in the 1880's, the influence parents/caregivers had decreased (Fuller & Olsen). Fuller and Olsen state, "The roles of parents shifted from that of being actively involved in running the school to that of guests of the school..." (p. 5). This shift created conflict between schools and parents and families and schools were no longer on the same page as to what their respective roles were in the education of a child (Cutler, 2000).

After World War I, relationships between families and schools became more adversarial (Berger, 1991). An increase in cultural diversity, the professionalization of teaching, and changes in technology all seemed to push families and schools further apart (Cutler, 2000). The school became bureaucratic and professional education establishments began dictating curriculum (Barbour & Barbour, 1997), something the parents/caregivers previously had a great deal of input on. Parents/caregivers were no longer seen as the experts in regard to the education of their children. Moreover, as school communities became more diverse, cultural discontinuity developed which pushed schools and families even further apart. Hill and Taylor (2005) explain there was a clear separation between families and schools in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century. The authors

state, “Schools were responsible for academic topics, and families were responsible for moral, cultural, and religious education” (p. 161).

In the 1960’s parents/caregivers began to insist they had rights and a reform movement that favored an increase of parent/caregiver and community involvement in school decision making began (Cutler, 2000). Additionally, there was also a push for collaborative practices between families, schools, and communities beginning in the 1980’s as businesses became invested in and concerned with the quality of education America’s youth were receiving (Barbour & Barbour, 1997). Even more recently, there has been shift towards a partnership approach in which schools and families share responsibility and work together to achieve common goals (Adams & Christenson, 2000). The authors explain this shift has occurred due to the complex needs faced by children in today’s world. Likewise, families and schools are more likely to share responsibilities for children’s education in present times due to a strong push for academic accountability (Hill & Taylor, 2005).

Additionally, recently in the United States there have been federal educational policy reforms (e.g., No Child Left Behind) and reforms at the school level specifically targeted at promoting collaborative relationships between schools, families, and communities. For example, Sheldon and Van Voorhis (2004) explain federal funding is available for Comprehensive School Reform (CSR) which stipulates programs must be committed to involving parents/caregivers and the local community in the planning and implementation of school improvement activities. It seems federal and school policies are beginning to recognize the benefits of collaborative partnerships between families

and schools and view these partnerships as a necessary ingredient in the improvement of schools as a whole and the education of children.

Before moving on to components of effective collaborative practices, it is necessary to first note that family-school partnerships do not look the same for all students or all families. Research clearly indicates stronger partnerships between families and schools exist at the elementary level than at the middle school and high school level (e.g., Cutler, 2000; Epstein, 1995; Izzo, Weissberg, Kasprow, & Fendrich, 1999; Phelps, 1999). Additionally, social class has always shaped parental attitudes regarding academics and development (Cutler, 2000). Likewise, Souto-Manning and Swick (2006) point out parents/caregivers of students from minority groups have historically been less involved than parents of white children. This is due to numerous factors such as time constraints, transportation issues, language barriers, and finances. The lower involvement levels of minority parents/caregivers has led many educators to jump to the conclusion that these parents/caregivers are not interested in their child's education and do not want to work with the school (Moles, 1993). However, research does not support this conclusion (e.g., Henderson, Marburger, & Ooms, 1986; Lareau, 1987). It appears parents/caregivers from all backgrounds are interested in and care about their children's education and agree it is important for parents/caregivers and schools to work together.

*Components of effective collaboration*

It is clear effective collaboration and the development of true partnerships involves working together to achieve common goals. However, in order for this to happen effectively, certain elements must be in place. Adams and Christenson (2000) assert trust is implicit in all successful partnerships between families and schools. Therefore, before parents/caregivers and schools can form a true partnership, they must first trust that they both have the best interest of the child at stake. Aside from the importance of trust, researchers have identified several characteristics and qualities of teachers that seem to promote strong relationships between families and schools. For example, Dietz (1997) asserts traits that typically play a role in the development of a collaborative relationship are warmth, openness, sensitivity, flexibility, reliability, and accessibility.

Moreover, in their extensive review of the literature, Mattessich and Monsey (1992) found in order for effective collaboration to occur members must have mutual respect, understanding, and trust; see collaboration as in their self-interest; be able to be flexible and compromise; share a stake in the process and outcome; and have open and frequent communication. Swick (2003) also discusses the importance of communication in the development of family-school-partnerships and goes as far to claim that “communication is the critical factor” (p. 275) in the development of family-school partnerships. Swick asserts there are four communication behaviors that empower the development of partnerships. These are: the approachable person, the sensitive person, flexibility, and dependability.

Additionally, Souto-Manning and Swick (2006) assert there are six key elements that need to be present in family-school partnerships. First, family and child strengths must be identified. Second, a supportive and accepting environment in which families feel validated must exist. Third, there must be multiple venues and formats in which schools involve families. Fourth, the learning is a two-way street where families learn from schools and schools learn from families. Fifth, trust must be built between families and schools. Sixth, schools must recognize, appreciate, and reflect cultural responsiveness to families from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

It is apparent there are numerous things that need to be in place for effective collaboration between families and schools to occur. Parents/caregivers and teachers must be trustful of one another, be accepting and respectful of one another, and must be willing to work together to achieve a common goal. They will have to be flexible and willing to compromise and understand there are multiple ways families and schools can work together. Lastly, it is apparent teachers need to be prepared to work with families from backgrounds different from their own. This requires characteristics of openness, understanding, and sensitivity, among others on the part of the teacher.

#### *Benefits to children when families and schools work together*

It is documented throughout the literature strong partnerships between families and schools correlate with positive academic and social outcomes for children (e.g., Cox, 2000; Sheldon & Epstein, 2002; Sheldon & Epstein, 2005). In addition to academic and social benefits, Koonce and Harper (2005) assert collaborative practices between families and schools promote a more positive overall school climate. Hill and

Taylor (2004) offer an explanation for why collaboration seems to promote positive educational outcomes for students. The authors assert as parents/caregivers build relationships with school personnel, they automatically become privy to information regarding the school's expectations for behavior and academic work, and the parents also learn how to promote learning at home. Hill and Taylor refer to this mechanism for enhancing educational outcomes as social capital and also discuss another mechanism they refer to as social control. Social control occurs when parents/caregivers and school personnel are on the same page in terms of behavior and academic goals for a student and collaborate to help the student achieve these goals. This information is consistently and effectively communicated to the student in both the school and home environments. Hill and Taylor's explanation offers some understanding of why collaborative relationships are beneficial to children but before moving on it is necessary to explore specific positive outcomes cited in the literature.

Wetzel (1991) explains the importance of social competence in regards to performing well academically. The author asserts being accepted by one's peers is often a better predictor of academic achievement than intellectual ability. Moreover, children who are socially competent are less likely to have behavioral difficulties in school. That being said, there is a body of literature which attributes strong family school partnerships with positive social and emotional outcomes for students which in turn, according to Wetzel, also increases the likelihood a student will perform well academically. Below is a list of several positive outcomes cited in the literature associated with families and schools working together.

- Significantly higher academic and behavioral self-concepts (Fantuzzo, Davis, & Ginsburg, 1995).
- More accurate computation and task completion rates in mathematics (Galloway & Sheridan, 1994)
- Better classroom competencies such as raising hands (Thurston, 1987).
- Better emotional adjustment and regulation (Izzo et al., 1999).
- Stronger communication skills (Marcon, 1999).
- Improved peer relationships (Fantuzzo, Davis, & Ginsburg, 1995).
- Stronger reading performance (Hill & Craft, 2003).
- Stronger mathematics performance (Hill & Craft, 2003; Sheldon & Epstein, 2005).
- Fewer number of discipline referrals (Sheldon & Epstein, 2002).

There is certainly a long list of positive outcomes for children when families and schools work together. It seems family-school partnerships can act both a protective factor for children, as well as a possible preventive factor in the early years of a child's educational career (Jimerson, Egeland, & Teo, 1999). It is clear schools will see improvements in their students both academically and socially if they strive to build collaborative relationships with parents/caregivers and engage parents/caregivers in the education of the children they teach. This list of positive outcomes drives home the importance of better understanding ways to promote collaborative practices between families and schools.

*Teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards collaboration*

Dauber and Epstein (1993) state,

The strongest and most consistent predictors of parent involvement at school and at home are the specific school programs and teacher practices that encourage and guide parent involvement...parents are more likely to become partners in their children's education if they perceive the school has strong practices to involve parents at school. (p. 61)

While the authors use the term parent involvement, it is clear one of the most important factors in the development of family-school partnerships are the roles of the school as a whole, as well as the roles of the individual teachers. Therefore, it is essential to explore teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards partnerships, as well as target intervention efforts charged at improving partnership practices towards this population.

Keyes (2002) explains teachers may view their role with parents/caregivers in one of three ways: parent-focused, school focused, and/or partnership focused. A teacher who views his or her role as parent-focused is likely to work closely with and empower parents/caregivers. A teacher who views his or her role as school-focused is likely to see the roles and functions of schools and families as separate. Lastly, a teacher who views his or her role as partnership-focused is likely to work cooperatively with parents/ caregivers towards a common goal. It is apparent that the manner in which a teacher interacts with parents/caregivers is impacted by their individual belief systems, which could be based on a number of factors such as a teacher's personality.

It is necessary to describe how the teacher's and parent's/caregiver's role differ in regards to a child. Keyes (2002) explains parents/caregivers and schools typically view children in different ways. A teacher's role is specific to educating the child in the

classroom and is shaped by a professional knowledge base of all children. However, a parent's/caregiver's role extends to all aspects of the child's life and is shaped by interactions with the child on a much more intensive level. This makes it likely the parent/caregiver will be more partial and have a much stronger attachment to the child. These dynamics certainly play a role in the development of a partnership, and certain underlying attitudes of the teacher and parent/caregiver impact communication, as do perceptions and beliefs about themselves and others (Swick, 2003).

Lawson (2003) found teachers are likely to think families and schools should work together to ensure the best outcomes for children. Likewise, Pelco and Ries (1999) surveyed over 400 teachers using Epstein and Salina's (1993) *School and Family Partnerships: Survey of Teachers of Elementary and Middle Grades* and found 99% of the teachers in their study either agreed or strongly agreed that parents/caregivers can help teachers be more effective with students and that parent/caregiver involvement is an important component of a good school. Moreover, 98% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that parent/caregiver involvement is important. Based on this information it seems teachers agree on the importance of involving families in the education of children, and that good things happen, both for students and schools as a whole, when families and school work together.

However, Lawson (2003) asserts teachers seem to think parents are neglecting their part in this relationship and the author found teachers in this study were likely to think children do not come to school ready to learn. Along the same lines, Pelco and Ries (1999) found teachers expect a lot from parents and think parents are not doing

their part in building collaborative relationships with schools. This could potentially lead teachers to believe their role is to educate parents/caregivers rather than interact with them in a collaborative manner. It is apparent a teacher's attitudes towards the parents/caregivers of the students they teach impact the type of relationship developed these with parents/ caregivers. It is essential for teachers to realize all parents/caregivers have something valuable to bring to the table.

An encouraging finding by Pelco and Ries (1999) is that the majority of teachers in their study disagree they do not have time to involve families in useful ways. This indicates teachers believe forming collaborative relationships with parents is something they have time to do. The researchers also found the majority of teachers were likely to agree they need information and education to implement effective collaboration practices with families, indicating teachers would be open to efforts aimed at helping them and schools as a whole improve in this area. Moreover, Pelco and Ries found 89.6% of teachers agreed that every family had strengths and 94.2% agreed all parents/caregivers were capable of learning ways to help their children be successful.

#### *Overview of Personality Literature*

The purpose of this section of the literature review is to provide an overview of personality theory. A brief history of the study of personality will be provided and a detailed discussion of the one of the most widely accepted models for studying personality, the Five-Factor Model (FFM), will be presented. At the end of this section, the topic of family-school partnerships will be linked with the information presented in this section to provide a framework and rationale for this study.

*General overview of personality theory*

The study of personality began in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, and according to Winter and Barenbaum (1999), the roots of personality theory are grounded in individualism, a desire to better understand irrational behavior and the unconscious, and an emphasis on measurement. The field of personality psychology really began to flourish early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century when humans started being viewed by society as individuals who were important and unique in their own right. The authors explain prior to the Renaissance period, persons were seen as part of a larger homogeneous group rather than unique individuals. It was not until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century that humans began to be seen as individuals who possess characteristics and traits that are not necessarily part of the larger group to which they belong. At this pivotal time in the field of personality study, Winter and Barenbaum assert the field took on two different but related goals which were to study individual differences between people and explore an individual person as a whole.

Allport (1937) explains it is very difficult to define personality because it is one of the most abstract words in the English language. He claims there is no single correct definition of personality but offers a definition that is cited frequently in the literature. Allport states, "Personality is the dynamic organization within the individual of those psychophysical systems that determine his unique adjustments to his environment" (p. 48). Burger (1986) offers a more simplistic definition of personality. He states, "Personality is defined as consistent behavior patterns originating within the individual" (p. 5). Additionally, it is widely agreed upon in the literature that once an individual

reaches adulthood his/her personality is static. McCrae and Costa (1999) state, “...somewhere between 20 and 30, individuals attain a configuration of traits that will characterize them for years to come” (p. 10). Lastly, it is also widely agreed upon that an individual’s personality traits impacts his/her behaviors (e.g., Barrick & Mount, 2005; John & Sirvastava, 1999; McCrae & Costa, 1990).

There are many different approaches to studying personality, but the feature all approaches to studying personality have in common is a desire to provide a psychological picture of an individual as a unique whole (McCrae & Costa, 1990). All personality theories have three predominant functions (McCrae & Costa, 1996). First, personality theories explore questions about human nature. Second, personality theories explore differences of traits and/or characteristics on an individual level. Third, personality theories provide information in regard to unanswered questions in the field as a whole. That is, understanding personality traits can help researchers better understand why people behave the way they do in various situations.

Before discussing trait-based theories of personality, it is necessary to first highlight theories from other schools of thought. Psychoanalytic theories of personality stress the role of the unconscious in an individual’s behavior, behavioral theories of personality examine only observable behavior and explain behavior by reinforcers or punishers in the environment, and humanistic theories of personality emphasize people’s needs to grow and be loved (McCrae & Costa, 1999). McCrae and Costa (1990) argue all the aforementioned personality theories are

...concerned with differences as well as the similarities among people. But the concern tends to be secondary...Other schools are less fully successful in delivering a good model of individual differences. Each school leads to an emphasis on certain characteristics, often to the exclusion of others. (pp. 21-22)

Trait models of personality are aligned with a variety of other theoretical models and have the strongest body of empirical evidence in the field of personality (McCrae & Costa, 1990). Moreover, theoretical orientation aside, the study of personality is usually grounded in the measurement of traits. McCrae and Costa (1993) state, "Traits are defined as enduring dispositions that can be inferred from patterns of behavior; they should be stable across long periods of time, and be similarly assessed by different observers" (p. 655). This definition infers traits are permanent dispositions and/or tendencies to behave, act, and feel certain ways across various situations and over long periods of time.

Personality traits are not temporary states but instead consistent and stable characteristics of individuals that have a biological basis (McCrae & Costa, 1999). Once traits are established within a person, they characterize the individual across situations (McCrae & Costa, 1996). It is also necessary to discuss the degree to which a person may or may not possess a certain trait. It is not an all or none situation, but instead persons possess varying degrees of a variety of traits. The more of a trait an individual possess, the more likely it is he/she will engage in the behavior encompassed by that specific trait (McCrae & Costa, 1990).

*Development of a Five-Factor Model (FFM)*

One of the most widely accepted models for studying personality is the FFM. This model is based on the assumptions of a trait theory and McCrae and Costa (1999) assert, “The FFM of personality is an empirical generalization about the covariation of personality traits” (p. 135). The five factors are known as Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism, and Openness and are frequently referred to in the literature as the Big Five. This title is intended to emphasize the broadness of each of these factors or dimensions (John & Srivastava, 1999). McCrae and Costa (1996) state, “The distinctive feature of the FFM is its claim that it provides a comprehensive system, a framework for organizing virtually all personality traits” (p. 61). Each factor represents a broad continuum of characteristics and numerous years of research indicate “...the field is approaching consensus on a general taxonomy of personality traits, the ‘Big Five’ personality dimensions” (John & Srivastava, 1999, p. 103). Moreover, this five factor structure appears to be reliable across different raters, samples, and variations of methodologies.

John and Srivastava (1999) argue the field of personality needed a descriptive model of personality and/or a taxonomy that would permit researchers to study specific characteristics of personality. An agreed upon taxonomy would allow investigators to compare and communicate research findings across various studies using a standard vocabulary. After years of research, the field is approaching an agreed upon taxonomy of personality characteristics known as the Big Five personality dimensions. John and Srivastava state,

These dimensions do not represent a particular theoretical perspective but were derived from analyses of the natural-language terms people use to describe themselves and others. Rather than replacing all previous systems, the Big Five taxonomy serves an integrative function because it can represent the various and diverse systems of personality description in a common framework. (p. 103)

The Big Five personality dimensions arose from what is called a lexical approach. This approach assumes most of the salient and socially relevant personality traits are encoded in our natural language. Meaning the words we use to describe ourselves and others are words commonly found and used in our natural language. This “personality vocabulary” became the source of attributes for the development of a scientific taxonomy (John & Srivastava, 1999, p. 102). The development of the FFM began with the extraction of all personality relevant words from the dictionary.

Using an unabridged English language dictionary, Allport and Odbert (1936) were the first to attempt to compile an extensive list of personality characteristics or traits. Their work revealed a list consisting of over 18,000 terms that could be used to “distinguish the behavior of one human being from that of another” (p. 26). To help put order to this massive number of terms, Allport and Odbert divided all of the traits into four categories which were consistent/stable traits, temporary states, judgments of personal conduct, and physical characteristics (John & Srivastava, 1999). The work of Allport and Odbert was the catalyst for the development of a taxonomy of personality characteristics.

A few years later, Cattell (1943) was interested in developing a systematic taxonomy of personality traits. As a starting point, he used the list of stable traits

created by Allport and Odbert (1936) which consisted of 4,500 items. This list was drastically reduced by Cattell to a much shorter list of roughly 35 variables and Cattell, using this much more manageable list of items, continued to conduct statistical analyses which lead him to a list of 12 personality factors (Cattell, 1945a, 1945b).

This innovative work by Cattell prompted other researchers to become interested in examining the traits he set forth (John & Srivastava, 1999). Fiske (1949) further investigated 22 of Cattell's variables and discovered a five factor solution that seemed to be stable across self-ratings, peer ratings, and supervisor ratings (Digman, 1996). These five factors were very close to what we think of today as the Big Five but the work of Fiske stayed under the radar. It was not until over 10 years later that Fiske's work resurfaced.

Tupes and Christal (1961) compared results of their study which involved eight different samples of participants and 30 of Cattell's scales to results of Cattell's (1943) and Fiske's (1949) work. These researchers, like Fiske, found five factors that were stable across replications of their own work and the reanalysis of the work previously conducted by Cattell and Fiske. Tupes and Christal report finding in all of their analyses, "Five relatively stable and recurrent factors and nothing more of any consequence" (p. 14). Since this pinnacle work, these findings have been replicated numerous times by others such as Norman (1963) and Borgatta (1964).

Interest in the FFM of personality declined in the late 1960's and 1970's, but the 1980's was met with a strong resurgence of interest (Digman, 1996; John & Srivastava, 1999). The second and current phase of work related to the FFM began with Lewis

Goldberg (Block, 1995). According to Digman (1996), Goldberg met up with Paul Costa and Robert McCrae and persuaded these researchers to add Agreeableness and Conscientiousness to their 3-factor model which included Neuroticism, Openness, and Extraversion. The first personality inventory based on the Big Five was launched in 1985 by Costa and McCrae.

Digman (1996) explains how this resurgence of interest had cumulative effects in the field of personality study. Numerous researchers interested in the study of personality, both at the national and international level began to examine the FFM and many found it to be extremely useful. Research on the FFM has dominated the field of personality study for the past 20 years and empirical evidence continues to be found and support for the model continues to be replicated. McCrae and Costa (1996) explain more than a sufficient amount of information has been collected that permits one to conclude the FFM is without a doubt a comprehensive model for describing basic dimensions of personality.

#### *Description of the Big Five*

Aforementioned, the five overarching personality dimensions that comprise the FFM are: I-Extraversion, II-Agreeableness, III-Conscientiousness, IV-Neuroticism, and V-Openness. Each of these dimensions encompasses numerous traits along a continuum. For example traits associated on with the Extraversion dimension range from shy to bold. The roman numerals associated with the factors are meaningful because there are more trait words associated with Factors I-III than they are for Factors IV and V (McCrae & John, 1992). Therefore, there are more trait terms in the English

language associated with the dimension of Extraversion compared to the dimension of Openness which has the fewest number of trait terms associated with it.

Extraversion is a relatively commonly used term and trait terms associated with this factor include bold, talkative, and energetic at one of the continuum and shy, quiet, and withdrawn at the other end. This factor is sometimes referred to in the literature as Surgency. This factor encompasses numerous traits and the breadth of this factor somewhat distinguishes Extraversion from the other four factors (McCrae & John, 1992). An individual with a high score on this factor is likely to be assertive and sociable, whereas an individual with a low score on this factor could be described as reserved, quiet, and independent (Costa & McCrae, 1992).

Since its inception, Factor II has consistently been referred to as Agreeableness. Trait terms associated with Agreeableness include sympathetic, warm, and kind at one end of the continuum and cold and harsh at the other end. Digman (1990) states, “Agreeableness...appears to involve the more humane aspects of humanity— characteristics such as altruism, nurturance, caring, and emotional support at one end of the dimension, and hostility indifference to others, self centeredness, spitefulness, and jealousy at the other” (p. 424). Therefore, it appears an individual high in Agreeableness could be described as warm, kind, and affectionate, whereas an individual who scores low on this factor could be considered unfriendly, unapproachable, and rude.

McCrae and John (1992) explain a variety of different interpretations of Factor III (Conscientiousness) have been offered. Trait terms associated with this dimension include organized, thorough, and efficient at one end and sloppy, disorganized, and

careless at the other end. Many have suggested the dimension of Conscientiousness incorporates volitional variables such as hardworking, achievement-oriented, and persevering (Barrick & Mount, 1991). Digman (1989) refers to this dimension as a Will to Achieve. Therefore it would seem an individual high in Factor III would strive for competence, have a strong work ethic, be disciplined and organized, whereas a person low on this dimension would not value hard work, be unreliable, and impulsive (Hough, 1992).

There is little controversy surrounding the definition of Neuroticism (McCrae & John, 1992). This factor, “represents individual differences in the tendency to experience distress and in the cognitive and behavioral styles that follow from this tendency” (p. 195). It should be noted this factor is sometimes referred to in the literature as its opposite which is Emotional Stability. Example of trait adjectives associated with the Neuroticism factor include moody, envious, and touchy at one end of the continuum and calm and relaxed at the other end. An individual who has high scores on this factor is likely to experience a wide range of negative affects such as fear, anxiety, anger, and also frequently experience irrational thinking and poor impulse control (Costa & McCrae, 1992; McCrae & Costa, 1987). Individuals who have a low score on this factor are likely to be emotionally stable and even-keeled (Costa & McCrae, 1992; McCrae & John, 1992).

The dimension of Openness has been one of the most difficult dimensions to identify (Barrick & Mount, 1991). It is sometimes referred to in the literature as Intellect or Intellect/Imagination (Srivastava, 2006) and/or Culture (Norman, 1963).

Trait terms associated with this dimension include creative, philosophical, and complex at one end of the continuum and unintellectual and simple at the other end. An individual high on the Openness dimension could likely be described as curious, open minded, and cultured, whereas an individual who has a low score on Openness would likely be more narrow, unreflective, artistically insensitive (Hough, 1992), conservative, and conventional in his/her behavior (Costa & McCrae, 1992).

Before moving on to the discussion of measuring personality, it should first be noted Costa and McCrae (1992) explain most individuals score in the average range on all five dimensions of the Big Five. Therefore, based on the well validated personality instruments developed by Costa and McCrae (NEO-PI & NEO-FFI), it appears the measurement of personality based on the FFM approximates a normal distribution, meaning the majority of individuals in the general population will score in the average range with a smaller percentage of individuals falling on the higher and lower ends of a specific trait. That being said, there are a few moderate differences found between sub-groups of the population. For example, Costa and McCrae explain slight differences found in terms of age, gender, education level, and career paths. Specifically, the authors assert older individuals appear to score slightly higher on the factors of Agreeableness and Conscientiousness and slightly lower on the factors of Extraversion, Neuroticism, and Openness compared to younger adults. In terms of gender differences, the authors report women to be slightly higher in the factors of Neuroticism and Agreeableness compared to men. In terms of educational level, Openness has been found to be slightly correlated with years of education. Lastly, Costa and McCrae

explain persons in specific careers may possess more or less of a trait. For example, salespersons are more likely to have higher scores on the Extraversion dimension compared to individuals in the general population. It is important to note all of these differences are slight and do not require the use of separate norms.

### *Measuring the Big Five*

Aforementioned, one of the underpinnings of the inception of the field of personality study is a strong emphasis on measurement (Winter & Barenbaum, 1992). The authors assert the field of personality arose at a time when there was a great deal of importance being placed on “exact sciences” (p. 5). It was also around this time when the first intelligence test was developed by Binet and the pencil and paper style of this test, as well as its questionnaire style, caught on in the measurement of personality. Winter and Barnbaum explain personality inventories were based on early intelligence tests and consisted of questionnaire items intended to measure various traits of personality. The formats of personality inventories in general have not deviated a great deal from this original design.

McCrae and Costa (1996) assert the FFM, like the measurement of personality in general, is rooted in a strong commitment to quantitative science. Moreover, since its inception, trait theory as a whole has always been closely linked with psychometrics. Like some other theories of personality, the FFM model assumes that humans are rational beings. This means individuals are considered to be knowledgeable and accurate observers of their own thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, thereby a reliable and valid source of personality data. This is important to note because most, if not all,

personality inventories that measure the Big Five ask the respondent to describe themselves and the answers the respondents provide are interpreted at face value. Srivastava (2006) offers a quick overview of the current instruments available to measure the Big Five. According to Srivastava, common instruments used to measure the Big Five include, but are not limited to, the NEO Personality Inventory Revised (NEO-PI-R) and NEO-Five Factor Inventory (NEO-FFI) developed by Costa and McCrae, the Big Five Inventory developed by John, and the Big Five mini-markers developed by Saucier. All of these personality inventories have been found to be consistently reliable and valid and are well-normed. As can be seen, there are numerous validated instruments available to measure the Big Five, and a more detailed discussion of the personality inventory used in this study will follow in the Methodology section.

#### *Overview of Effective Collaboration and Personality*

The purpose of this section of the literature review is to link the previous two sections of the literature review together and provide a rationale for this study. First, literature available on the relationship between teachers' attitudes and practices towards family-school partnerships and teacher personality will be explored. Second, components of effective collaboration will be discussed in the context of possible links with specific personality traits. Finally, a rationale will be outlined for the present study.

#### *Development of family-school partnerships and the possible influence of personality*

It is clear there is a great deal of literature available on both family-school partnerships and personality. Both of these areas have been researched extensively over a long period of time. However, to the best knowledge of the researcher, to date there is

no literature available on the possible link between these two independently well researched areas. Numerous searches of research databases were conducted by the researcher and consistently no literature was found pertaining to how practicing teachers' personality may impact the way in which practicing teachers collaborate with families. That being said, a study recently conducted by Walsh, Hamilton, and Shriberg (2009), in anticipation of this dissertation project, explored the relationship between pre-service teachers' attitudes and practices towards family-school partnerships and teachers' personality traits based on the FFM. The researchers found a significant correlation between the personality dimension of Openness and the pre-service teachers' predicted attitudes and behavior towards family-school partnerships ( $r(198) = .34, p < .01$ ). This means higher scores on the Openness dimension were related to more favorable attitudes and behaviors towards family-school partnerships.

The previously mentioned study appears to be the first study to explore the possible relationship between teacher personality and teachers' attitudes and behaviors towards family-school partnerships. The results of the study indicated a significant relationship between Openness and the development of effective collaborative relationships. However, this study was conducted with pre-service teachers and in order for these findings to be more generalizable, a similar study must be conducted with practicing teachers. Should the results of such a study confirm the findings in the study conducted by Walsh et al. (2009), there will be clearer evidence that teacher personality appears to be related to the development of effective family-school partnerships. This information can be used to help school psychologists and other educators bridge the gap

that currently exists between families and schools and have a better understanding of the process behind the development of these beneficial relationships.

*Components of effective collaboration and personality traits*

The components of effective collaboration were outlined in an earlier section of the literature review. Based on the literature around this topic, it seems clear that warmth, sensitivity, flexibility, strong communication skills, trust, openness, cultural sensitivity, and respect among others are essential in the development of effective collaborative relationships between families and schools. While there appears to be no specific literature available on each of the components and their respective relationship with various personality traits, based on the previous description of what each of the Big Five dimensions encompasses, it seems reasonable that many of the components of effective collaborative practices potentially fall under the dimensions of Agreeableness and Openness. Specifically, Agreeableness encompasses such traits as warmth, trust, and, respect, and sensitivity, and the traits of flexibility and cultural sensitivity are encompassed in the dimension of Openness. An individual high on the dimension of Openness is more likely to be sensitive to and open to working with individuals who do not share the same values and less likely to be judgmental and conventional in his/her thinking.

Aforementioned, family-school partnerships have historically been more challenging to form with minority parents/caregivers. The National Collaborative on Diversity in the Teaching Force (2004) reports 14% or less of the educators working in our schools are from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, whereas over

40% of the student population in our schools can be considered from minority backgrounds. Because many of the teachers serving our students may have backgrounds that are different from the students they serve, and because Walsh et al. (2009) found a significant relationship between the dimension of Openness and pre-service teachers' attitudes, it is important to examine the potential role this dimension of personality may play in the development of partnerships between teachers and parent/caregivers from different backgrounds.

#### *Rationale for the present study*

The present study seeks to fill a void in the literature pertaining to the possible relationship between certain teacher personality traits and the development of effective collaborative relationships between families and schools. We know a great deal about personality and family-school partnerships, but the link between these two fields of study is not clear. Based on the information discussed in this literature review, it is reasonable to assume there is a link between teacher personality and teachers' attitudes and practices towards family and school partnerships; however, there is not enough current literature available on this possible link to draw any solid conclusions. Should a link between teacher personality and teachers' attitudes and practices be found, school psychologists and other educators will have a better understanding of how to promote these beneficial relationships.

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

The purpose of the methodology section is to describe in detail what steps were taken to address the four research questions listed in the Introduction. As previously stated, the intention of this study was to explore the potential role teacher personality may play in the development of family-school partnerships. Specifically, this study sought to explore the following questions in depth: (1) Are any of the personality dimensions of the FFM correlated with attitudes and behaviors towards family-school partnerships?; (2) Are teacher demographic variables associated with higher or lower levels of collaboration?; (3) Is a match between a teacher's and student's background associated with the development of a partnership?; and (4) How does the personality profile of teachers compare to that of the general population? In order to answer these four questions, it is necessary to cover several methodological topics. First, it is necessary to discuss and describe who the participants in the study were. Second, sampling techniques, measures, and procedures will be presented. Finally, procedures used to analyze the collected data will be discussed.

### *Participants*

The participants for this study were practicing teachers in grades kindergarten through eighth (K-8) in public schools in the state of Illinois. The researcher did not recruit secondary teachers for this study because as previously stated, partnerships are not as strong at the high school level (e.g., Cutler, 2000; Epstein, 1995; Izzo, Weissberg, Kaspro, & Fendrich, 1999; Phelps, 1999). The researcher strived to ensure the sample was proportionally weighted with teachers from rural, suburban, and urban areas as described below and that a minimum of 50 participants are in each of these cells.

#### *Description and demographic profile of the participants*

The researcher emailed 4,327 certified teachers in grades K-8 across the state of Illinois from rural, urban and suburban parts of Illinois. An attempt was made to recruit teachers in each group proportional to that of what would be found in the state, however; because of the low response rate, the researcher terminated data collection once each cell had enough completed surveys to allow for appropriate statistical power. Of the 4,327 teachers emailed, a total of 285 (6.6%) teachers accessed the survey and of those 285, a total of 243 (5.6%) teachers completed the majority of the survey and were included for data analysis.

Females comprised the majority of the sample (90.9%). Males comprised 9.1% of the sample. The National Education Association (2003) reports 9% of elementary school teachers in the United States are male, the exact percentage of males in this study. A significant majority of the teachers in this sample were White (90.4%),

whereas 3.3% were African American, 2.9% were Asian, and 1.6% were Hispanic as well as Multiracial. In the state of Illinois, 85.1% of teachers are White, 11% African American, 1.4% Asian, and 5% Hispanic (Illinois State Report Card, 2008). The majority of the teachers in this sample held a masters degree (67.1%), whereas 32.6% held a bachelors degree. The percentage of elementary teachers in Illinois who hold a Bachelor's degree is 44.1% and hold a Master's degree 55.8% (Illinois State Report Card, 2008). The majority of the teachers in the sample were General Education teachers (60.2%) while 22.5% were Special Education teachers, 10.2% were Reading Specialists, and 7.2% were ESL/Bilingual teachers. While the majority of teachers in this sample taught in grades K-4 (55.7), the percent of teachers teaching in grades 5-8 (43.4) was not significantly less. Table 1 displays the demographic characteristics of the sample.

In regard to characteristics of the classrooms the teachers taught in, the majority of classes ranged in size from 21-25 students (35%), however; a large percentage of classes ranged in size from 16-20 (24.7%) and 26-30 (21%). A much smaller percentage of classes had fewer than 11 students (10%), between 11-15 students (5.4%), or more than 30 students (3.3%). The average number of students in grades K-8 in the state of Illinois is 21.6 (Illinois State Board of Education, 2008). The majority of teachers in this sample taught students either between the ages of 5-8 (35.3%) or the ages of 9-12 (45.8%), while only 2.9% of teachers worked with students 13 and older. Table 2 displays the classroom characteristics of the sample.

Table 1

*Demographic Characteristics*

Characteristics	Frequency	Total Percentage of Respondents
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	219	90.9
Male	22	9.1
<b>Ethnicity</b>		
African American	8	3.3
Asian	7	2.9
Hispanic	4	1.6
Multiracial	4	1.6
White	217	90.4
<b>Highest Degree Obtained</b>		
Bachelors	79	32.6
Masters	163	67.1
<b>Endorsement</b>		
ESL/Bilingual	17	7.2
General Education	142	60.2
Reading Specialist	24	10.2
Special Education	53	22.5
<b>Grade Level Taught</b>		
K-4	123	55.7
5-8	96	43.4

Table 2

*Classroom Characteristics*

Characteristics	Frequency	Total Percentage of Respondents
<b>Class Size</b>		
≤10 students	24	10
11-15 students	13	5.4
16-20 students	60	24.7
21-25 students	85	35
26-30 students	51	21
>30 students	8	3.3
<b>Age Range of Students Taught</b>		
5-8	84	35.3
9-12	109	45.8
≥13	38	2.9

*Sampling, Measures, and Procedures**Sampling*

The participants in this study were randomly sampled. The researcher divided all the public K-8 schools in the state of Illinois into the categories of rural, suburban, and urban based on the guidelines from the Illinois State Board of Education (1998). The researcher then randomly sampled a set number of schools within each of these lists. The number of schools randomly selected from each list was proportional to the percent of the total population of teachers in the state of Illinois that comprised each of the three categories. According to the Illinois State Board of Education (1998), approximately 60% of Elementary schools in Illinois can be considered Suburban, 33% Rural, and 7% Urban.

The researcher sampled twice as many suburban schools and determined the per pupil expenditure figure for each school. A median split was utilized to break this list in half, with half of the schools having a per pupil expenditure figure above the median split and the other half below. The rationale for this step was that suburban schools can vary greatly in terms of student population and resources. The per pupil expenditure figure is an objective way to divide schools in this category. Table 3 presents the breakdown of participants in each of the four geographic categories. Teachers from rural areas comprise 23.5%, suburban above the median per-pupil expenditure comprise 22.6%, suburban below the per-pupil expenditure comprise 26.7%, and teachers from urban areas comprise 7.2%. A chi-square test found no significant difference in group size between any of the four groups,  $\chi^2(3, N = 243) = 1.527, p > .05$ . The goal of

having the current sample be representative of the geographical distribution of the population was not achieved; however, adequate power was.

Table 3

*Geographical Distribution*

Geographic Area	Number of Teachers	Percentage
Rural	57	23.5
Suburban Above Median Split	55	22.6
Suburban Below Median Split	65	26.7
Urban	66	27.2

*Measures*

There were two different surveys used in this study, in addition to the collection of teacher demographic data. One survey is designed to measure teachers' attitudes and behaviors towards family-school partnerships. There are two scales within this measure. The first scale measures teachers' attitudes about family school partnerships and is comprised of 17 items that ask teachers to indicate how strongly they agree or disagree with an attitudinal statement. The second scale measures teachers' partnership practices and is also comprised of 17 items that ask teachers to indicate how frequently they engage in various partnership activities. Please see Appendix A for a full list of the items on this instrument.

The most well-known, validated measure of teachers' attitudes and behaviors towards collaboration is Epstein and Salina's *School and Family Partnerships: Survey*

*of Teachers of Elementary and Middle Grades* (1993). However, this survey in its original form has too much of a parental involvement focus and is therefore not appropriate for the current study. The partnership measures created for the present study are based on Epstein and Salina's survey but because the scales are adapted reliability cannot be assumed.

The second survey used in this study measured personality traits of teachers according to the FFM. The personality inventory used in this study was Costa and McCrae's (1992) Revised NEO-FFI. This is one of the most well validated instruments in the field of personality psychology for measuring the Big Five. This instrument has 60 items and provides global information for each of the five factors. The researcher received permission from the publishing company to use this measure, designed to be a paper/pencil survey, in an on-line format. Please see Appendix B for an example of items on this instrument. It should be noted that based on restrictions of the publishing company, no more than three items of the NEO-FFI can be printed in this document.

The researcher also collected demographic information from teachers. In this section of the survey in addition to basic demographic information, the researcher asked the teacher to describe the type of neighborhood he/she was raised in and to describe the neighborhood the school he/she teaches in. Additionally, the researcher asked the teacher to estimate the education level of the parents/caregivers of the students he/she teaches. These questions are asked to help the researcher answer question three of the research questions. Please see Appendix C for a list of all the items to be included in the demographic section of the survey.

*Procedure*

Once the researcher compiled a randomly sampled list of schools for each of the categories, the websites for each of the schools were accessed. On the school's website, the researcher attempted to locate all of the teachers' e-mail addresses. It is common practice for schools to provide this information on their websites. However, if one of the sampled schools did not have a website or teacher e-mails available on-line, the researcher randomly sampled another school from the respective category.

The researcher sent a recruitment e-mail (see Appendix D) to each of the teachers whose e-mail addresses were collected from the randomly sampled schools' websites asking him/her for his/her voluntary participation in this study. The text of the e-mail explained the purposes of the study and that responses would be anonymous. If the teacher decided he/she was interested in participating in the study, he/she could click on a link to the on-line survey. When the teacher clicked on the link in the text of the e-mail, he/she was directed to the survey through the secure host-server Survey Monkey. It was estimated the time to complete this survey would be less than 25 minutes. Respondents' IP addresses were suppressed to insure there was no way the participants could be identified. Lastly, two weeks after sending the initial recruitment e-mail, the researcher sent a follow-up email asking potential participants once more for their voluntary participation in this study. Please see Appendix E for the text of this e-mail.

The researcher created four different surveys in Survey Monkey. Each survey contained the same content but had a different link generated by Survey Monkey. The

purpose of this step was to ensure the researcher could track the total number of participants who completed the survey from the rural, two suburban, and urban categories. As previously stated, the goal was to have a minimum of 50 participants in each cell. It should be noted this was a minimum standard and that a higher participant pool was aimed for in order to increase statistical power of the study and have each of the percentage of teachers in each of the geographical groups be proportional to that found in the general population. If the numbers from the initial recruitment e-mails did not reach this minimum goal, the researcher would have a clear idea of what categories need more participants, and more schools could be randomly sampled within the respective category. This process continued until an adequate total participant pool was met. As previously stated, the goal was to have a minimum of 50 participants in each of the geographic cells to ensure adequate power for the statistical analysis. While the researcher ideally wanted the current sample of teachers in various geographic areas to be representative to the population as a whole, low response rates and time restrictions caused the researcher to suspend data collection prior to proportionality being met.

#### *Data Analysis*

To analyze the data collected using the surveys, the researcher used SPSS. First, the researcher ran descriptive statistics to get an overall idea of how the sample responded. The research looked at the means and standard deviation for all the variables and also explored the skewness and kurtosis of each variable. Reliability coefficients, Cronbach's alpha, were calculated to determine the reliability of the partnership practices scales.

To address the first research question which is: What, if any, personality dimensions of the FFM correlate with attitudes and behaviors towards family-school partnerships?; correlational analyses were conducted to determine if there were any significant relationships between each of the Big Five personality dimensions and the two partnership scales. Additionally, stepwise regression was conducted to determine how much personality can be said to predict and account for collaborative attitudes and behaviors.

To answer the second research question which is: What, if any, teacher demographics are associated with collaboration?; a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to determine if differences exist between various teacher demographics and reported attitudes and behaviors towards family-school partnerships.

To address the third research question which is: Is a match between a teacher's and student's background associated with the development of a partnership?; the researcher coded the teachers as having an "exact, near, or weak SES match" and a "strong, moderate, or low racial/ethnicity match" with his/her students. Participants were coded as having an "exact SES match" if the same response was selected for both items 11 and 12 on demographic portion of the survey. A code of "near SES match" was assigned for participants whose responses on items 11 and 12 were only off by one SES category level. Lastly, a participant was coded as a "weak SES match" if they differed by more than one SES category level. In regards to race/ethnicity match, a participant was coded as having a "strong racial/ethnic match" if at least 75% of the students were identified as being the same race/ethnicity of the participant. A code of

“moderate racial/ethnic match” was assigned if the participant identified 40-74% of the students as being of the same race/ethnicity. Lastly, a participant was coded as having a “low race/ethnic match” if less than 40% of the students are identified as having the same race/ethnicity of the participant. An ANOVA was conducted to determine if differences exist between SES and/or racial match and other variables such as reported attitudes and behaviors towards collaboration. For example, a comparison was made between teachers who were strong/exact matches on both the SES and race/ethnicity dimension and teachers who were only strong/exact matches on one dimension versus strong/exact matches on neither dimension.

To answer the last research question, which is: How does the personality profile of practicing teachers compare to that of the general population?; a t-test was run to determine if the personality profile of practicing teachers is significantly different than that of the general population. The researcher compared the teachers’ mean scores on each of the five factors to the mean scores of the NEO-FFI normative sample. The normative sample was collected from 500 men and 500 women who were selected to match the projected U.S. Census projections for 1995 in the distribution of age and race groups.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESULTS

The purpose of the current study was to investigate the role teacher personality may play in teachers' attitudes and practices towards family-school partnerships.

Additionally, the researcher was interested in exploring additional research questions related to teacher demographics, a cultural match between a teacher and student's, and the FFM teacher personality profile. This chapter will present an in-depth analysis of survey data collected to answer the following research questions: (1) Are any of the personality dimensions of the FFM correlated with attitudes and behaviors towards family-school partnerships?; (2) Are certain teacher demographic variables associated with higher or lower levels of collaboration?; (3) Is a match between a teacher's and student's background associated with the development of a partnership?; and (4) How does the personality profile of teachers compare to that of the general population?

The findings will be presented in the following format.

1. Research question one.
2. Research question two.
3. Research question three.
4. Research question four.

Before discussing the data analysis for each of the research questions, it is necessary to first discuss the reliability of the partnership scales used in the present

survey. As previously stated, the scales used in this study to measure teachers' attitudes and practices towards family-school partnerships were based on Epstein and Salina's empirically validated *School and Family Partnerships: Survey of Teachers of Elementary and Middle Grades* (1993). However, the present survey was adapted to reflect more of a partnership orientation versus a parental involvement orientation which made it necessary to ensure the adapted scales demonstrate sufficient reliability. To determine the reliability of the two partnership scales, Cronbach's Alpha was calculated. Cronbach's Alpha calculations indicated the reliability was acceptable for both the Attitudes scale (.70) and the Partnership Practices scale (.91).

#### *Research Question One*

The primary focus of this study was to determine if any of the Big Five traits play a role in the way teachers view and work with the families of their students. To make this determination, two types of analyses were conducted. First, correlational analyses were conducted to determine if there was a significant relationship between any of the Big Five personality dimensions and either of the partnership measures. Second, step-wise multiple regression analyses were performed with the Big Five traits as the independent variables and overall scores on both the Attitudes and Partnership Practices scales as the dependent variables. The goal of the step-wise regression analyses was to determine if any of the Big Five personality dimensions significantly predict teacher's attitudes and practices.

In regards to correlational findings, the researcher found a significant negative correlation between the personality dimension of Neuroticism and the Attitudes scale

( $r(239) = -.31, p < .01$ .) Likewise, the dimension of Neuroticism was significantly negatively correlated with the Partnership Practices scale ( $r(241) = -.25, p < .01$ ). The dimension of Extraversion was significantly positively correlated with both the Attitudes scale ( $r(239) = .28, p < .01$ ) and the Partnership Practices scale ( $r(241) = .28, p < .01$ ). A significant relationship was found between the dimension of Openness and the Partnership Practices scale ( $r(240) = .13, p < .05$ ). A significant relationship between Openness and the Attitudes scale was not found ( $r(242) = .07, p > .05$ ). The strongest relationship was found between the dimension of Agreeableness and the Attitudes scale ( $r(239) = .45, p < .01$ ). There was also a significant relationship found between Agreeableness and the Partnership Practices scale ( $r(241) = .37, p < .01$ ). Lastly, there was a significant relationship between the dimension of Conscientiousness and the Attitudes scale ( $r(239) = .28, p < .01$ ) and the Partnership Practices scale ( $r(241) = .31, p < .01$ ). Overall, it appears Agreeableness, compared to the other four dimensions, is most strongly related to teacher attitudes and practices. Table 4 summarizes the correlational findings.

Table 4

*Correlational Findings Between Big Five Personality Dimensions and Partnership*

*Measures*

	Neuroticism	Extraversion	Openness	Agreeableness	Conscientiousness
Attitudes Scale	-.31**	.28**	.07	.45**	.28**
Partnership Practices Scale	-.25**	.28**	.13*	.37**	.31**

\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$

Step-wise multiple regression analyses were conducted to determine how much personality can be said to predict and account for collaborative attitudes and behaviors. Regression analyses were conducted for each of the five factors and both partnership measures. Table 5 displays the results of the analyses. As can be seen in the table, there were significant regression findings for all five of the factors on at least one of the partnership scales. However, while statistically significant findings are important, what is more important are findings that are not only statistically significant but also are strong enough to be meaningful in practice. The goal of the regression was to account for as much variance as possible. In order to achieve this goal, it was necessary to build a regression model to determine what combination, if any, of the five personality dimensions work together to account for the greatest variance in teachers' collaborative attitudes and behaviors.

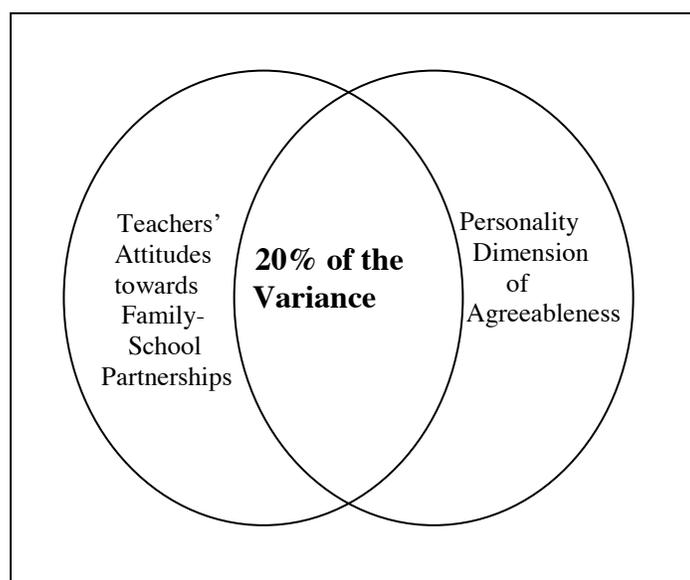
Table 5

*Regression Calculations for the Big Five and Partnership Measures*

Model	B	Std. Err. B	Beta
<b>Attitudes Scale</b>			
Neuroticism	-.38	1.4	-.31**
Extraversion	.44	.1	.28**
Openness	.11	.10	.07
Agreeableness	.77	.10	.45**
Conscientiousness	.42	.09	.28**
<b>Partnership Practices Scale</b>			
Neuroticism	-.34	.09	-.25**
Extraversion	.50	.11	.28**
Openness	.21	.11	.13*
Agreeableness	.71	.11	.37**
Conscientiousness	.50	.10	.31**

\*p &lt;.05; \*\*p &lt;.01

In regards to teachers' attitudes about family-school partnerships, Agreeableness emerged as the sole, significant predictor. The researcher started with the dimension of Agreeableness when building various models because this factor was most strongly correlated with the Attitudes scale. No other personality dimensions when paired with Agreeableness significantly added to the model. This indicates Agreeableness is the best and strongest predictor of teachers' attitudes and explains 20% of the variance in teachers' attitudes towards family-school partnerships (see Figure 1).



*Figure 1.* The role of agreeableness in teachers' attitudes towards family-school partnerships

As for the Partnership Practices Scale, the strongest model for prediction includes the Big Five traits of Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, and Extraversion. In this model, Agreeableness emerged as the strongest, positive predictor of the frequency in which teachers engage in various partnership practices, accounting for 14% of the

variance. However, Conscientiousness and Extraversion also significantly added to the predictability of these practices. Together, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, and Extraversion account for 20% of the variance (see Figure 2). Table 6 displays the data for this regression model.

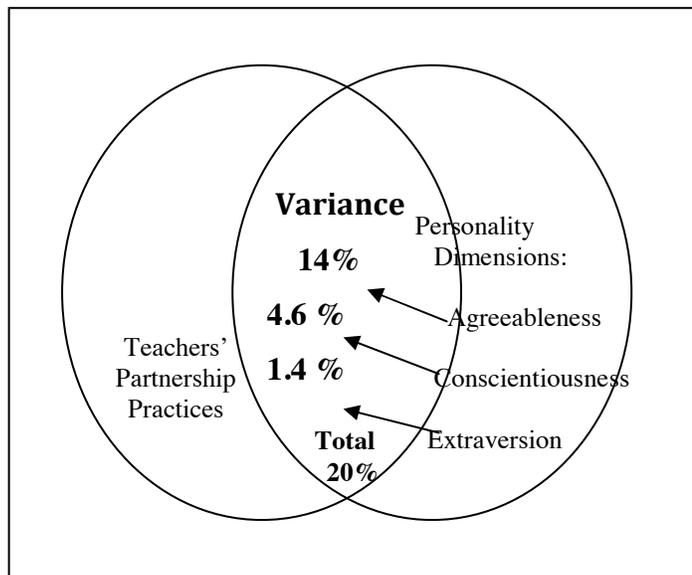


Figure 2. Big Five personality dimensions that predict teachers' partnership practices

Table 6

*Regression Model for Partnership Practices*

Model	B	Std. Err. B	Beta
Agreeableness	.51	.12	.27**
Conscientiousness	.35	.10	.21**
Extraversion	.23	.11	.13*

\*p <.05; \*\*p < .001

*Research Question Two*

To determine if various teacher demographic variables impacted responses on the survey, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted between specific demographic variables and scores on the various scales comprising the survey. The demographic variables included for analysis were gender, race/ethnicity, type of teaching endorsement, degree level, geographic area, grades taught, age range of students taught, and class size. The analysis of these various variables and mean scores on the partnership measures yielded mixed findings.

In regards to significant findings, there were significant mean differences between female and male teachers' scores on both the Attitudes scale ( $F(1, 237)=14.79$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and the Partnership Practices scale ( $F(1, 239) = 13.87$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Overall, female teachers reported more favorable attitudes ( $M=96.92$ ,  $SD=9.02$ ) and endorsed engaging in more partnership practices ( $M=104.68$ ,  $SD=10.22$ ) compared to the male teachers whose mean Attitudes scale ( $M=89$ ,  $SD=10.88$ ) on the Partnership Practices scale ( $M=96.14$ ,  $SD=10.51$ ). In examining the gender profile of participants, compared to the female teachers, males were found to be more likely to teach in grades 5-8, hold a General Education teaching certification, and teach students who were nine years old and older. Table 7 displays all the ANOVA calculations that were conducted.

Table 7

*Analysis of Variance Findings for Demographic Variables and Partnership Measures*

<b>Source</b>		<b>Sum of Squares</b>	<b>Df</b>	<b>Mean Square</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>p</b>
Geographic Groups and Attitudes	Between	682.322	3	227.44	2.6	.06
	Within	20767.19	237	87.63		
	Total	21449.51	240			
Geographic Groups and Partnership Practices	Between	63.68	3	21.23	.19	.90
	Within	26565.55	239	111.15		
	Total	26629.23	242			
Degree Level and Attitudes	Between	24.65	1	24.65	.28	.60
	Within	21358.65	238	89.74		
	Total	21383.30	239			
Degree Level and Partnership Practices	Between	5.41	1	5.41	.05	.83
	Within	26607.31	240	110.86		
	Total	26612.72	241			
Teacher Ethnicity and Attitudes	Between	188.18	4	47.04	.53	.72
	Within	20849.90	233	89.49		
	Total	21038.07	237			
Teacher Ethnicity and Partnership Practices	Between	835.84	4	208.96	1.92	.11
	Within	25554.36	235	108.74		
	Total	26390.20	239			
Class Size and Attitudes	Between	117.23	5	23.45	.26	.94
	Within	21206.74	233	91.02		
	Total	21323.97				

Table 7 (continued)

<b>Source</b>		<b>Sum of Squares</b>	<b>Df</b>	<b>Mean Square</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>P</b>
Class Size and Partnership Practices	Between	242.33	5	48.47	.44	.82
	Within	26038.19	235	110.80		
	Total	26280.53	240			
Gender and Attitudes	Between	1252.02	1	1252.02	14.79	.00**
	Within	20064.51	237	84.66		
	Total	21316.53	238			
Gender and Partnership Practices	Between	1457.69	1	1457.69	13.87	.00**
	Within	25089.63	239	104.98		
	Total	26547.32	240			
Teacher Endorsement and Attitudes	Between	461.33	3	153.78	1.73	.16
	Within	20445.79	230	88.90		
	Total	20907.11	233			
Teacher Endorsement and Partnership Practices	Between	979.06	3	326.35	3.05	.03*
	Within	24775.42	232	106.79		
	Total	25754.48	235			
Age Range of Students Taught and Attitudes	Between	519.09	3	173.03	2.02	.11
	Within	19852.42	232	85.57		
	Total	20371.51	235			
Age Range of Students Taught and Partnership Practices	Between	2309.59	3	769.87	7.55	.00**
	Within	23866.01	234	101.99		
	Total	26175.60	237			
Elementary vs. Middle Grades and Attitudes	Between	391.89	2	195.94	2.20	.11
	Within	19230.17	216	89.03		
	Total	19622.06	218			

Table 7 (continued)

<b>Source</b>		<b>Sum of Squares</b>	<b>Df</b>	<b>Mean Square</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>p</b>
Elementary vs. Middle Grades and Partnership Practices	Between	2309.59	3	769.87	7.55	.00**
	Within	23866.01	234	101.99		
	Total	26175.60	237			

\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$

An ANOVA calculation also revealed significant mean differences between the type of endorsement a teacher held and scores on the Partnership Practices scale ( $F(3, 232)=3.06, p > .01$ ). No significant mean differences were found between various endorsement types and reported attitudes ( $F(3, 230)=1.73, p < .05$ ). A post hoc comparison test, Tukey's Honestly Significant Difference (HSD), was utilized to determine which groups of teachers differed on the Partnership Practices scale. Teachers certified as ESL/Bilingual ( $M=110.3, SD=9.07$ ) scored significantly higher than General Education teachers ( $M=102.7, SD=10.8$ ) on the Partnership Practices scale. On average, ESL/Bilingual teachers scored, 7.6 points higher than General Education teachers. An examination of the profile of ESL/Bilingual teachers revealed the vast majority to be female teachers in grades K-4. Table 8 presents the significant results of Tukey's HSD test for post hoc comparisons.

Table 8

*Tukey's HSD Comparison of Teacher Endorsement and Reported Partnership**Practices*

(I) Endorsement	(J) Endorsement	Mean Diff. (I-J)	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
General Ed.	ESL/Bilingual	-7.60*	2.65	-14.47	-.74
ESL/Bilingual	General Ed.	7.60*	2.6	.74	14.47

\*p &lt; 0.05

Additionally, an ANOVA calculation revealed significant mean differences between scores on the Partnership Practices scale and the age range of students the teacher reported working with ( $F(3, 234)=7.55, p<.01$ ). There were no significant mean differences found on the Attitudes scale for this variable ( $F(5, 233) =.26, p<.05$ ).

Tukey's HSD test for post hoc comparisons was utilized to determine which groups of teachers differed on the Partnership Practices scale. Teachers working with students 13 and older ( $M=97.4, SD=15.23$ ) scored significantly lower on the Partnership Practices scale compared to teachers working with students between the ages of 5-8 ( $M=106.5, SD=8.56$ ) and 9-12 ( $M=104.65, SD=8.86$ ). This means teachers of students 13 years of age and older scored, on average, 9.11 points lower on this scale than teachers of students between the ages of 5-8 and 7.23 points lower than teachers of students between the ages of 9-12. Table 9 presents the significant results of Tukey's HSD test for post hoc comparisons. No other post hoc comparisons were significant.

Table 9

*Tukey's HSD Comparison of Age Range of Students Taught and Reported Partnership**Practices*

I Age Range	J Age Range	Mean Diff. (I-J)	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
5-8	≤13	9.11**	1.97	3.99	14.22
9-12	≤13	7.23**	1.90	2.30	12.15
≤13	5-8	-9.11**	1.97	-14.22	-3.99
≤13	9-12	-7.23**	1.90	-12.15	-2.30

\*\*p &gt; 0.01

Lastly, an ANOVA calculation revealed a significant mean difference between Elementary and Middle school teachers on the Partnership Practices scale. No significant mean differences were found between Elementary and Middle school teachers regarding their reported attitudes ( $F(2, 216)=2.20, p < .05$ ). On average, Elementary teachers ( $M=106.13, SD=8.47$ ) scored 4.92 points higher on the Partnership Practices scale compared to Middle school teachers ( $M=101.20, SD=12.36$ ) indicating Elementary school teachers engage more often in various partnership practices.

ANOVA calculations revealed the following non-significant findings. First, teachers from various demographic areas did not differ significantly in their responses on the Attitudes scale ( $F(3, 239)=.19, p < .05$ ) or the Partnership Practices scale ( $F(3, 237)= 2.6, p < .05$ ). Second, degree level did not significantly impact mean scores on

the Attitudes scale ( $F(1, 238)=.28, p < .05$ ) or the Partnership scale ( $F(1, 240)=.05, p < .05$ ). Third, teacher ethnicity did not significantly impact scores on the Attitudes scale ( $F(4, 233)=.53, p < .05$ ) or on the Partnership Practices scale ( $F(4, 235)=1.92, p < .05$ ). Lastly, class size did not impact the way teachers responded on the Attitudes scale ( $F(5, 233) =.26, p < .05$ ) or Partnerships scale ( $F(5, 235)=.44, p < .05$ ).

Before moving on to a discussion of the findings for research question three, it is necessary to note the ANOVA calculation for geographic area and teacher attitudes is approaching significance ( $p=.06$ ). Based on this finding, the researcher conducted Tukey's HSD test for post hoc comparisons to determine which groups of teachers differed on the Attitudes scale. Post hoc analysis revealed a significant mean difference between teachers from Urban areas and Suburban areas above the median split. Specifically, teachers from Urban areas scored 4.58 points lower on average on the Attitude scale than did teachers from Suburban areas above the median split. Table 10 presents the significant results of Tukey's HSD test for post hoc comparisons. No other post hoc comparisons were significant.

Table 10

*Tukey's HSD Comparison of Geographic Areas and Reported Attitudes*

		95% Confidence Interval			
I Geographic Area	J Geographic Area	Mean Diff. (I-J)	Std. Error	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Urban	Suburban Above	-4.58*	1.72	-9.03	-.14
Suburban Above	Urban	4.58	1.72	.14	9.03

\* $p > 0.05$

*Research Question Three*

To determine if a match between a teacher's background and the background of the students they teach impacts teachers' collaborative attitudes and/or practice, an ANOVA was conducted. The researcher coded the teachers as having an "exact, near, or weak SES match" and a "strong, moderate, or low racial/ethnicity match" with his/her students and compared the mean responses of the various groups on both partnership measures. Additionally, the researcher combined the SES and racial/ethnicity match data to create a new variable. For this variable, the researcher paired all possible match combinations. For example, the researcher paired a "strong SES match" with an "exact racial/ethnicity match" and all other possible combinations. There were nine different possible combinations.

Before discussing the results of the ANOVA, it is first necessary to provide descriptive information regarding the percentage of teachers who fell in the various SES and racial match categories. Table 11 displays descriptive data regarding the type of neighborhood the school the teacher taught in was located and the type of neighborhood the teacher reported growing up in. This data was used to determine the teacher's SES match with that of his/her students. Table 11 displays the percentage of teachers who fell in each of the three SES match categories. As can be seen in the Table 12, 40% of the teachers fell into the category of "near SES match". This means the teachers differed with the population of students they teach by one SES category.

Table 11

*Descriptive Information about SES Match*

Type of Neighborhood	School Neighborhood		Teacher Neighborhood	
	Frequency	Total Percentage of Respondents	Frequency	Total Percentage of Respondents
Poor	29	13.3	1	0.5
Working Poor	28	12.8	7	3.2
Lower Middle Class	53	24.3	40	18.5
Middle Class	56	25.7	119	18.5
Upper Middle Class	41	18.8	46	21.3
Upper Class	11	5.0	3	1.4

In regards to descriptive information about the racial/ethnicity match data, it is first necessary present the information teachers provided about the ethnicity of the students they teach. Teachers were asked to estimate the percentage of students in their classes from various racial/ethnic categories. Figure 3 displays this data for each of the racial/ethnic groups and the four different geographic areas because the percentages of students from various backgrounds varied greatly among the different geographic areas. Figure 4 displays an average of the percentage of students in each racial/ethnic category compared to the ethnic breakdown of the teachers. Lastly, Table 13 presents the percentage of teachers who fell in the various racial/ethnicity match categories.

Table 12

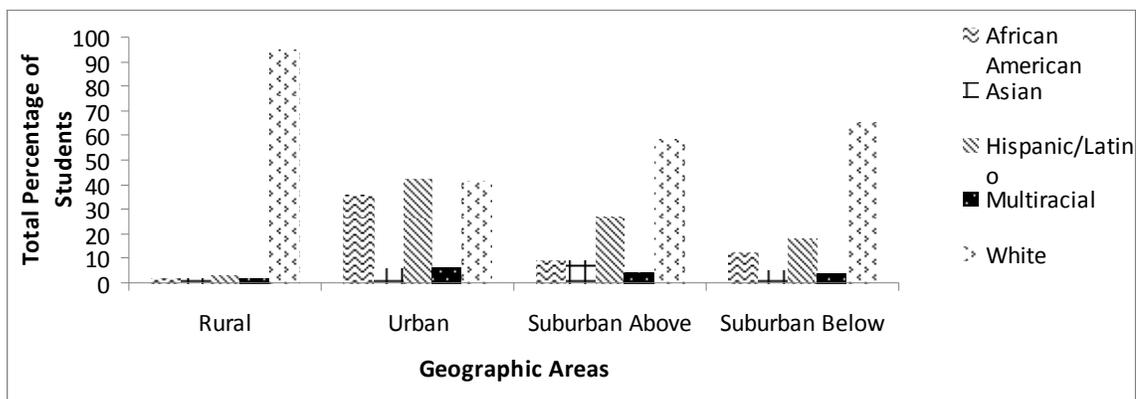
*SES Match Categories*

Match Category	Frequency	Total Percentage of Respondents
Exact	59	27.4
Near	87	40.5
Weak	69	28.4

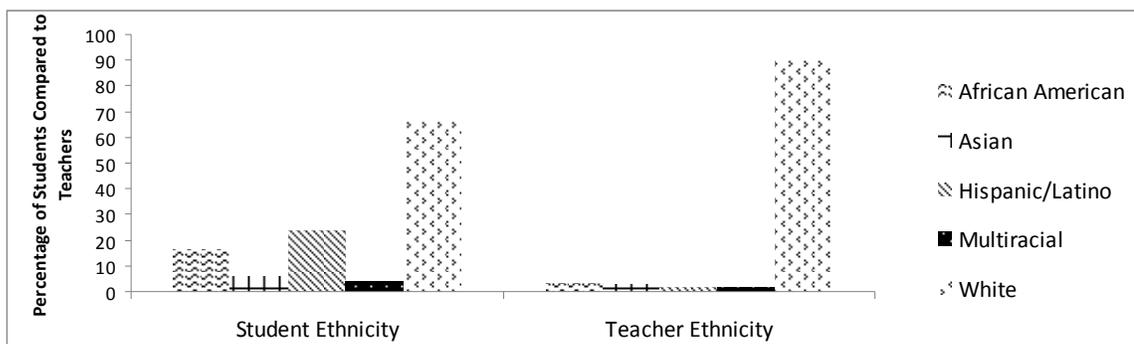
As can be seen in Figure 3, teachers in urban areas report a higher percentage of students to be from more diverse ethnic backgrounds compared to teachers in rural and suburban areas. Moreover, teachers from rural areas reported serving the highest percentage of White students compared to urban and suburban areas. Overall, the students' teachers reported serving are more ethnically diverse than the teachers themselves, with 90.4% of the teachers being White compared to 66.2% of the students they serve. All in all, 51.4% of teachers were found to have the same ethnicity as at least 75% of their students and are therefore considered to have a "strong racial/ethnic match".

To determine if a match between teachers' and students' SES and racial/ethnic background impacted teachers' responses, an ANOVA calculation was utilized. In regards to SES match, there were no significant differences found between teachers in any of the three match categories on the Attitudes scale ( $F(2, 210)=.08, p < .05$ ) or Partnership Practices scale ( $F(2, 212)=1.17, p < .05$ ). Additionally, there were no significant differences found between teachers in any of the three racial/ethnicity match

categories on the Attitudes scale ( $F(2, 203)=8.2, p < .05$ ) or Partnership Practices scale ( $F(2, 205)=1.74, p < .05$ ). Table 14 displays findings from these ANOVA analyses.



*Figure 3.* A graph depicting the percentage of students from various racial/ethnic backgrounds across the four geographic areas



*Figure 4.* A graph depicting the percentage of students in each racial/ethnic category compared to the ethnic breakdown of the participants

Table 13

*Racial/Ethnicity Match Categories*

Match Category	Frequency	Total Percentage of Respondents
Strong	107	51.4
Moderate	51	21.0
Low	50	20.6

Table 14

*Analysis of Variance Calculations for SES and Racial/Ethnicity Match and Partnership Measures*

Source		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	P
SES Match and Attitudes	Between	13.76	2	6.88	.08	.93
	Within	19187.15	210	91.37		
	Total	19200.91	212			
SES Match and Partnership Practices	Between	63.68	3	21.23	.19	.90
	Within	26565.55	239	111.15		
	Total	26629.23	242			
Racial/Ethnicity Match and Attitudes	Between	104.72	2	70.26	.82	.44
	Within	17336.31	203	85.4		
	Total	17477.03	205			
Racial/Ethnicity Match and Partnership Practices	Between	267.13	2	133.58	1.17	.31
	Within	24236.62	212	114.32		
	Total	24503.76	214			

As previously stated, the researcher combined the SES and racial/ethnicity match data into one variable to explore how the combination of these variables interacted to impact teachers' responses on the partnership measure. An ANOVA calculation revealed no significant differences on the Attitudes scale ( $F(8, 186)=1.31$ ,  $p < .05$ ) or Partnership Practices scale ( $F(8,188)=1.80$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Table 15 presents data from these ANOVA calculations.

Table 15

*Analysis of Variance Calculations for Combined SES and Racial/Ethnicity Match and Partnership Measures*

Source		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	P
Combined SES and Racial/Ethnicity Match and Attitudes Scale	Between	900.82	8	112.60	1.31	.24
	Within	15975.26	186	85.89		
	Total	16816.07	194			
Combined SES and Racial/Ethnicity Match and Partnership Practices Scale	Between	1632.73	8	204.09	1.80	.08
	Within	21273.78	188	113.16		
	Total	22906.51	196			

*Research Question Four*

To determine if the overall Big Five personality profile of the teachers in this study differed significantly from the norming group on the NEO-FFI, a one-sample t test was conducted. Analyses revealed that the teachers' mean scores on each of the five factors differed significantly from the norming population. Teachers were more Agreeable ( $t(242)=11.85, p=.00$ ), Extraverted ( $t(242)=13.52, p=.00$ ), Open ( $t(241)=3.70, p=.00$ ), and Conscientious ( $t(242)=6.94, p=.00$ ), and less Neurotic ( $t(242)=-5.38, p=.00$ ). Because such a large majority of the participants in this study were female (90.9%), the researcher also compared the female teachers' average scores on the NEO-FFI to the female only norming group. Data for the male teachers was excluded for this analysis. One-sample t-test revealed the same significant findings.

Compared to females in the general population, female teachers were more Agreeable ( $t(218)=8.66, p=.00$ ), Extraverted ( $t(218)=14.62, p=.00$ ), Open ( $t(217)=3.02, p=.00$ ), and Conscientious ( $t(218)=6.34, p=.00$ ), and less Neurotic ( $t(218)=-9.10, p=.00$ ). The NEO-FFI reports scores in t-scores where a t-score of 50 is considered average. Costa and McCrae (1992) define scores 34 and below as Very Low, scores 35-44 as Low, 45-55 as Average, 56-66 as High, and 66 and higher as Very High. Participants' scores were compared to the norming groups, both combined and female only, to t-scores of 50. Table 16 displays t-scores for the participants on both the combined and female only norm groups.

Table 16

*Participant t-scores for Combined and Female Only Norms*

Personality Dimension	Combined Male and Female	Female Only
Neuroticism	46	44
Extraversion	59	60
Openness	53	52
Agreeableness	58	59
Conscientiousness	54	55

## CHAPTER FIVE

### DISCUSSION

The purpose of the discussion section is to provide a summary of this study. The researcher will also present a discussion of the findings and explore possible implications of these findings. Additionally, the limitations of the study will be stated. Lastly, recommendations for further study on this topic will be made.

#### *Summary*

The primary purpose of this study was to explore the potential impact teachers' personality has on their attitudes and practices towards family-school partnerships. The benefits students reap when families and schools work together has been consistently documented (e.g., Cox, 2000; Ditrano & Silverstein, 2006; Sheldon & Epstein, 2002; Sheldon & Epstein, 2005). However, despite the widespread agreement on the importance of these relationships, there continues to be a documented disconnect between families and schools (Christenson, 2004). There are numerous factors that can potentially play a role in the development of a partnership. This study explored the role teacher personality may play in this process, as this is one factor that has yet to be studied.

In addition to the primary research question of the study, the researcher was also interested in three other secondary questions. First, the researcher was interested in exploring how various demographic variables impacted teachers' reported attitudes and

practices towards family-school partnerships. Second, because students in our schools are from such diverse backgrounds, the researcher was interested in how a cultural match between a teacher and student may impact teachers' reported attitudes and practices. Third and finally, the researcher was interested in comparing how teachers' personality traits, as measured by the FFM, compared to the personality traits of the general population. Several of the research questions posed in this study are questions that, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, have not been previously explored.

To answer the research questions set forth, a random sample of elementary teachers across the state of Illinois were surveyed. A total of 243 teachers from various geographic areas in the state completed the survey. The survey consisted of a FFM personality measure, attitudes towards family-school partnership measure, partnership practices measure, and demographic questions. Statistical analyses revealed several significant findings as reported in Chapter Four. Below follows a detailed discussion of these findings.

### *Discussion of Findings and Implications*

#### *The impact of teachers' personality on attitudes and practices towards family school partnerships*

The role of practicing teachers' personality as it impacts attitudes and practices towards family-school partnerships is an area that has not been studied. Walsh et al. (2009) did a similar pilot study with pre-service teachers and found the dimension of Openness to be related to pre-service teachers' attitudes towards partnership but the present study was done with practicing teachers and used a different personality

measure. To better understand the findings of the present study, available research on the various personality dimensions found to have a significant impact on teachers reported attitudes and practices related to family-school partnership will be utilized.

In regards to teachers' attitudes, the trait of Agreeableness was found to account for 20% of the variance in predicting teachers' attitudes towards family-school partnerships. The Attitudes scale measured how strongly teachers agreed or disagreed with various attitudinal statements such as "collaborating with parents/caregivers is a rewarding part of my job", "enjoying learning about the families of students", and all "parents/guardians have strengths". Available research on the trait of Agreeableness can be utilized to better understand the predictive relationship that exists between this trait and teachers' attitudes. In order to interpret this finding, it is necessary to have a clear understanding of the characteristics encompassed under this dimension of personality.

A person who is high on the Agreeableness dimension would likely be described as sympathetic, warm, kind, cooperative, and helpful. This dimension of personality captures individuals' interpersonal styles (Miller, Lynam, & Jones, 2008) and motivations to create and maintain positive interpersonal and prosocial relationships with others (Graziano & Eisenberg, 1997; Jensen-Campbell & Graziano, 2001). Moreover, Graziano, Habashi, Sheese, and Tobin (2007) explain a "Person X Situation" perspective is necessary to glean the most comprehensive understanding of how the attributes, motivations, and situations all interact to impact an individual's helping behaviors (p. 583). The authors assert prosocial motivation can be directly linked to

helping behavior. It is apparent individuals who score high on the Agreeableness dimension have strong interpersonal skills and find prosocial relationships to be intrinsically motivating. Additionally, there also seems to be situational and motivational factors that enhance traits under the Agreeableness dimension.

Based on this information, it does not seem surprising that Agreeableness would positively impact the way teachers think about the families of the students they serve. One of the essential components of effective collaboration is trust (Adams & Christenson, 2000), and it seems reasonable to think that parents would more readily establish a trustful relationship with a teacher whom they considered to be warm and kind. Moreover, Dietz (1997) asserts the teacher traits of warmth and sensitivity, among others, enhance the development of a partnership. It is clear these two traits fall under the Agreeableness umbrella.

In regards to partnership practices, there were three different personality dimensions that significantly impacted teachers' responses on this scale. Together, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, and Extraversion interact together and account for 20% of the variance for this behavior. Specifically, Agreeableness was found to account for 14% of the variance, Conscientiousness 4.6%, and Extraversion 1.4%. The Partnership Practices scale measured how frequently or infrequently teachers reported engaging in various partnership practices such as problem solving with parents/caregivers when a difficult situation arises, being flexible with availability of meeting with parents/ caregivers, and ensuring parents understood teacher expectations.

It is not surprising the dimension of Agreeableness was also found to significantly predict the frequency for which teachers engaged in various partnership practices. It seems a highly agreeable teacher would find engaging in relationships and specific practices to be meaningful and a necessary component of student success. Since Agreeableness was previously discussed, more attention will be paid here to the dimensions of Conscientiousness and Extraversion.

The factor of Conscientiousness encompasses traits such a diligent, hard-working, thorough, and organized. Individuals possessing these traits would be described as highly conscientious. Hogan and Ones (1997) explain conscientious individuals consistently have strong job performance across a variety of workplace settings. Teachers high on this dimension would likely be described by their superiors and having a hard work ethic and being dedicated. In terms of partnership practices, it is reasonable to see how a dedicated, thorough, hard-working teacher would value engaging frequently with parents/caregivers in various, meaningful ways.

The factor of Extraversion encompasses the traits of talkative and energetic at one end of the continuum and shy and withdrawn at the other end. Interestingly, it has been noted in the literature that there are some similarities between the dimension of Extraversion and Agreeableness in relation to prosocial behaviors (Carlo, Okun, Knight, & de Guzman, 2005). McCrae and Costa (1999) explain this factor is associated with sociability, positive emotions, and warmth. Due to the overlap that appears to exist between these two factors and prosocial behaviors such as helping, it is reasonable to

see how Extraversion may play a small but significant role in the prediction of teachers' partnership practices.

In terms of the implications of these findings, the purpose of exploring the link between teachers' personality and respective attitudes and practices towards family-school partnerships was not to imply that should a link be found that teachers' personalities could be changed. It is widely agreed upon in the literature that once an individual reaches adulthood, his/her personality is static (e.g., McCrae & Costa, 1999). Instead, the purpose of this study was to explore if teacher personality is a factor that impacts the development of partnerships with families. It is clear now that teacher personality is a one factor that does play a role and seems to account for 20% of the variance for both teachers' attitudes and practices.

This information is vital for school psychologists and other educators who are frequently called upon to help schools promote these beneficial relationships. Being aware of teacher traits that predispose teachers to naturally partner with families, can help school psychologists target both teachers who can serve as role models and those teachers who may need more support in this area. Additionally, research has implied that many prosocial behaviors captured under the dimension of Agreeableness, and to some extent Extraversion, are not only driven by personality attributes but also related to motives (Graziano & Eisenberg, 1997; Graziano et al., 2007; Jensen-Campbell & Graziano, 2001). While we cannot change personality, we can perhaps influence the level of motivation teachers have to reach out and partner with families. For example, school climate has been shown to be a factor in the development of strong partnerships

with families (Dauber & Epstein, 1993). Perhaps a school climate that values and emphasizes collaborating with families motivates teachers to engage in prosocial behaviors and evaluate and adapt their attitudes and practices towards family school partnerships. School psychologists can help schools determine what could potentially motivate teachers to engage in more prosocial behaviors.

*Impact of various demographic variables on teachers' attitudes and behaviors towards family-school partnerships*

Significant findings were found for the demographic variables of gender, age range of students taught, grades taught, teaching endorsement, and geographic area. In regards to gender, female teachers scored significantly higher on both partnership measures. On the Attitudes scales, female teachers scored on average 7.92 points higher than male teachers. On the Partnership Practices scale female teachers scored on average 8.54 points higher than males. In examining the gender profile of male teachers in more detail, it was found that 62% male teachers reported teaching in grades 5-8 compared to 41% of female teachers. Also, 86% of the male teachers reported they were certified as General Education teachers compared to 57% of female respondents. Lastly, 80% of male teachers reported working with children nine years old and older compared to 60% of female teachers.

This information is important because research indicates that partnerships are more likely to form between teachers and parents of elementary school students (e.g., Cutler, 2000; Epstein, 1995; Izzo, Weissberg, Kasrow, & Fendrich, 1999; Phelps, 1999). As children get older, the likelihood of collaboration between families and

schools declines with partnerships least likely to develop at the high school level. Since, the vast majority of male teachers reported working in grades 5-8 and with children nine years old and older, it is not surprising their scores on the partnership measures were significantly lower. Lastly, women tend to score slightly higher than men on the Agreeableness scale (Costa & McCrae, 1992). As we know, in this study the dimension of agreeableness was associated with more favorable attitudes and practices towards family-school partnership, and this is one other reason male teachers may have scored significantly lower on the partnership measures.

As in previous studies, the present study found elementary school teachers (grades K-4) and teachers of students younger than 13 to engage more frequently in various partnership practices compared to Middle school teachers (grades 5-8) and of students nine years old and older. Specifically, elementary school teachers scored 4.92 points higher on the Partnership Practices scale compared to middle school teachers. Additionally, teachers of students 13 years and older scored 9.11 points lower on this scale than teachers of students between the ages of 5-8 and 7.23 points lower than teachers of students between the ages of 9-12. Aforementioned, it is well documented in the literature that collaboration between families and teachers declines as students get older. The findings of this study support previous research findings in this area.

In regards to the type of teaching endorsement held by a teacher, a significant difference in scores on the Partnership Practices scale was found between General Education teachers and ESL/Bilingual teachers. Teachers with an ESL/Bilingual endorsement scored on average 7.6 point higher than teachers certified as General

Education teachers. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, there does not appear to be any literature that has directly examined how often teachers with different types of teaching certifications engage in various partnership practices. From a practical viewpoint, it is not surprising ESL/Bilingual teachers report engaging more frequently in various partnership practices, as these teachers may be, in many instances, one of the only people at the school that can communicate information with parents/caregivers whose primary language is not English.

The implications of these findings are two-fold. First, information about various teacher demographic variables that are associated with more favorable attitudes and practices towards family-school partnerships is useful because it provides those seeking to promote these relationships with information about teachers who may need more support in this area. Second, this study replicates the finding that Elementary teachers engage more often in various partnership practices compared to Middle school teachers and that teachers of older students, specifically 13 years old and older, report engaging in significantly less often in various partnership activities. These two findings provide credibility for the present study and indicate this sample of teachers responded similarly to other samples of teachers.

#### *Impact of a cultural match on teachers' attitudes and behaviors towards family-school partnerships*

There were no meaningful mean differences found on either of the partnership measures between teachers and students of various SES or racial/ethnicity match categories. The researcher felt this was a necessary area to explore because partnerships

with minority families are less likely to develop (Henderson, Marburger, & Ooms, 1986; Lareau, 1987; Souto-Manning & Swick, 2006). Moreover, we know the students in our schools are much more diverse than our teachers (National Collaborative on Diversity in the Teaching Force, 2004). Based on this information, the researcher thought it was important to explore how a cultural and/or racial/ethnicity match between a teacher and the students he/she teachers potentially impacts attitudes and practices towards partnerships.

The researcher found a match between a teacher and student's SES and/or race did not impact attitudes a teacher had about partnering with families or the frequency with which he/she engaged in various partnership practices. This is an optimistic finding considering so many teachers and students do not share common backgrounds. Moreover, this finding indicates a match between a teacher and student is not likely one of the barriers to forming partnerships with minority families. School psychologists and other educators working to increase the likelihood of partnerships forming between schools and minority parents/caregivers can use this information to inform schools that a match between a teacher and student's background is not a necessary prerequisite to effective collaboration. These findings suggest schools seeking to facilitate strong partnerships with minority families should focus on the similarities between teachers and students rather than focusing on the differences.

*Comparison of teachers' FFM personality profile compared to that of the general population*

One goal of this study was to determine how the FFM personality profile of teachers compares to that of the general population. Historically, teacher personality has been studied from a different theoretical standpoint than the FFM. The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (e.g., Rushton, Morgan, & Richard, 2007; Sears & Kennedy, 1997) appears to be the most common personality measure used to explore teacher personality. The researcher sought to fill in a gap in the literature by comparing the FFM personality profile of to that of the general population.

Data analysis revealed that teachers significantly differed from the norming group (N=1,000) on all five factors. The teachers were found to be more extraverted, agreeable, open, and conscientious and less neurotic. A closer look at the average t-scores for the female teachers compared to the female norming group indicate female teachers scored in the high range (t-scores between 56-65) on the traits of Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Conscientiousness, in the average range (t-scores between 45-55) on the dimension of Openness, and in the low range (t-scores between 44-35) on the dimension of Neuroticism. While these findings are statistically significant, it unclear there are any meaningful implications of these findings. Instead, the goal was to fill in a gap in the literature related to the FFM of teacher personality.

### *Limitations*

The most significant limitation of this study is the low response rate. Of the 4,327 teachers emailed, a total of 285 (6.6%) teachers accessed the survey and of those 285, a total of 243 (5.6%) teachers completed a majority of the survey and were included in the data analysis. A response rate of 5.6% is considered to be low and could potentially indicate the findings of the study do not adequately represent the general population of teachers in the state of Illinois. The Division of Instructional Innovation and Assessment at the University of Texas at Austin (2007) asserts the average response rate for e-mail surveys is 40%, where Sheehan (2001) found the average response rate to be around 31%. There does not seem to be a clear definition of an acceptable response rate nor consistency in the reporting of what typical response rates are for various types of surveys. That being said, many variables appear to potentially impact response rate in web-based survey research.

Variables that potentially seem to impact response rates on web-based surveys are survey length, pre-notification, follow-up requests, and the offering of incentives (Coughlan, Cronin, & Ryan, 2009; Division of Instructional Innovation and Assessment at the University of Texas at Austin, 2007; Sheehan, 2001; Umbach, 2005). It is possible some of these variables impacted the response rate of the present study. In particular, the researcher did not employ pre-notification or recruitment procedures, utilized only one follow-up request, and did not offer an incentive. It is possible the response rate for this study would have been higher if pre-notification, more follow-up requests and the offering of an incentive were utilized. It is not likely the survey length

impacted the response rate of the present study because such a large number of teachers who accessed the survey completed the majority of the survey.

Because this study explored several research questions that have not been previously studied, it is even more difficult to determine if the participants in this study, despite the low response rate, are representative of all K-8 teachers in the state of Illinois. That being said, there were some findings in this study that support findings from previous studies. This helps to provide some evidence the current sample is a representative sample of teachers.

Another limitation of this study was the chosen methodology. As with any methodology, survey research has some limits. In particular, survey research poses limitations such as self-report bias and issues of social desirability. Additionally, even when scales within a survey instrument are found to have adequate reliability, there is no way to ensure the scales are measuring exactly what they set out to measure. Lastly, a survey only taps specific information; thereby decreasing the robustness of the data and making it possible some relevant topics were left unexplored.

#### *Future Directions*

Prior research clearly delineates the benefits of family-school partnerships. It is essential for researchers to continue exploring the factors involved in promoting these beneficial relationships. This study highlights several novel findings related to factors at work in the development of partnerships between teachers and families. Due to the low response rate and the unavailability of a body of literature available to compare some of the present findings, it is recommended this study be replicated. Similar findings from

another study would add to the generalizability of the results. Below are recommendations for areas of future research in this area.

Future studies should more closely examine the link between teacher personality and attitudes and behaviors towards family-school partnerships. Should the traits of Agreeableness, in addition to the traits of Conscientiousness and Extraversion, continue to be found to impact teachers' attitudes and practices, a closer examination of these traits and the facets they encompass will be warranted. The implications of how this information can be used to help schools, bridge the gap between families and schools will need to be explored as well. Therefore, should the findings of this study be replicated, there are two important next steps. First, a deeper understanding of the personality traits and how they may relate to teachers' attitudes and practices towards family-school partnerships is needed. Second, studies exploring the utility of these findings would be necessary. For example, teachers' attitudes and practices could be measured over time to determine if providing positive role models (e.g., teachers high on the trait of Agreeableness) or increasing teachers' motivation to engage in prosocial behaviors positively impacted teachers' responses on the partnership measures.

Additionally, a closer analysis of how various teacher certification types impact attitudes and behaviors and a rationale for why this may be is needed. It is possible further research could identify a difference in the teacher training curriculum between General Education and Bilingual/ESL certification types that shapes how prospective educators think about working with families. This finding would have potential implications for teacher training programs. There are certainly other possible

explanations. Research is needed to better understand attitudinal differences between teachers holding various certification types.

Lastly, more research is needed to better understand why partnerships with minority families are less likely to develop. We know less about forming effective partnerships with minority families and the factors that both increase and/or decrease the likelihood of the development of these beneficial relationships. Researchers need to continue to rule-in and rule-out various factors impacting the ways schools reach out to minority families. This information is necessary for those seeking to promote these relationships in the schools they serve.

APPENDIX A  
PARTNERSHIP MEASURES

### Teacher Attitudes Towards Partnerships

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

Partnership=a two-way relationship in which educators and family members are working towards a shared goal.

1. Partnerships with parents/guardians are an important component of a student's education.
2. Collaborating with parents/guardians is a rewarding part of my job.
3. Parents/guardians have strengths that can be tapped to increase student success.
4. Partnerships are not necessary for student success.
5. One essential component of a good school is a strong, shared commitment to work with families.
6. Parents/guardians are good not resources to help teachers be more effective with students.
7. Most parents/guardians know how to help their children be successful in school.
8. All parents/guardians are capable of learning new tools to promote the academic competence of their children.
9. It is important to contact parents/guardians only when a problem arises.
10. As a teacher, I do not have enough time to develop partnerships with the parents/guardians of my students.
11. My school values input from parents/guardians.
12. The overall climate of my school is welcoming to all teacher, students, and parents.
13. Attending professional development sessions on ways to better promote partnerships with the families of the students I teach would be helpful to me.
14. It is the parent/guardians job to facilitate a relationship with their child's teacher/s.
15. I enjoy learning about the families of my students.

16. If parents/guardians express interest in learning a new tool to promote the academic/behavioral competence of their child, it is appropriate for the school to provide this learning opportunity.
17. When assigning homework, it is important to think about the role parents/guardians may have in assisting the student complete the homework assignment.

### Teacher Partnership Practices

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Extremely Extremely Important	Very Unimportant Important	Somewhat Unimportant	Neither Important Unimportant	Somewhat nor Unimportant	Very Important	

**Directions:** Below is a list of possible partnership practices that may or may not be appropriate for all teachers in all grade levels. Please indicate how often you engage in each of this possible partnership activities.

1. Engage in problem solving strategies with parents/guardians when a difficult situation arises.
2. Have a face-to-face meeting with each of my student's parents/guardians at least once a year.
3. Ask parents/guardians about their child's strengths.
4. Contact parents/guardians when a concern arises about their child.
5. Contact parents/guardians when their child impresses me.
6. Assign homework activities that encourage interaction between a parent/guardian and the student.
7. Encourage parents/guardians to read with their child.
8. Be flexible about meeting times with parents/guardians.
9. Brainstorm with other teachers on ways to involve parents in our school.
10. Provide parents/guardians with clear information regarding the academic skills their child needs to be successful in the grade you teach.
11. Ensure parents/guardians understand grading policies.
12. Ensure parents/guardians understand behavior expectations in the classroom.

13. Ensure parents/guardians understand my instructional style.
14. Ensure expectations for homework assignments are clear.
15. Provide ideas of specific activities parents/guardians can do with their child to promote the child's academic competence.
16. Involve parents/guardians as volunteers in my classroom.
17. Make use of alternative methods of communication with parents/guardians (e.g., e-mail, class website, notes in student's academic planner).

APPENDIX B  
EXAMPLE OF ITEMS FROM COSTA AND MCCRAE'S (1992)  
REVISED NEO-FFI

Instructions: Read each statement carefully. For each statement please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the statement. Check the box that best represents your opinion.

SD=Strongly Disagree    D=Disagree    N=Neutral    A=Agree    SA=Strongly Agree

	<u>SD</u>	<u>D</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>SA</u>
1. I usually prefer to do things alone.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
2. I have a lot of intellectual curiosity.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
3. I strive for excellence in everything I do.	<input type="checkbox"/>				

APPENDIX C  
DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

1. Gender
2. Race
3. Degree Level
4. Current Grade/s Taught
5. Geographic Location (Urban, Suburban, Rural)
6. Structure of Grade (Departmentalized or Not)
  - a. If departmentalized, what subject/s are you responsible for teaching
7. Typical Size of Class
8. What is the current age range of students in your class?
9. Below is a list of various racial/ethnic categories. Based on the students in your class this year, please estimate the percentage of your students that fit into each category. If you teach multiple classes of students each day, please base this on the class of students you see most often during the day (e.g. Homeroom).
 

• White	_____
• African American	_____
• Hispanic/Latino	_____
• Asian	_____
• Pacific Islander	_____
• American Indian	_____
• Multiracial	_____
• Other: _____	_____
100%	
10. Below is a list of possible levels of educational attainment. Please estimate the percentage of parents/caregivers of your students that fit into each category.
 

• <8 <sup>th</sup> grade	_____
• Some High School	_____
• High School Diploma/GED	_____
• Some College or Technical School	_____
• Bachelor's Degree	_____
• Graduate Degree	_____
100%	

11. What is the neighborhood like where your school is located? Check the statement that best describes the demographics of where your school is located.
- a. The neighborhood is made up of mostly families living in poverty and a large percentage of the student population receives free and reduced lunch (e.g. most persons are unemployed, rely on government help, and do not have a high school education).
  - b. The neighborhood is made up of mostly families who can be considered working poor (e.g. most families have low-paying jobs and are at risk of poverty).
  - c. The neighborhood is made up of mostly families who can be considered lower- middle class (e.g. most families have a job that provides for the basic needs of the family).
  - d. The neighborhood is made up of mostly families who can be considered middle class (e.g. most families a job that provides for an comfortable standard of living and some opportunity to put money in savings).
  - e. The neighborhood is made up of mostly families who can be considered upper-middle class (e.g. most families have jobs that provide for a very comfortable living, have the opportunity to travel and/or take a vacation once/twice a year, and are able to put money in savings).
  - f. The neighborhood is made up of mostly families who can be considered upper class (e.g., most families have jobs that provide for a more than adequate standard of living, have the opportunity to travel and vacation as they wish, and are able to put a significant amount of money into savings).
12. What was the neighborhood like where you attended elementary/middle school? Check the statement that best describes the demographics of where your school is located.
- a. The neighborhood is made up of mostly families living in poverty and a large percentage of the student population receives free and reduced lunch (e.g. most persons are unemployed, rely on government help, and do not have a high school education).
  - b. The neighborhood is made up of mostly families who can be considered working poor (e.g. most families have low-paying jobs and are at risk of poverty).

- c. The neighborhood is made up of mostly families who can be considered lower- middle class (e.g. most families have a job that provides for the basic needs of the family).
- d. The neighborhood is made up of mostly families who can be considered middle class (e.g. most families a job that provides for a comfortable standard of living and some opportunity to put money in savings).
- e. The neighborhood is made up of mostly families who can be considered upper-middle class (e.g. most families have jobs that provide for a very comfortable living, have the opportunity to travel and/or take a vacation once/twice a year, and are able to put money in savings).
- f. The neighborhood is made up of mostly families who can be considered upper class (e.g., most families have jobs that provide for a more than adequate standard of living, have the opportunity to travel and vacation as they wish, and are able to put a significant amount of money into savings).

APPENDIX D  
PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT E-MAIL

Dear Teacher,

My name is Anna Hamilton and I am a 3<sup>rd</sup> year Doctoral student in School Psychology at Loyola University of Chicago. I am emailing you because you are currently a practicing K-8 teacher in the state of Illinois and I would like to ask you for your voluntary participation in a research study I am conducting for my Dissertation under the supervision of Dr. David Shriberg. The purpose of the study is to explore the role teacher personality plays in the development of partnerships with families.

Should you decide to participate, you will be asked to complete an on-line survey that is estimated to take no more than 25 minutes to complete. The survey will ask you about your attitudes and practices towards family-school partnerships and some information about yourself and the students you teach. Your participation would be greatly appreciated and your responses will be confidential and anonymous.

If you are interested in participating, please click the link below. Once you click this link you will be taken to a secure site to complete the survey. Your IP addresses will be suppressed to insure there is no way you can be identified. If you have any questions please contact me at [annahamilton88@gmail.com](mailto:annahamilton88@gmail.com). Moreover, should you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, please feel free to contact Loyola University's Compliance Manager at (773) 508-2689.

Thank you for your voluntary participation and for helping me complete my dissertation research.

Click here to access the survey: [WEB ADDRESS](#) went here.

Sincerely,

Anna R. Hamilton

APPENDIX E  
PARTICIPANT FOLLOW-UP E-MAIL

Dear Teacher,

This is a follow-up e-mail regarding your voluntary participation in a Dissertation study exploring the relationship between teacher personality and family-school partnerships. A couple of weeks ago, I sent an initial email requesting your voluntary participation in this study and your willingness to complete an on-line survey that should take no more than 25 minutes to complete.

Your participation would be greatly valued and appreciated. If you are interested in participating, please click the link below. Once you click this link you will be taken to a secure site to complete the survey. Your IP addresses will be suppressed to insure there is no way you can be identified. If you have any questions please contact me at [annahamilton88@gmail.com](mailto:annahamilton88@gmail.com). Moreover, should you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, please feel free to contact Loyola University's Compliance Manager at (773) 508-2689.

Thank you for your voluntary participation and for helping me complete my dissertation research.

Click here to access the survey: [WEB ADDRESS](#) went here.

Sincerely,

Anna R. Hamilton

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## VITA

Anna Rawlings Hamilton is from Franklin, Virginia. Prior to her graduate studies at Loyola University Chicago, Anna attended the University of Virginia where she earned her Bachelor of Arts in Psychology in May of 2003. From the fall of 2003 through the spring of 2006, Anna attended the University of Tennessee at Knoxville where she earned a Masters of Science in Mental Health Counseling. It was during her internship year at Tennessee when Anna realized she wanted to pursue a career working with children.

In the fall of 2006, Anna began her graduate career at Loyola. Throughout her time at Loyola, Anna participated on an action research team examining socially just collaboration practices. She also had varied experiences, both as a student and employee, working in Chicago Public Schools with children from diverse backgrounds. Additionally, Anna taught an undergraduate course for pre-service special education teachers.

Currently, Anna is completing an APA approved internship at Washburne Middle School in Winnetka, Illinois. Upon completion of her internship, she hopes to return to Virginia and pursue clinical licensure.

## DISSERTATION APPROVAL SHEET

The Dissertation submitted by Anna Rawlings Hamilton has been read and approved by the following committee:

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The final copies have been examined by the director of the Dissertation Committee and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated and that the Dissertation is now given final approval by the committee with reference to content and form.

The Dissertation is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Date

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