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MIDDLE SCHOOL PARENT INVOLVEMENT: PERCEPTIONS IN TWO SOUTH
CAROLINA SCHOOL DISTRICTS

By
Jessica VanValkenburgh

A Dissertation Submitted to the
Gardner-Webb University School of Education
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

Gardner-Webb University
2020

Approval Page

This dissertation was submitted by Jessica VanValkenburgh under the direction of the persons listed below. It was submitted to the Gardner-Webb University School of Education and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Gardner-Webb University.

Jennifer Putnam, Ed.D.
Committee Chair

Date

Mitchell Porter, Ph.D.
Committee Member

Date

Sydney Brown, Ph.D.
Committee Member

Date

Prince Bull, Ph.D.
Dean of the School of Education

Date

Dedication

To my Mom, thank you for teaching me to follow my dreams. You are an example of resilience, lifelong learning, and success. To my girls, Veronica and Bianca, always remember you can do anything you dream of with the right mindset!

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To my husband Sean, thank you for stepping up and taking over many of my responsibilities so I had more time to work on my dissertation. Thank you for being my rock and my safe place. To my parents, Jamie and Terri Guidry, thank you for keeping the kids, encouraging me, and teaching me to follow my dreams. You never stopped believing in me.

Dr. Jennifer Putnam, my dissertation chair, thank you for your encouragement, feedback, and unwavering support. Thank you for pushing me to be my best self and for always helping me find a way. Dr. Sydney Brown, thank you for encouraging me to apply to the program regardless of the obstacles I faced. I appreciated your feedback, questions, and dedication to my success. Dr. Mitch Porter, thank you for being so wonderful with statistics! I appreciate your willingness to join me in this journey and teach me how to create concise statistical analysis. I most definitely could not have done this without you!

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Abstract

MIDDLE SCHOOL PARENT INVOLVEMENT: PERCEPTIONS IN TWO SOUTH CAROLINA SCHOOL DISTRICTS. VanValkenburgh, Jessica, 2020: Dissertation, Gardner-Webb University.

This study was created to explore the parent involvement perceptions of teachers and parents of middle school students in two South Carolina districts. The study is grounded in Epstein et al.'s (2019) theory of overlapping spheres and six typologies of parent involvement. An exploratory mixed methods study was used to gather research.

Quantitative and qualitative data were collected to determine the perceptions of teachers and parents at five different sites. Cronbach's alpha was used to test reliability, and a MANOVA test was used to test for mean differences of dependent variables. Univariate ANOVA tests were used to further explore differences in quantitative data. Qualitative data were coded to determine themes and opinions of stakeholders. Student achievement data were analyzed, and all data were triangulated to determine correlations. The findings showed that all six typologies had significant differences in responses from parents and teachers. Qualitative data further showed that parents and teachers had similar opinions regarding some typologies of parent involvement and differing opinions with others. After triangulating data, a detailed discussion of the findings found specific relationships. Recommendations for practice and future studies were reported.

Keywords: parent involvement, family involvement, community involvement, teacher perceptions, parent perceptions, middle school

Table of Contents

	Page
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
Statement of the Problem.....	2
Significance of the Study	5
Purpose of the Study	7
Research Questions	8
Overview of Methodology	9
Conceptual/Theoretical Framework.....	9
Key Terms and Definitions	11
Delimitations	11
Limitations	12
Summary	12
Chapter 2: Literature Review.....	14
Parent Involvement	14
History of Parent Involvement.....	15
Parent Involvement Models	16
Differences in Grade Level Involvement.....	25
Parent Involvement in Middle School	27
Perceptions of Parent Involvement	30
Perceptions of Parents	31
Perceptions of Teachers	34
Perceptions of Students.....	36
Parent Involvement and Socioeconomic Status (SES)	38
Parent Involvement and Community Poverty	39
Parent Involvement and Ethnicity.....	42
Parent Involvement and Special Education	44
Theoretical Framework.....	46
Summary	48
Chapter 3: Methodology	49
Overview	49
Restatement of the Problem.....	50
Research Questions	51
Research Design.....	51
Population and Sampling	53
Measures and Instruments.....	55
Protecting Participants	60
Quantitative Data Analysis	61
Qualitative Data Analysis	62
Researcher's Role and Access to Site.....	63
Limitations and Delimitations.....	64
Summary	65
Chapter 4: Results	66
Overview.....	66
Research Questions	66

Data Collection Process	66
Research Findings	68
Summary	89
Chapter 5: Discussion	90
Overview of the Study	90
Research Questions	90
Findings and Implications	91
Limitations and Delimitations	98
Recommendations	99
Conclusion	104
References	106
Appendices	
A Permission to Adapt Survey	117
B Survey Protocols and Instruments	119
C Gardner-Webb University Informed Consent Form	124
Tables	
1 Study Site Demographics (2018)	3
2 Percent of Teachers Satisfied with Home Relations	4
3 Percent of Parents Satisfied with Home Relations	4
4 Percent of Students Scoring Met or Exceeding on the SCREADY ELA test	5
5 Percent of Students Scoring Met or Exceeding on the SCREADY Math test	6
6 Participant Demographics (Survey 1)	54
7 Participant Demographics (Survey 2)	54
8 Number of Survey Items for Each Type of Parent Involvement	56
9 Data Alignment	59
10 MANOVA Results	69
11 Mean and Standard Deviation	71
12 Ways Parents and Teachers Feel Schools Help Them Learn About Parenting	73
13 Type of Communication Mentioned by Parents and Teachers	75
14 Types of Structures that Help Parents Volunteer at the School Site	76
15 How the School Provides Information About Helping Students with Their Studies	77
16 How the School Includes Parents in Decision-Making	79
17 How the School Collaborates with the Community	81
18 Percent of Students Scoring Met or Exceeding on the 2019 SCREADY Tests	85
19 Mean and Standard Deviation	86
20 ANOVA Results	87
21 Mean Differences, Standard Deviations, and Student Achievement	87
Figures	
1 Epstein's (1995) Six Types of Involvement	10
2 Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) Adapted Model of Parent Involvement	17
3 Epstein et al.'s (2019) Theoretical Model: External Structure	46
4 Epstein's et al.'s (2019) Theoretical Model: Internal Structure	47
5 Coding	63

Chapter 1: Introduction

Multiple research studies have shown a positive correlation between parent involvement and student achievement (Cotton & Wikelund, 1989; Epstein, 1996, 2011; Epstein, Simon, & Salinas, 1997; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005; Smith, 2015). While many studies have been conducted to determine how parent involvement correlates to student achievement (Cotton & Wikelund, 1989; Epstein, 1996, 2011; Epstein et al., 2019; Erdener, 2016), few studies have explored the perceptions stakeholders have pertaining to parent involvement. Varying perceptions of parent involvement could, at the least, hinder family and community involvement. Herrell (2011) suggested that research involving parent involvement should be expanded to include the perceptions parents and teachers have regarding parent involvement. Parent involvement research has focused on how parents are involved, not the frequency and quality of the involvement, as perceived by teachers (Thompson, Herman, Stormont, Reinke, & Webster-Stratton, 2017). Additionally, the quality and frequency of communication used by the school to get parents involved have not been a focus of research (Thompson et al., 2017). Determining the perceptions of stakeholders and how teacher and parent views align might benefit schools and allow for continuous improvement, two factors leading to increases in student achievement (Cotton & Wikelund, 1989; Epstein, 1996, 2011; Epstein et al., 2019; Smith, 2015).

Herrell (2011) found that significant differences occurred between teacher and parent perceptions of parent involvement based on age, gender, education level, and race. Many parents become less involved in their child's schooling during middle school, even though this period is when their involvement is needed most (Smith, 2015; Stevenson,

1998; Wehrspan, Dotterer, & Lowe, 2016). Since parent involvement is directly related to positive effects on student achievement, getting middle school parents involved is an important goal (Erdener, 2016; Kettler & Valentine, 2000). Although researchers have determined ways to improve parent involvement, few have asked parents and teachers their perceptions of parent involvement at their site.

The United States has begun to stress the importance of parent involvement through the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Additionally, ESSA emphasizes the importance of parent involvement for students who attend Title I schools (Park, Stone, & Holloway, 2017). Title I schools have high percentages of low-income students and receive additional federal funding to help their students succeed.

Cotton and Wikelund (1989) contended that the U.S. Department of Education needed to start recognizing the need for parent involvement and research surrounding the topic in the late 1980s. At the same time, Epstein (1992, 1996) gained recognition for her work with parent involvement, specifically her Partnership Model and the six types of parent involvement. Cotton and Wikelund further determined the downward trend of parent involvement after elementary school. Over 25 years later, Magourik (2015) showed no current change in this trend; parent involvement still lessens as students age.

Statement of the Problem

Within the proposed districts of study, the lack of parent involvement is an issue that varies by school. Mirroring previous research (Cotton & Wikelund, 1989; Magourik, 2015), parent involvement in these districts dropped significantly in middle schools. While parents were lined up to volunteer and donate at the elementary level, the middle schools often had a hard time getting chaperones and needed donations. These districts

were in the same region of the state. The surveys were sent to five of the eight middle schools within the districts that agreed to participate. Each middle school contained different populations of students. A brief description of the schools, as described by the State Department of Education, is seen in Table 1.

Table 1

Study Site Demographics (2018)

	School A	School B	School C	School D	School E
Setting	Suburban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Rural
Enrollment (approximate)	1,000	500	550	350	300
Student: Teacher Ratio	20:1	25:1	N/A*	18:1	24:1
Free/Reduced Lunch	25%	54%	84%	75%	64%

*Information listed as Not Available on the state website.

Affluent communities tend to have more family involvement unless schools in less affluent communities work to build partnerships with the families (Epstein et al., 2019). The schools within the target district all had very different populations and needs. School A was a suburban school in an area of rapid growth. At the time of this study, the school housed Grades 6-8 in a traditional middle school model. With approximately 1,000 students, the school had outgrown its current facility. Approximately 25% of students receive free/reduced lunch at this school, and the student-teacher ratio is 20:1.

School B was a rural school on the outskirts of the county and had an enrollment of approximately 500 students. The school was serving Grades 6-8. The free/reduced lunch rate was at 54% and had risen slightly over the past 3 years. The student-teacher ratio was 25:1.

School C was an urban school with an enrollment of approximately 550 students. The school housed Grades 6-8. The free/reduced lunch rate was 84% and had risen over the past few years. The school qualified as a Title I school.

School D was a rural school with an enrollment of approximately 350 sixth-through eighth-grade students. The free/reduced lunch rate was 75% and was rising every year. The student-teacher ratio at the school was 18:1.

School E was a rural school with an enrollment of 300 students. The school housed Grades 6-8. Over 60% of the students qualified for free/reduced lunches. The student-teacher ratio was 24:1 at the time of the study.

Tables 2 and 3 show the last 3 years of state report card data for each school. The report card data shows the number of teachers satisfied with home relations and the number of parents satisfied with home relations.

Table 2

Percent of Teachers Satisfied with Home Relations

	School A	School B	School C	School D	School E
2016	81%	89%	N/A*	49%	87%
2017	82%	89%	38%	45%	86%
2018	82%	90%	46%	48%	79%

*Accurate data not available.

Teacher responses at School A, School B, and School D stayed relatively consistent over the last 3 years. School E saw a drop of almost 10% over the past 3 years. School C rose from 2017 to 2018. Table 3 shows the percent of parents satisfied with home relations.

Table 3

Percent of Parents Satisfied with Home Relations

	School A	School B	School C	School D	School E
2016	76%	77%	51%	40%	N/A*
2017	76%	62%	75%	83%	69%
2018	76%	62%	54%	59%	58%

*Accurate data not available.

Overall, School A is the only school with consistent parent and teacher

satisfaction scores over the last 3 years; however, School B's teacher satisfaction stayed about the same, while parent satisfaction dropped over 10% during the last 3 years.

Schools C, D, and E showed a rise in both teacher and parent satisfaction from 2016 to 2017 and then a decline in teacher and parent satisfaction from 2017 to 2018. It is important to note that only parents of eighth-grade students are invited to participate in the state's report card survey.

Significance of the Study

Enhancing parent involvement in middle school leads to higher student achievement, attendance, and happiness throughout the middle grades (Epstein et al., 2019; National Education Association, 2008; Oswald, Zaidi, Cheatham, & Brady 2017). An increase in achievement and overall student satisfaction has the potential to increase site and district success. A meta-analysis by Sheridan, Smith, and Kim (2019) found that schools within different locales experience different contexts that may interfere with family-school relations. The schools in this study include rural, suburban, and urban areas. According to the South Carolina State Department of Education (2018) state report card data, all schools in the study have a low percentage of students meeting the state expectations for their grade level. Table 4 shows the percent of students meeting or exceeding standard expectations on the South Carolina College and Career Ready Assessment (SCREADY) in English/language arts (ELA).

Table 4

Percent of Students Scoring Met or Exceeding on the SCREADY ELA Test

	School A	School B	School C	School D	School E
2016	58%	38%	21%	28%	48%
2017	49%	33%	19%	21%	40%
2018	57%	38%	19%	21%	40%

From 2016-2018, the total percentage of students who met or exceeded ELA standards dropped for all schools in the study. Percentages from Schools D and E dropped the most, while School C's percentage stayed consistent. Scores in Schools A and B dropped from 2016 to 2017 and then increased in 2018. Table 5 shows the data for the SCREADY mathematics test.

Table 5

Percent of Students Scoring Met or Exceeding on the SCREADY Math Test

	School A	School B	School C	School D	School E
2016	51%	42%	11%	18%	24%
2017	50%	40%	11%	15%	25%
2018	57%	39%	11%	16%	25%

The mathematics scores were more stable, with scores in School B only varying by 3% over the last 3 years. School A's scores dropped slightly from 2016 to 2017 and then increased by 7%. Consistently, 11% of students in School C scored as met or exceeding standards.

In School A, in general, more than half the students met or exceeded state standards in ELA and mathematics during each year. Less than half of all students in the other four schools met the state standards for both ELA and mathematics.

This study allowed researchers, administrators, teachers, and other stakeholders to gain insight into the current perceptions of parent involvement throughout the districts. In addition to being able to use the results for immediate, continuous improvement, the study could be replicated at neighboring schools and districts. From this research, sites and districts will be able to create their own action plans to increase parent involvement and family/community engagement. These action plans have the potential to increase

parent involvement, and as stated previously, parent involvement is positively correlated with increased academic achievement. Researchers outside of the district/state of this site could use the results of the study as a basis to plan future studies or engagement efforts. Determining the perceptions of stakeholders and how they compare to one another may allow researchers to effectively plan and implement activities to increase parent involvement which in turn increases student achievement.

In addition to the administration at the focus sites, other middle-level administrators may find interest in this study. School personnel at elementary, high, or intermediate schools might use the results of this study to prevent the loss of parent involvement as students progress through their schooling. Additionally, it will be useful to determine the perceptions of parent involvement, as seen by stakeholders, before creating a plan of action to increase involvement.

This research could also increase collective teacher efficacy. After gathering research about current perceptions of parent involvement, action plans can be created to support parent involvement, improve the school climate/culture, and increase support for parents and teachers. All these steps have the potential to increase teacher efficacy throughout the site. Krizman (2013) found that a “moderately strong relationship exists between teacher self-efficacy and the use of parental involvement practices” (p. 173). Visible Learning (2018) found collective teacher efficacy to be the most influential factor in student achievement.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this case study was to explore the relationships between parent and teacher perceptions of parent involvement. Specifically, the study’s goal was to

determine how parent involvement, within the districts, could be described using Epstein et al.'s (2019) six typologies of parent involvement. It is important to examine how perceptions are related in order to strengthen relationships and improve student learning. Perceptions are defined, through the research instruments, as the thoughts, opinions, and experiences of teachers and parents. Student achievement scores also were examined to explore how perceptions of parent involvement related to student achievement.

Research Questions

This study was conducted to gain a better understanding of teacher and parent perceptions of parent involvement within two South Carolina school districts. The research questions were formulated to gather evidence pertaining to perceptions of specific stakeholder groups (teachers and parents). To help answer this research focus, the following questions were used:

1. How can parent involvement be described in two South Carolina school districts, in relation to Epstein's (1995) six types of parent involvement?
 - 1a. What are the mean differences between parent and teacher perceptions of parent involvement regarding Epstein's (1995) six typologies?
 - 1b. What themes emerge in differences between parent and teacher perceptions of parent involvement regarding Epstein's (1995) six typologies?
2. How can the mean differences of parent and teacher perceptions of parent involvement be described with student achievement?

These research questions allowed the researcher to fully explore the perceptions of teachers and parents as well as investigate student achievement and perceptions of parent

involvement.

Overview of Methodology

This study was a mixed methods case study consisting of a quantitative and a qualitative survey. The first survey gathered quantitative data, and the second survey gathered qualitative data. Survey 1 (quantitative survey) used an adapted version of Epstein et al.'s (2019) *Measure of School, Family, and Community Partnerships* survey. The survey was sent out electronically to administrators at each of the five sites. If they chose to participate in the study, the administrators then passed on the survey to their faculty and parents. The same survey was sent to both participant groups. No identifying information was gathered from the survey, except for items asking about the participant's site, their role at the site, and household income. The survey was sent out in October 2019 and remained open for 2 weeks. After completion of the first survey window, a second qualitative survey was sent to participants. Survey 2 contained six open-ended questions pertaining to Epstein's (1995) six typologies and one final question asking participants for any final thoughts. At the end of the 2-week period, the survey was disabled so data analysis could begin.

Conceptual/Theoretical Framework

This study used the work of Epstein (1995) as its conceptual framework. Epstein's (1995) Six Types of Family/Community Involvement were adopted by the National Parent Teacher Association as a framework for family and community engagement in schools (Anderson, 2017). The goal of the research was to determine how parents and teachers at each of the sites perceived family involvement in these six categories. Epstein's (1995) Six Types of Family/Community Involvement can be seen

in Figure 1.

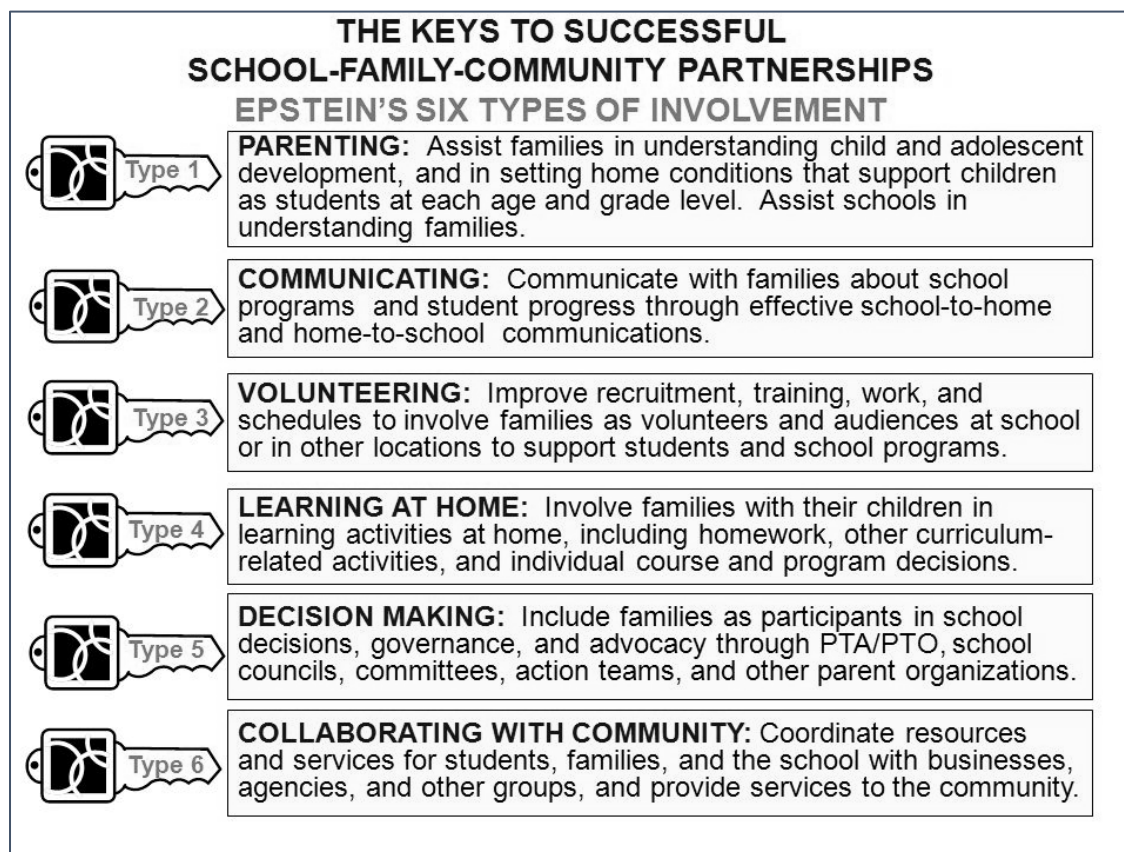


Figure 1. Epstein's (1995) Six Types of Involvement.

Collected data from the study allowed each site to know its strengths as well as areas with a need for improvement within Epstein's (1995) types of involvement. In addition, the data showed any positive or negative relationships when comparing teacher and parent perceptions.

The study used Epstein et al.'s (2019) theoretical model as seen in the Handbook for Action. Epstein et al.'s (2019) model contains three overlapping spheres of influence on children's learning: family, school, and community. Within these spheres, the external forces of experience, philosophy, and practices of family can increase or

decrease parent involvement. Time, age, and grade level of the child can also affect parent involvement (Epstein et al., 2019). This figure will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 2.

Key Terms and Definitions

Parent. A person who brings up or cares for another (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). In this work, parent refers to a biological parent, stepparent, or any other legal guardian who cares for the child at least half of the time.

Parent involvement. Participation of parents in school activities and activities outside of school that promote student success; commitment to promote success for students (Smith, 2017).

Teacher. In this work, the term teacher refers to a full-time, certified, classroom teacher of any subject.

Delimitations

Delimitations of a study are characteristics that result from specific choices by the researcher (Simon & Goes, 2013). Delimitations of the study include the choice to use only one district in the research. While the research problem could have been applied to many schools, the researcher chose to focus on two districts so the data gathered could direct immediate recommendations and changes at the district and school levels. Basing the study on Epstein (1995) and her six types of parent involvement is also a delimitation. There are other researchers with other ideas about parent involvement, but Epstein et al.'s (2019) types of parent involvement were used as the conceptual framework for this study. The choice to focus on parent and teacher perceptions of parent involvement is one that was made after much consideration of alternatives. The researcher chose to focus on

parents and teachers because those two groups are the adults who are most responsible for communication at a school. Everyday communication about behavior, academics, and other items come from the teacher to the parent. While students sometimes get caught in the middle, they are children; and the researcher for this study was interested in perceptions of the adults and parent involvement. Choosing to give participants a Likert scale survey is a delimitation that allowed the researcher to use nonparametric statistics to analyze the data.

Limitations

According to Butin (2010), all researchers have “limits to the data they can ‘capture’ and accurately depict” (p. 108). The limitations of this study included the teachers and parents who chose to complete the surveys. The survey instructions and links were sent to the superintendent and/or principals at individual sites. The first survey was to be sent to all staff at each site, but the number of surveys completed and received by the deadline was out of the researcher’s control. In addition to the teachers, the survey was to be sent to all parents whose children attend each school site through the ConnectEd automated email and phone system. The second survey should have been sent 3 weeks after the first survey. The researcher had no control over the actual distribution of the surveys because of district protocol.

Summary

This study intended to uncover how parent involvement can be described, using Epstein’s (1995) six typologies, within two South Carolina school districts. Additionally, the researcher gathered information to determine what mean differences exist between perceptions of parent involvement and how they can be described with student

achievement. The study investigated parent involvement practices and perceptions from both stakeholder groups. Epstein's (1995) six types of parent involvement were used as the foundation and conceptual framework for the study. Quantitative and qualitative data were used to fully explore perceptions at the sites so the researcher could make recommendations to improve parent involvement. A comprehensive review of literature is found in Chapter 2, reviewing the history of parent involvement in education and current research. For this study, the researcher chose to complete a case study. A case study involves researching an actual challenge, opportunity, or decision in an organization to develop an in-depth analysis of a case (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

This study set out to determine the perceptions of parent involvement at five sites. Parents and teachers were surveyed to gain quantitative and qualitative data. Surveys were sent to all teachers and parents at the site. The state's most recently published test scores were used to gather student achievement data. In Chapter 3, the methodology for the study is more thoroughly described.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this study was to explore how parent involvement can be described using Epstein et al.'s (2019) six typologies. This study also determined how middle school parents and teachers characterize effective parent involvement. This chapter reviews literature related to parent involvement. The chapter begins with an overview of parent involvement, followed by information on the history of parent involvement, parent involvement models, and parent involvement when looked at through different lenses.

Parent Involvement

Hill et al. (2004) defined parent involvement as “parents’ interaction with schools and with their children to benefit their children’s education success” (p. 1491). Parent involvement in this study refers to the caregiver’s participation in the student’s education and with the school. Curry and Holter (2019) stated that “parents across all ethnic groups and income levels want to help their children experience success in school” (p. 537). Parental involvement allows for children to receive support for their academic and emotional development, regardless of economic status or cultural background (Daniel, 2016). Cotton and Wikelund (1989) affirmed that “parents can support their children’s schooling by attending school functions and responding to school obligations (parent-teacher conferences, for example)” (p. 2). In addition to these supports, parents can also stay up to date with happenings at the school and take an active role in the students’ at-home schooling such as homework, studying, and projects. Parents can also be an advocate for the school and/or volunteer to help the school in any fashion (Cotton & Wikelund, 1989). Some districts allow parents to take an active role in decision-making

through parent-teacher organizations (PTOs), school improvement councils, or other similar organizations. Legislation regarding parent involvement has changed over the last 30 years as research has become more prevalent.

History of Parent Involvement

Students' home-related experiences may be different, but they bring their positive or negative family and home experiences with them to school each day. Parent involvement has also become a more researched topic in education since the 1980s. Over the last 3 decades, parent involvement has moved from the back to the forefront of education.

In the 1980s, parent involvement was focused on parents volunteering in schools, attending meetings, and helping students with homework. In the early 2000s, national reform known as the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act: No Child Left Behind* included family involvement in the reform (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.). The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) stated how parents must be informed by the school. The original NCLB reform required schools to inform parents of schooling choices (public schools, charter schools, supplemental education services) and detailed information about school districts and schools, in the form of school report cards (U.S. Department of Education, 2003). School report cards had student achievement data, school demographics of the student population, and teacher qualification information (U.S. Department of Education, 2003). This reform was reworked and transformed into ESSA by President Obama in 2015 (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.). This law focuses on preparing all students for college or careers, with the help of educators and families (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.). ESSA ensures that school assessment and report card

information be shared with not only parents but with communities as well (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.). The ESSA legislation also includes grants such as Promise Neighborhoods (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.). The purpose of Promise Neighborhoods, as noted by the U.S. Department of Education (2018), is to “significantly improve the educational and developmental outcomes of children and youth in our most distressed communities, and to transform those communities” (para. 2), which includes family and community supports through the grant. In addition, the U.S. Department of Education (2005) created a parental involvement section within the Title I legislation requiring schools to meet parent involvement requirements in order to receive and keep that part of the funding. Schools receiving Title I funds must involve parents in the creation, review, and improvement of parent involvement plans (U.S. Department of Education, 2005). The school must conduct annual evaluations of the parent involvement plan and identify current barriers of parent involvement at their site (U.S. Department of Education, 2005). The legislation goes so far as to mandate that meetings be made on different days and times to allow more parents to be involved. State education agencies review the parent involvement policies to ensure they meet the requirements of the legislation (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.). Many of these legislative changes have been sparked by parent involvement research and parent involvement models and frameworks.

Parent Involvement Models

In the mid-1990s, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997), as well as Epstein (1995), were creating parent involvement models that are still in use today. These models have been used in research completed by individuals and organizations. The

models have even helped shape much of the legislation and processes we know today.

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's *Model of Parental Involvement Process* shows five levels of parent involvement. Figure 2 displays the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler model.

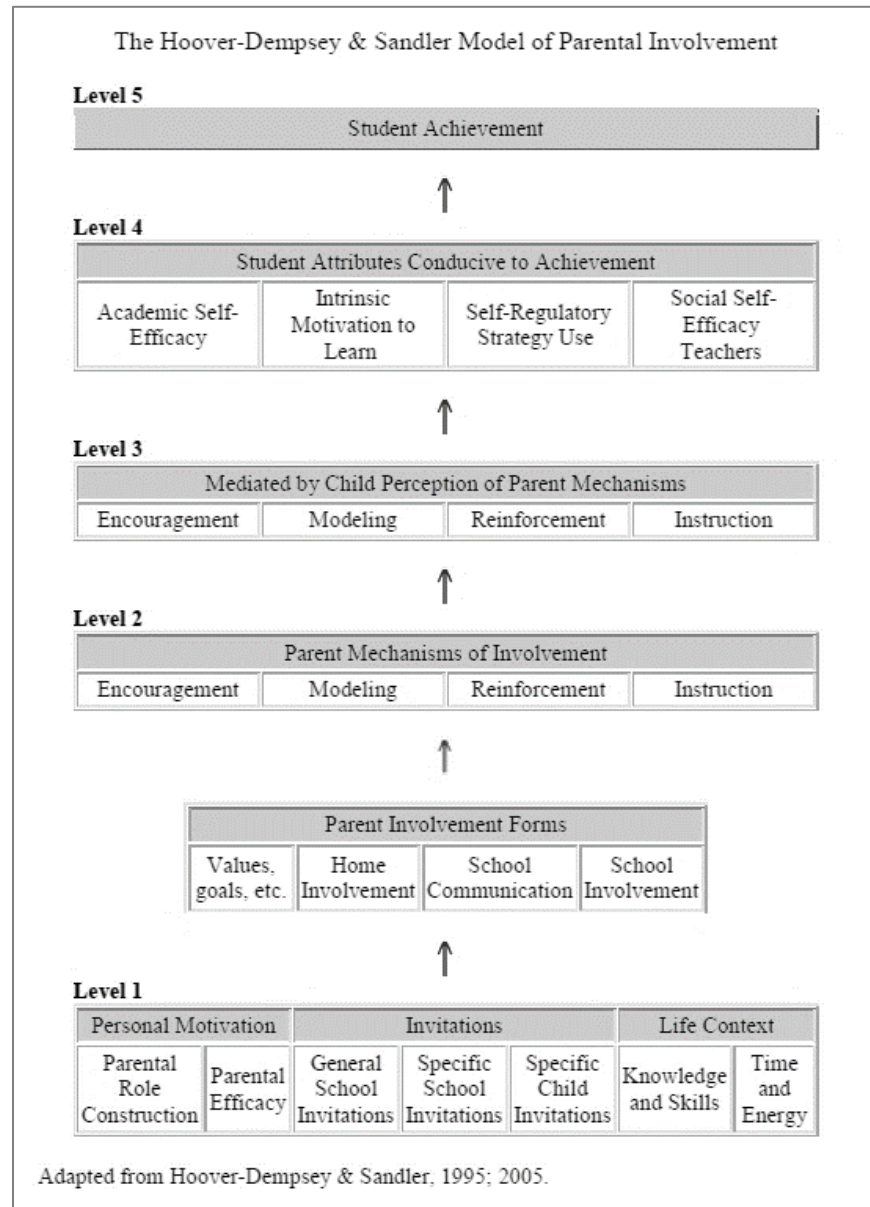


Figure 2. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) Adapted Model of Parental Involvement.

Level one of Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1997) model shows involvement

decisions being determined by parent motivation, invitations, and life context. Each level of involvement moves toward level five: student outcome/student achievement. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler believed that “parental decision-making about involvement occurs in both explicit and implicit ways” (p. 6) and found that the

three most influential psychological constructs characterizing parents’ lives are (a) parental role construction, (b) parents’ sense of efficacy for helping children succeed in school, and (c) parents’ perceptions of the general invitations, demands, and opportunities for involvement presented by children and their schools. (p. 31)

The Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler model suggests that after parents make the decision to become involved, they choose specific involvement activities based on their skills/interests, time/energy, and invitations.

Recent trends have moved to a family, school, and community partnership model (Epstein et al., 2019) that allows all stakeholders to work together and create a successful learning community for all students inside and outside of the classroom. As the National Education Association (2008) stated,

In the past, parent involvement was characterized by volunteers, mostly mothers, assisting in the classroom, chaperoning students, and fundraising. Today, the old model has been replaced with a much more inclusive approach: school-family-community partnerships now include mothers and fathers, stepparents, grandparents, foster parents, other relatives and caregivers, business leaders and community groups—all participating in goal-oriented activities, at all grade levels, linked to student achievement and school success. (p. 1)

Parent involvement is now recognized as an important part of a child's education and it is related to academic performance (Oswald, 2017). Family and community involvement is positively correlated to student success (Epstein et al., 2019; National Education Association, 2008; Oswald, 2017). The research holds true for all races, income levels, and parent education levels (National Education Association, 2008; Sheridan et al., 2019). This success may be seen through better attendance, higher test scores, or even better behavior; but they are all positive (National Education Association, 2008). Furthermore, a partnership between the school and home is more effective than just basic parent involvement (Epstein, 2011; Epstein et al., 2019). With a partnership model, the school, family, and community work together to create learners; each piece taking responsibility for, sharing, and guiding the learning within their role (Epstein, 2011; Epstein et al., 2019). In many ways, the entire community takes a role in the growth of its youth. The popular proverb "it takes a village to raise a child" is one that attests to the impact a community has on its children. Schools that work well with families have improved teacher morale, higher ratings by teachers and parents, and better reputations in the community (Henderson & Berla, 1996). Henderson and Berla (1996) noted, "When parents are involved at the school, their children go farther in school, and the schools they go to become better" (p. 15).

According to Epstein et al. (2019), there are six types of parent involvement. Epstein et al.'s (2019) six types of parent involvement include parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with community. This research is grounded in Epstein et al.'s (2019) six typologies. After a thorough review of Epstein et al.'s (2019) six types, parent involvement will be discussed through

different lenses.

These typologies are research-based, created after analyzing hundreds of engagement activities reported by schools. Each type of involvement is comprised of different practices and can have different results and challenges (Epstein et al., 2019). Additionally, some activities may involve more than one type of involvement. According to Epstein et al. (2019), “this framework is more useful than limited categorizations (e.g., involvement at home vs. at school) for planning and improving school programs of family and community engagement” (p. 18).

Parenting. Parenting refers to how schools are “working to increase families’ understanding of child and adolescent development” (Epstein et al., 2019, p. 64) and how schools get to know the families in their community. In this model, examples of parenting are demonstrated when schools offer workshops for parents, display an open and welcoming school climate, and provide resources for parents to get help if needed. Activities within this type of involvement may include home visits, welcoming meetings when students transition, programs that help schools understand families’ goals for their children, and even workshops for parents (Epstein et al., 2019). Within the parenting typology, schools may find it challenging to provide information to all families who need or want information, instead of to only the few who can attend a meeting (Epstein et al., 2019). It may also prove challenging to ensure all information is clear and usable to all families (Epstein et al., 2019). According to Epstein et al. (2019), expected results of effective parenting typologies include the teachers being able to understand family backgrounds, needs, and goals. Teachers will then be able to more thoroughly understand student diversity and respect the strengths and efforts of families. Effective

parenting activities allow parents to feel supported by the school and other parents while increasing confidence about parenting and also increase awareness of parenting challenges (Epstein et al., 2019).

Communicating. Communication is the second typology and includes “two-way connections about school programs and students’ progress” (Epstein et al., 2019, p. 64). Strategies to increase communication may include open house or meet the teacher events, literacy night/family night events, and an open relationship with the school. Epstein et al. (2019) also suggested that schools may decide to conference with every parent at least once per year; create goals with families based on report card progress; and inform parents about parent portals, internet safety, and bullying (Epstein et al., 2019). To ensure effective communication with all families, information should be available in all languages and in various formats. Challenges related to communicating with families may include finding suitable translators for parents who do not speak English. Reviewing the quality and readability of communications may also be a challenge for schools as they need to ensure all parents can interpret the information. With effective communication, students may have a better awareness of their own progress, a more thorough understanding of school policies, and be able to make more informed decisions about their future studies (Epstein et al., 2019). Likewise, parents will understand school procedures and programs more fully while being able to monitor their child’s progress. Through increased communication, teachers will be able to understand parent views on programs and progress as well as have an increased awareness and appreciation for communication with parents (Epstein et al., 2019).

Volunteering. Volunteering allows parents and family members to “share their

time and talents to support the school, teachers, and student activities at the school or in other locations” (Epstein et al., 2019, p. 65). Parents and family members may volunteer for various activities at the school or school-related functions, but they may also choose to support the school by donating goods or attending events if time during the school day is not readily available. Examples of volunteering activities may include parent telephone or email trees, parent portals, having school and classroom volunteer programs, and having a volunteer or parent room at the school (Epstein et al., 2019). Challenges within the volunteering typology include recruiting volunteers and organizing volunteer training, making flexible volunteer and event schedules, and matching parent talent with volunteer responsibility (Epstein et al., 2019). For parents, effective volunteering can yield a better understanding of the teaching profession and self-confidence in their ability to work with children (Epstein et al., 2019). Teachers can give individual students more attention when volunteers are in the building to help. Teachers may also gain an awareness of parents’ talents and interests displayed through volunteering (Epstein et al., 2019).

Learning at home. The learning at home typology consists of activities that “provide families with information about the academic work that their children do in class, how to help their children with homework, and other curriculum-related activities and decisions” (Epstein et al., 2019, p. 65). This typology helps parents learn how to talk about, help, and monitor their children’s academic work. Planning for the student’s future education is also included in this typology. Some schools are now requiring parents to be a part of high school course selection. Other examples may include homework that involves parents or information given to the parents that helps them help

their children. Specifically, schools may inform parents of skills needed to achieve at each grade level, assign summer learning activities, or distribute calendars with learning activities that can be completed at home (Epstein et al., 2019). Learning at home may include challenges such as involving parents in all curriculum decisions (courses/ programs) and designing a regular schedule of interactive homework that allows families to remain involved (Epstein et al., 2019). Successful activities within this typology can lead to more homework completion, an increase in student skill sets, and a more positive attitude toward schoolwork for students. Parents will have more knowledge of student learning and assignments, which can lead to more discussions about school and homework with children (Epstein et al., 2019). Parents may also have a greater appreciation of teachers' skills and efforts (Epstein et al., 2019). Effective use of this typology can lead to teachers having a better design for homework assignments, greater respect for family time, and satisfaction with family involvement and support (Epstein et al., 2019).

Decision-making. Decision-making is the fifth typology. This typology includes how families “participate in decisions about school policies, programs, and practices that affect their own and other children” (Epstein et al., 2019, p. 65). Common ways schools attempt to include families in decision-making include school improvement council, PTO, and other committees within the school (Epstein et al., 2019). Schools may also allow for room parents to help teachers connect with families, parent buddy systems to ensure all parents are informed, and parent involvement committees (Epstein et al., 2019). This typology allows parents and families to advocate for, as well as improve, school programs (Epstein et al., 2019). Schools may find it difficult to include parents

and students in decision-making groups. It may also be difficult to include parent representatives from all racial, socioeconomic, and other groups on school committees (Epstein et al., 2019). Decision-making allows teachers to gain awareness of parent perspectives. In addition, students will understand that their rights are protected. Parents will also benefit from the results of effective decision-making activities. Parents will gain an understanding of school policy while gaining ownership in the school and sharing input into policies that affect their child's education (Epstein et al., 2019).

Collaborating. The final typology is collaborating with the community. Collaborating with the community allows schools and families to have access to resources, services, and opportunities that would not be available otherwise. One event created by collaborating with the community is “dine-out nights,” where restaurants donate a portion of the night's proceeds to a school. Others include family nights at community establishments, community service projects, or even after-school programs. Schools may even make information available to parents about health, social, recreational, and other programs in the community (Epstein et al., 2019). Alumni participation is also included under this typology. Challenges within this typology include informing families of community programs and assuring equitable opportunities for all students and families to participate in the programs (Epstein et al., 2019). Collaboration with the community can lead to a better awareness of community resources for parents, students, and teachers alike. Teachers can make more knowledgeable referrals for needed services (Epstein et al., 2019). Through collaborating with the community, parents may create more interactions with other stakeholders in community activities. Students can gain increased skills through extracurricular activities and

community programs and become aware of options for future education and work (Epstein et al., 2019).

Each of these six types of involvement plays a key role in family involvement. According to Epstein et al. (2019), “the framework of six types of involvement is a typology, not a hierarchy” (p. 17). A hierarchy ranks items, whereas a typology just classifies items by type. More research is always needed to determine specific practices of partnership at different sites (Epstein et al., 2019). After discussing parent involvement through different lenses, the theoretical framework will be discussed in detail.

Differences in Grade Level Parent Involvement

According to the National Education Association (2008), “parent involvement in education tends to decline as their children go up in grade, with a dramatic drop once students reach middle school” (p. 2). Epstein et al. (2019) also stated that partnerships “tend to decline across the grades, unless schools and teachers work together to develop and implement appropriate practices of family and community engagement at each grade level” (p. 15). Daniel (2016) also stated, “parent involvement reduces as children move through the school grades” (p. 559). Yoder and Lopez (2013) stated that “research has suggested that parents may not be as involved in their youth’s education as they age because of the commonly-held belief that parents often think their children may not require assistance with schoolwork as they get older” (p. 418). Parents may also become less involved in their child’s education when the content becomes more difficult (Yoder & Lopez, 2013).

A 2002-2003 survey showed that as the grade level of students increased,

communication between the school and families decreased. Communication was defined as telephone calls, notes/emails, or newsletters/memos/notices. Specifically, 55% of elementary parents receive communication about their child from the school, while only 49% of parents in middle school receive communication about their child (Vaden-Kiernan & McManus, 2005). The number drops even more to 38% with high school students (Vaden-Kiernan & McManus, 2005). Additionally, the percent of parents who reported school-initiated information consistently dropped as grade levels increased (Vaden-Kiernan & McManus, 2005).

When looking at the percent of parents involved in school activities, the numbers are much more drastic. Approximately 92% of parents participate in school activities with kindergartners, while only 75% of parents with middle schoolers, and only 53% of parents with students in high school (Vaden-Kiernan & McManus, 2005). Homework involvement (parents checking that homework is complete) drops from 100% in kindergarten to 87% in middle school and 53% in high school (Vaden-Kiernan & McManus, 2005). While some think student autonomy should increase as children age, Mac Iver, Epstein, Sheldon, and Fonseca (2015) stated that parent encouragement and support with homework in high school leads to increased learning and course credit completion.

Dauber and Epstein (1989) found that parents of elementary-aged students are more involved than parents of middle school-aged students because elementary school teachers do more to involve parents. In traditional schooling, the trend seems to be that as the child ages, teachers tend to involve parents less. Parents of more successful students were found to be more involved, although this may not indicate that students do

better because parents are more involved (Dauber & Epstein, 1989). In this study, most teachers reported that parents were not involved and did not want to be, but the parents told the authors a different story. Parents reported that they are involved with their children, but a lack of support from the teachers and school was a barrier to that involvement (Dauber & Epstein, 1989). According to Epstein (2011), the overarching goal of most parent involvement research is to ensure educators are equipped to engage all families in their student's education throughout their schooling career.

According to Epstein et al. (2019), family and community involvement has a positive effect on a student's success through high school. In a study focusing on Grades 8, 10, and 12, students scored higher on reading tests or earned higher grades in English when parents checked their homework, had high expectations, and talked to them about their schooling (Epstein et al., 2019). Epstein et al. (2019) also stated that "parents' interest in and support for reading and other subjects continue to play an important role in adolescents' academic development through high school" (p. 49).

Parents of elementary-aged children are more involved than parents of children in middle school. Middle school students still need the support of their parents throughout their middle school years and even through high school. Parent involvement in middle school can help increase achievement and have a positive effect on a student's later schooling.

Parent Involvement in Middle School

While parent involvement typically drops when students enter middle school, parent involvement is still beneficial to adolescent students. Parent involvement in adolescence and student outcomes related to that involvement have been studied

frequently (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Wehrspan et al., 2016). Bhargava and Witherspoon (2015) found that adolescents and parents alike acknowledge a decline in parent involvement time in the middle grades. Students reported a decrease in home-based involvement, while parents noted a decrease in volunteering and communication (Bhargava & Witherspoon, 2015).

The shift from elementary to middle school can be difficult for most students and their families (Henderson & Berla, 1996). Wehrspan et al. (2016) noted that during adolescence, children undergo “rapid biological, social, and cognitive changes” (p. 194). Most of these changes occur during the middle school transition (Wehrspan et al., 2016). The middle school structure is different than that of elementary school but may provide few opportunities for the autonomy adolescents crave (Bhargava & Witherspoon, 2015). Bhargava and Witherspoon (2015) stated that parents may reduce their involvement in middle school to allow for more autonomy.

Schools can help families with the transition to middle school, and research shows they should (Henderson & Berla, 1996). When parents stay involved, students adjust better to the middle school, their quality of work does not decrease, and they develop realistic goals (Henderson & Berla, 1996). The lack of parental involvement is seen as the single biggest problem facing the nation’s schools (National Education Association, 2008).

Parental involvement is empirically related to student academic outcomes such as academic performance and engagement across middle and high school (Hill & Tyson, 2009). Specifically, Hill and Tyson (2009) determined that academic socialization practices, such as talking to children about the value of an education, were strongly

associated with positive middle school outcomes. Bhargava and Witherspoon (2015) found that academic socialization practices did not change during adolescence.

Henderson and Berla (1996) explained that middle schools should keep parents informed and facilitate contact so families can monitor their children's activities, and schools should designate personnel to serve as the parent's main contact, such as a teacher or counselor. Henderson and Berla suggested that restructuring the middle grades could make it possible for teachers to work with smaller groups of students. Working with smaller groups of students would allow them to collaborate more closely with more families (Henderson & Berla, 1996). This suggestion was published around the same time as the 1995 publication of the National Middle School Association's *This We Believe*, which was a revision of middle-level education. *This We Believe* suggested flexible organization structures that would allow for family and community partnerships at the middle school level. One of the recommendations of the publication was to institute team teaching and to encourage better parent involvement. Team teaching allows teachers to work together with the same set of students, potentially allowing teachers to collaborate and meet the needs of their learners more efficiently while promoting better communication with parents through a team approach. Parent involvement is especially crucial during the middle school years when "many parents disengage from their adolescents" (Smith, 2015, p. 393). According to Smith (2015), "Researchers have found that when parents are actively involved with their middle school-age children's education, their children's academic achievement tends to increase" (p. 394). Parent involvement is low in most middle schools, even though behavior and academic achievement usually improve with involvement (Smith, 2015). The lowest

levels of parent involvement are found in small towns and rural areas, and Smith (2015) recommended “middle school educators should do all that they can to increase positive, meaningful, and active parental involvement to boost students’ self-confidence, grades, and academic achievement” (p. 394).

Parent involvement is important throughout all grade levels, but parent involvement may be especially critical in the middle school years when parent/child relationships may not be their strongest. Middle school teachers and parents should work together to increase involvement for the betterment of the student. Working together may prove difficult if teacher perceptions of parent involvement differ from the perceptions of parents.

Perceptions of Parent Involvement

Perceptions of parent involvement differ between parents, teachers, and students. As an example, teachers tend to contact parents when there are problems and parents contact teachers when things are going well (Epstein, 1996; Minke, Sheridan, Kim, Ryoo, & Koziol, 2014). Both examples are initiating contact and involvement but for vastly different reasons. According to a study by Rodriguez, Blatz, and Elbaum (2014), schools that have successful parent involvement have accessible teachers, ask for parent input, and communicate with parents frequently in a variety of ways. The study also showed that parents tend to become more involved when they feel their student’s needs are not being met.

After conducting research in one school district in Tennessee, Herrell (2011) found that teachers and parents agreed that communicating was the most important type of parent involvement. Herrell found that age, education level, gender, and experience

did not have a significant difference on teacher perceptions of parent involvement.

Alternatively, Herrell's research did show that parent perceptions of parent involvement were statistically different regarding race, gender, age, and education level. Herrell also found there was a statistical difference in the perceptions of parents and teachers regarding effective parent involvement in five of Epstein's (1995) six typologies of parent involvement. The only typology that did not show a statistically significant difference when comparing the perceptions of parents and teachers was volunteering (Herrell, 2011). These findings indicate that parents perceive the typologies of parenting, communicating, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community to be more effective than teachers believe them to be. Perceptions of parent involvement may differ between parents, teachers, and students. Parent involvement perceptions may also differ based on education, gender, race, and age.

Perceptions of Parents

One barrier of parent involvement can be the way parents perceive parent involvement or their beliefs about certain issues. Hornby and Lafaele (2011) stated, "the way parents view their role in their children's education is crucial" (p. 39). As an example, parents who believe they are only responsible for ensuring their child gets to school will not be as actively involved in other school activities (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). Another item that is pertinent to parental involvement is the "belief that parents have in their own ability to help their children succeed at school" (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011, p. 39). Additionally, parents' views of their child's intelligence and how children learn are critical to parent involvement (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011).

Parents usually become involved in school activities because they receive

invitations or demands from their children or the school itself. While Epstein et al. (2019) stated that the six types of parent involvement are not a hierarchy, Herrell (2011) found that 90% of her research population (parents) considered communication to be the most effective type of parent involvement activity. Additionally, parents in the study found learning at home to be the second most effective and parenting to be the least effective parent involvement activity. Effective parent involvement did not appear to be defined for participants of the study. In a study conducted by Mapp (2003), parents indicated that school and social factors take part in influencing how they are involved with the school. As Mapp stated,

According to the parents, when school personnel initiate and engage in practices that welcome parents to the school, honor their contributions, and connect them to the school community through an emphasis on children, these practices then cultivate and sustain respectful, caring, and meaningful relationships between parents and school staff. (p. 36)

Mapp's study also "suggests that parents' involvement in their children's education is influenced by a school culture that values and works aggressively to form relationships with families that are respectful and reciprocal" (p. 60). A study of parent involvement in children's education conducted by Yoder and Lopez (2013) found the largest barrier to parent involvement to be marginalization. Yoder and Lopez also determined that "feeling alienated from society prompted them, in turn, to alienate themselves from their children's educational institution" (p. 429).

Boyd (2005) found that parents agreed their role in parent involvement was to see that the student attends school and is ready to learn. Boyd's study included parents who

were involved in their child's education. Many parents in the study believed parent involvement positively affects the success of their student and some believed their involvement could benefit other students as well (Boyd, 2005). None of Boyd's study participants directly mentioned a student's academic success as a benefit of parent involvement; instead, items such as confidence and security were mentioned.

Parent perceptions of the school initiating involvement varied greatly. Overall, in Boyd's (2005) study, parent responses "indicated that they were looking for much more from the school" (p. 107). As Boyd noted, "many parents expressed the belief that the teachers were overworked and needed their help" (p. 104). Parents even noted that their children did not mind them staying involved during middle school. In addition, Boyd found that, by far, the largest barrier to parent involvement, as seen by the parents, was the time they had available.

Smith (2017) found the following themes when interviewing parents about their perceptions of parent involvement: helping with homework, attending school events/conferences, and making sure their child behaves appropriately at school. Other themes that emerged in Smith's (2017) study were teacher-initiated communication and the role of the teacher when compared to the role of the parent. Perceptions of parent involvement may be a function of how the school communicates with the family (Smith, 2017). Participants in Smith's (2017) study did not initiate conversations about their concerns; instead, the parents waited to be contacted by the teacher or school. Parents viewed "their understanding of parent involvement as supporting whatever the school or teacher communicates to them as being important or necessary for success" (p. 107).

Parents want to see their children succeed in school but may not know how or

when to help their child. Parent perceptions of parent involvement can differ based on personal experiences, beliefs, and demographics. While the perception of parents is important, it is also important to understand teacher perceptions regarding parent involvement.

Perceptions of Teachers

Teacher perceptions of parent involvement sometimes differ from the perspectives of parents. Herman and Reinke (2017) found teacher perceptions of parent involvement to be predictors of student success. According to Herman and Reinke, “teacher perceptions are especially important given that teacher beliefs about parents, regardless of their accuracy, may influence their interaction with parents and their children” (p. 90). Smith (2017) stated that “assumptions around educator perceptions of parent involvement can misconstrue what many parents’ expectations, participation, love, and care for their children look and feel like on a daily basis” (p. 30). Teacher perceptions of parent involvement focus on the number of contacts parents have with school personnel and the teacher’s comfort with parents (Herman & Reinke, 2017). A combination of comfort and contact creates a teacher’s perception of parent involvement (Herman & Reinke, 2017). As previously mentioned, Herrell (2011) found that teachers agreed communicating was the most important type of involvement. When determining if involvement activities (correlated to Epstein’s (1995) six types of involvement) were effective, there was “no statistically significant difference in the perceptions of effective parent involvement among teachers based on age, education level, teaching experience, or gender” (Herrell, 2011, p. 92). Teacher perceptions of parent involvement remained consistent regardless of age, education level, teaching experience, or gender.

Smith (2015) found that middle school teachers strongly supported having parents involved in their child's schooling. Smith (2015) also stated that "when asked to rank the importance of parent involvement, the teachers' average response was a 4.81 on a 5-point scale" (p. 396). Overall, teachers in Smith's (2015) study believed that parent involvement increased positive behavior and academic achievement of students. Teachers acknowledged that parents volunteered for field trips and special events. Additionally, teachers stated that parents helped in the office and helped decorate classrooms. Smith (2015) also found that teachers preferred parents to be involved in what they deemed "effective" involvement tasks. These tasks included becoming involved in school organizations, fundraising, assisting in the classroom with nonacademic tasks, providing escorts throughout the building, and providing materials for teachers (Smith, 2015).

Smith (2015) also delved into what teachers perceived to be barriers to parent involvement. Parent work schedules were found to be the most significant problem in Smith's (2015) study. Teachers were frustrated that parents did not have the flexibility to come to the school during the day (Smith, 2015). Additionally, teachers believed the negative attitude of some parents or a lack of education were other barriers (Smith, 2015).

DePlanty, Coulter-Kern, and Duchane (2007) surveyed 22 teachers to determine their thoughts on parent involvement. The data showed that teachers believed one of the most important parent involvement behaviors is ensuring students complete their homework. The results "also indicated that parents' presence in the school was not important as long as the parents emphasized the importance of education at home" (DePlanty et al., 2007, p. 364). Teachers in this study also thought that parents may not

be involved due to being intimidated by the school or content of the courses (DePlanty et al., 2007). DePlanty et al. found that students, teachers, and parents believed that school attendance was the most important aspect of parent involvement. The research also showed that “students believed that ‘talking to their friends’ parents about school’ and ‘limiting the time they watch television’ were the least important” parent involvement activities (DePlanty et al., 2007, p. 364).

Teacher perceptions of parent involvement are mostly determined through communication with the parents. Teachers believe parent work schedules and prior commitments are barriers to parent involvement. Additionally, teachers believe that parents should instill the importance of education at home. Teacher perceptions about parent involvement may determine how a teacher interacts with students and their families, which could influence student perceptions of involvement as well.

Perceptions of Students

Perceptions of student and parent involvement have not been studied as extensively as perceptions of teachers and parents, but student perceptions have been found to be associated with their success in school. According to a study by DePlanty et al. (2007), students have recognized the importance of parent involvement in education. In a study by Cavendish (2017), it was confirmed that “the relationship of both school and family support of student meaningful involvement in planning to the development of youth self-determination skill” (p. 119). Another study of seventh to tenth graders found that “children’s academic functioning was associated with their perceptions of parental involvement in the homework process” (Nunez et al., 2017, p. 10). Specifically, Nunez et al. (2017) assessed student perceptions of parental support (help) with homework and

control over homework (if parents check to ensure assignments are complete). Students who were stronger academically reported that their parents were more controlling and supportive with homework (Nunez et al., 2017).

It is known that students learn from their parents, and many of a child's values and actions are those of their parents. Ciciolla, Curless, Karageogre, and Luthar (2017) found that "perceptions of parental values are very salient and influential for early adolescents entering middle school, a developmental period that has been identified as tumultuous for both children and parents" (p. 1071). Ciciolla et al. examined the relationship between a child's perception of the parent's achievement emphasis and criticism. The authors found that a parent's priority, as seen by the children, is associated with the child's behavior and functioning in school (Ciciolla et al., 2017). After DePlanty et al. (2007) surveyed and/or met with 234 junior high students, 301 parents, and 22 teachers at one school, teachers, parents, and students all agreed that attending parent-teacher conferences, talking to the child about school, and attending school activities were the top three parent involvement behaviors. Teachers and parents ranked talking to the child's teacher sixth in the frequency of parent involvement behaviors, while students ranked it as fourth. Talking with other parents about school ranked as fifth for all participant groups. Additionally, students ranked talking to the child's teacher as fourth, while parents and teachers ranked it as sixth. Overall, there was a significant difference in the way parents and students perceived parent involvement behaviors. The study showed that students (and teachers) had higher expectations for parent involvement than parents did (DePlanty et al., 2007). Additionally, parents overestimated their involvement when compared to the responses of teachers and students (DePlanty et al.,

2007). While few studies have focused on student perceptions of parent involvement, student perceptions of parent involvement are pertinent.

Overall, students understand that parent involvement is important. Parent involvement has been found to increase achievement of students, but a difference exists between student and parent perceptions of parent involvement. Parents ranked their involvement higher than students did. A student's behavior in school is related to their understanding of their parent's priorities.

Parent Involvement and Socioeconomic Status (SES)

Each school in the district of study has a unique variety of students from different SES backgrounds. SES can be one reason parents are not as involved with their child's education. Parents in low-income situations are less likely to express high educational expectations (Benner, Boyle, & Sadler, 2016). Yoder and Lopez (2013) stated that "meager financial resources and the lack of financial stability hinder parental involvement in school activities and subsequently influence youths' academic success" (p. 417). Additionally, safety concerns within the neighborhood, lack of childcare and/or transportation, and an inability to leave work were identified as barriers to parental involvement (Yoder & Lopez, 2013). Yoder and Lopez found that "parents' low-income statuses caused them to feel fear, guilt, and shame, and consequently, they were less involved" (p. 429). Parents felt a stigma associated with their low-income status and felt powerless, due to their placement in society. Likewise, Choi, Chang, Kim, and Reio (2015) found that SES had a significant effect on parent involvement in school. Specifically, Choi et al.'s findings showed that "students from higher-SES families had parents who participated more in school activities and provided academic advising more

frequently to their children, and these students showed higher levels of mathematics self-efficacy and mathematics performance in school” (p. 162), yet Benner et al. (2016) collected data from 15,240 tenth-grade students and found that parental involvement is particularly beneficial for students from low-SES families. Benner et al. also stated, “parents’ academic socialization seemed to better promote the academic success of more advantaged youth (i.e., those from high-SES families, those with higher prior achievement)” (p. 1053). Relationships between parental involvement and children’s academics may be conditioned by aspects of the family SES, but students from less affluent homes may benefit more from parents’ home-based parental involvement activities, such as traveling to a museum (Benner et al., 2016). Specifically, Benner et al. used a comprehensive measure of SES which included income, education level, and the prestige of one’s job. The effects of school-based involvement found by Benner et al.’s study showed that students from a low SES family received the most benefits from parent involvement with the schools. Benner et al. summarized by saying, “although achievement gaps tied to student demographics are narrowing, there still exists a substantial achievement divide between the rich and the poor” (p. 1060).

Parents with a low SES have barriers they must overcome to be involved with their child’s school. Nontraditional work schedules, a lack of education, and embarrassment may lead to less involvement. Although there are more obstacles to overcome, students from low SES households benefit more from parent involvement than higher SES students.

Parent Involvement and Community Poverty

Community poverty is a term used to describe neighborhoods or communities that

have a high concentration of people living in poverty. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (n.d.), the poverty threshold in 2018 for a family of four, two children and two adults, is if they make less than \$25,465 a year. Gordon and Cui (2014) used a large, nationwide sample to explore how parental involvement was related to community poverty. In Gordon and Cui's study, five U.S. Census labels were used to define community poverty: unemployment proportion, proportion of households living in poverty, proportion of people with service-level jobs, proportion of houses receiving public assistance, and the proportion of households that were female headed with children (Gordon & Cui, 2014). Gordon and Cui stated,

Social disorganization theory suggests that residents residing in neighborhoods that are high in poverty are less able to maintain collective cohesion for the good of their community. As a result, such distressed environments (e.g., high crime rate) may weaken parents' efforts to assist with their adolescents' academic achievement. For example, parents' involvement in a science fair project may not be as effective when the school lacks resources for funding such projects and has a lower performance expectation. (p. 618)

Additionally, community poverty has been linked to adolescent issues such as delinquent behaviors and mental illness (Gordon & Cui, 2014). It has been suggested that positive effects of active parenting are negatively affected by community poverty (Gordon & Cui, 2014). For example, in communities with poverty, parents may lack resources, knowledge, or availability (due to working multiple jobs) to help with school tasks (Gordon & Cui, 2014). After completing a study with 20,745 adolescents in middle and high school, Gordon and Cui found that "school-related parental involvement was less

effective on adolescents' academic outcomes when they lived in communities with high poverty as compared to peers from more affluent communities" (p. 622).

After gathering data from 15,600 parents, Alameda-Lawson and Lawson (2018) categorized involvement into school involvement profiles. The profiles, from lowest to highest involvement, were as follows: low involved, school invested, school involved, and school engaged. Low-involved parents were involved in a small amount of school-based activities and school-invested parents included those who participated in the PTA/PTO and parent-teacher conferences. Parents who were classified as school-involved included those who were engaged in multiple activities but not governance, and school-engaged parents were involved in a wide variety of school-based activities. In the study, over 50% of families whose incomes were less than or equal to \$30,000 were categorized as low involved or school invested (Alameda-Lawson & Lawson, 2018). Over 80% of families making above \$75,000 were categorized as school involved or school engaged (Alameda-Lawson & Lawson, 2018). Low-income parents have strengths related to parent involvement that schools should use to promote the success of students (Alameda-Lawson & Lawson 2018). These strengths include the parents' social practices, values, and resources used to pursue their own goals and purpose (Alameda-Lawson & Lawson, 2016). Students dealing with community poverty sometimes need extra support to help them succeed at school. Parents in areas of community poverty may also need extra support to help their students be successful.

Community poverty can often hinder parent involvement efforts. Parents within these communities may not have access to resources or time to be as involved as they would like. Parents living within community poverty often have goals and values

pertaining to parent involvement that go unseen due to the barriers mentioned above.

Parent Involvement and Ethnicity

People with different cultural backgrounds view education differently and therefore parent involvement sometimes differs across different races/ethnicities. Day and Dotterer (2018) stated that gaps in education experiences between ethnic groups in the United States are prevalent today and parent involvement is typically suggested to improve outcome among diverse adolescents. To add to the struggle, members of different culture groups perceive parental involvement in different ways; some groups may believe it is the parent's responsibility to partner with teachers, and others may believe that academics are the responsibility of the teacher alone (Calzada et al., 2015). Evidence suggests that minority parents may be at a disadvantage in terms of parental involvement (Yoder & Lopez, 2013). Yoder and Lopez (2013) noted that in a "study of African American and Latino parents, parents reported feeling unwelcome at their children's school were 2.5 times less likely to attend school functions than white parents" (p. 417). A lack of language proficiency, a lack of understanding of school structure, or a lack of understanding of traditional family roles also reduce interactions between parents and teachers (Yoder & Lopez, 2013). Teachers are also sometimes unfamiliar with the cultural norms of all students (Calzada et al., 2015); however, Calzada et al. (2015) found that classroom level parent involvement efforts are extremely beneficial for immigrant students (Latinos and Afro-Caribbean).

A meta-analysis of the relationship between parental involvement and African American school outcomes by Jeynes (2016) found that overall, there is a "relationship between parental involvement for pre-kindergarten through college freshman youth as

expressed in academic and behavioral outcomes combined” (p. 202). Specifically, Jeynes found that there was a statistically significant relationship between parental involvement programs for African Americans and academic achievement. Jeynes also found that three areas of parental involvement also had statistically significant results: parental expectations, parental style, and participation. Within Jeynes’s study, parental expectations referred to “whether parents had high, but reasonable expectations of what their children could achieve” (p. 202). Parental style was defined as “whether parents reared their children in a way that emphasized both love and structure” (Jeynes, 2016, p. 202). Participation was the “extent to which parents attend school functions” (Jeynes, 2016, p. 202); however, Benner et al. (2016) stated that in a study of African American families, parental involvement was positively correlated to academic achievement in children whose parents were college-educated, but the links were not significant when the highest level of education was a high school diploma.

Inoa (2017) interviewed 21 Latino parents to determine parental involvement perceptions and practices. All the parents had a child or children attending one of seven different schools. Inoa found that “Latino parents may openly speak to their children about flaws in the American educational system, as well as the importance of being happy with oneself over academic and even financial success” (p. 330). Latino parents in the study viewed academic achievement as important but second to the emotional needs of the child (Inoa, 2017). Specific barriers to family involvement were interacting with other parents, having multiple jobs, and a lack of English proficiency. Additionally, most parents in Inoa’s study completed their education outside of the United States and found it hard to help their children with homework.

Parent involvement sometimes differs between ethnicities because of cultural beliefs and values. Cultural groups that do not feel welcomed at a school are less likely to become involved. Additionally, language barriers and a lack of knowledge regarding American education can hinder parent involvement for certain families.

Parent Involvement and Special Education

Parents of students with special needs must be involved with the school to complete yearly revisions to individualized education plans and other documents requiring (by law) parent input. Parent involvement is deeply rooted in special education through legislation such as the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA; Elbaum, Blatz, & Rodriguez, 2016). Parents of students with special needs have greater parental involvement barriers than parents of students in general education (Fishman & Nickerson, 2015). Research stated that there is substantial evidence for the positive correlation between parent involvement and the outcomes of students with special needs (Elbaum et al., 2016; Hirano, Garbacz, Shanley, & Rowe, 2016). As Hirano et al. (2016) stated, “in addition to academic achievement, parent involvement is also linked to post-school outcomes for youth with disabilities” (p. 3537).

Special needs parents advocate for their children, a task that brings stress to families (Fishman & Nickerson, 2015). Fishman and Nickerson (2015) stated, “special education professionals have been encouraged to focus not only on improving the quality of life for students with disabilities, but also for the entire family” (p. 524). After surveying 137 parents of special education students in two districts, Fishman and Nickerson found that parent beliefs about their responsibility in their student’s schooling predicted their school involvement. Fishman and Nickerson suggested that “since

students in special education often work with a variety of individuals within the school” all school staff should send the same message to families (p. 532).

Elbaum et al. (2016) found that “older and newer studies involving parents of students with disabilities report adversarial stances, negative perceptions of parents on the part of the school staff, and parents’ needs to advocate for their child to gain access to appropriate services” (p. 15). One third of special education parents stated that the school does not facilitate their involvement to improve results and services for the student (Elbaum et al., 2016). Additionally, after a qualitative study conducted with 92 parents, Elbaum et al. (2016) found that “comments related to the effectiveness of services and teacher quality emerge as significant predictors of parents’ perceptions of schools’ engagement efforts” (p. 22).

Rodriguez et al. (2014) conducted a study with 96 parents of students with special needs from varying schools and districts. Rodriguez et al. found that the most prominent theme in their data was the extent to which schools collaborated with parents in their students’ education. Rodriguez et al. found that parents mentioned positive things like the school updating the parents on their student’s progress, providing alternative methods of communication, and accessible teachers with this theme. Alternatively, parents who spoke negatively about the theme mentioned receiving no response from the school at times or having to contact a district representative to get services. Another reoccurring theme in Rodriguez et al.’s study was that of child progress and needed supports. The study found that the quality of parent involvement efforts depended on the teacher (Rodriguez et al., 2014). Parents who seemed to favor this mindset mentioned competent teachers and program choices, and those who did not mentioned items such as

insufficient support and a lack of resources at the school (Rodriguez et al., 2014).

Parents of students with special needs must be involved with the school to a certain degree. Parents who feel their child's individualized needs are being met have better perceptions of parent involvement. Children with special needs benefit just as much, if not more, from parent involvement.

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in the research of Epstein (1995) and her six typologies as well as her theoretical model of overlapping spheres (Epstein et al., 2019). As noted earlier, Epstein et al.'s (2019) model (Figures 3 and 4) contains three overlapping spheres of influence of family, school, and community on children's learning.

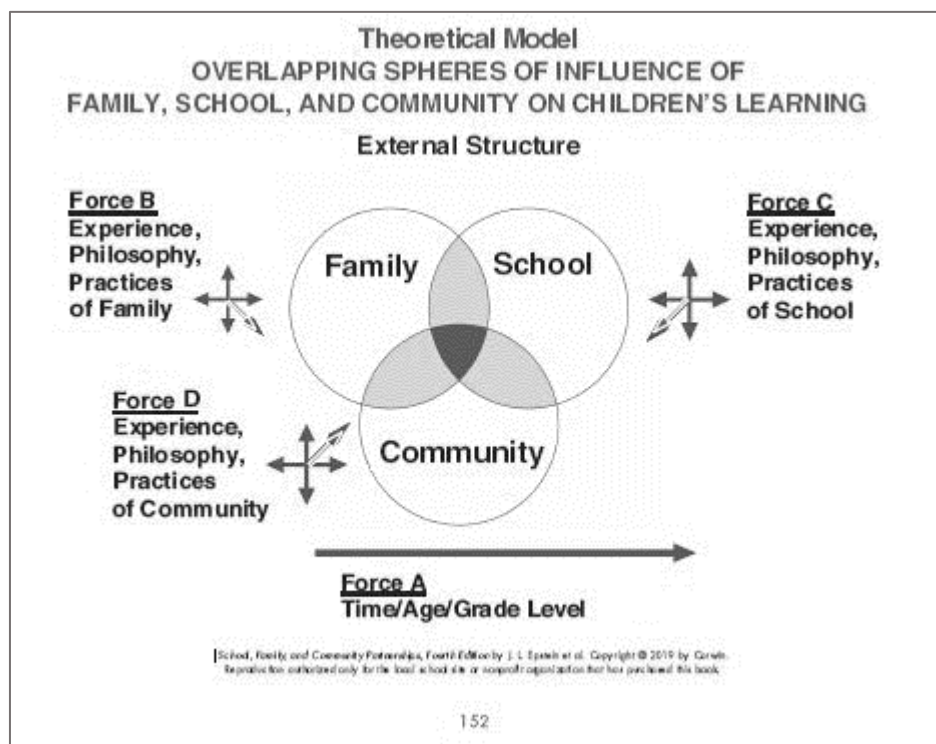


Figure 3. Epstein et al.'s (2019) Theoretical Model: External Structure.

The external forces of experience, philosophy, and practices of family can

increase or decrease parent involvement. Each external factor includes the experiences, philosophy, and practices of the factor. As an example, the family sphere includes the experiences of the family, the family philosophy, and practices of the family. The school and community factors contain the same three characteristics as related to their entity. Time, age, and grade level of the child also can affect parent involvement (Epstein et al., 2019). Epstein et al. (2019) affirmed that “the model of school, family, and community partnerships locates the student at the center” (p. 12). With the student at the center of the model, the external part of the model containing the philosophy, practices, and experiences of the family, school, and community can be pushed apart or brought together. The arrows represent how the circles may be pushed towards one other circle or towards the center, which represents the student. Figure 4 shows the internal structure of Epstein et al.’s (2019) model.

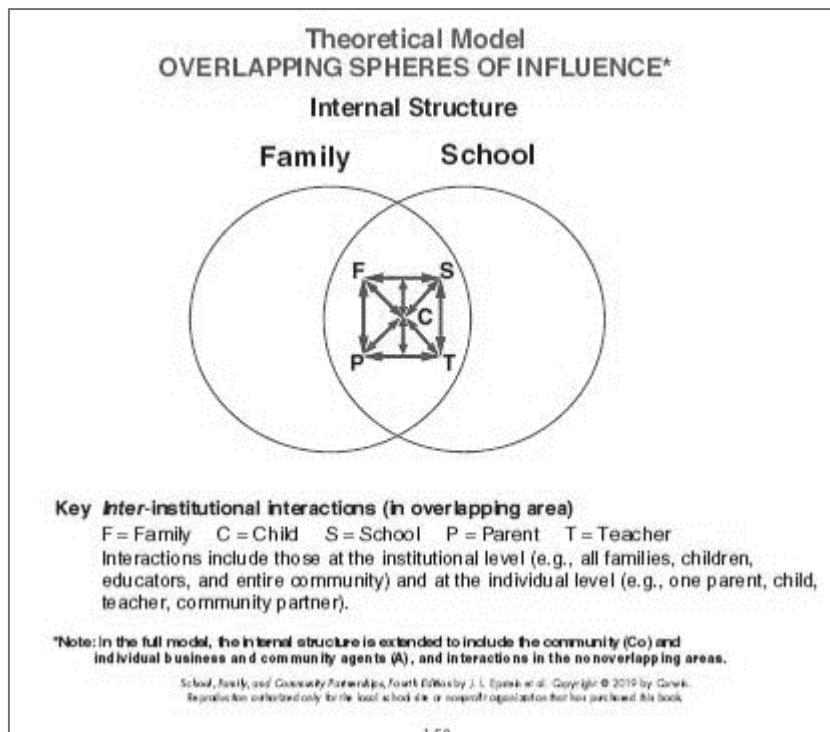


Figure 4. Epstein et al.’s (2019) Theoretical Model: Internal Structure.

The internal structure of the model (Figure 4) shows “where and how complex and essential interpersonal relations, interactions, and patterns of influence occur between individuals at home, at school, and in the community” (Epstein et al., 2019, p. 12). As these components ebb and flow, time does not stand still and the student continues to age and advance grade levels, which can sometimes change the contexts within the model.

Summary

Chapter 2 contained a review of literature pertaining to the study. The Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) model of parent involvement and Epstein et al.’s (2019) six typologies of parent involvement were discussed. This research is grounded in Epstein et al.’s (2019) six typologies of parent involvement. A brief history of parent involvement, parent involvement in middle school, and differences in parent involvement at different grade levels were also reviewed. Perceptions of parent involvement were discussed in Chapter 2. Specifically, perceptions of parents, teachers, and students were discussed before comparing those perceptions.

Parent involvement was also discussed with other variables and through different lenses. Literature concerning parent involvement and SES as well as community poverty was reviewed. Parent involvement was looked at within different ethnicities (primarily African American and Latino) and children with special needs. The chapter ended with a discussion of the theoretical framework.

Chapter 3 contains an in-depth description of the study. Qualitative and quantitative research methods, instruments, and analysis are thoroughly covered. Additionally, information about protecting participants, the researcher’s role, and eliminating bias are reviewed.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter discusses the research design and research methodology that was used to conduct this study. The chapter begins with an overview of the chapter, followed by a restatement of the problem and research questions. The research design then is discussed in depth, followed by specific information regarding the protection of participants and sampling. Finally, data instruments, collection, and analysis are discussed.

Overview

The methodology of this study was formulated after much research in the field. The foundation of the study was based on Epstein et al.'s (2019) work with parent involvement, specifically, the work contributed to in *School, family, and community partnerships: Your handbook for action* (Epstein et al., 2019). In that work, Epstein et al. (2019) created a guide that allows schools to create action plans to improve parent involvement after measuring their current parent involvement situation.

Parent perceptions of parent involvement can differ based on personal experiences, beliefs, and demographics. The researcher explored parent perceptions in the proposed districts to ensure assumptions about parent perceptions were not made incorrectly. Allowing teachers to share their perceptions of parent involvement within the study ensured the recommendations given would be inclusive of all stakeholders. Within the districts of study, many different cultures and demographic populations are represented in the student population, and parents may not view parent involvement in the same way (Calzada et al., 2015; Day & Dotterer, 2018).

Exploring perceptions of parent and teacher involvement at the middle school

level allowed the researcher to make recommendations for sites and the district to improve parent involvement, which should lead to an increased level of student learning and achievement (Henderson & Berla, 1996; Hill & Tyson, 2009). Through this research, perceptions of teachers and parents were analyzed to determine how the findings might be generalized to other school districts. Additionally, the researcher gathered current student achievement data, which are public records, to determine how student achievement could be described with the mean differences of parent and teacher perceptions regarding parent involvement.

This study determined the current state of parent involvement through the perceptions of parent involvement regarding Epstein's (1995) six typologies. The study also determined if correlations exist between parent perceptions of parent involvement and student achievement. Analyzing both research questions allowed the researcher to make recommendations to improve parent involvement and hopefully increase student achievement within the district.

Restatement of the Problem

Within the school districts of study, all five middle school sites had different demographics and different reports of parent involvement. Additionally, all the middle schools indicated a decline in parent involvement as children transition from elementary to middle school. After analyzing school report card data pertaining to satisfaction with home relations, middle school parent and teacher satisfaction varies throughout the sites. Student achievement is also low throughout both districts. Lower achievement has been recorded at schools with a smaller percentage of parents and teachers who are satisfied with the home relations at the school. Parent involvement has proven to increase

achievement across all demographics, ages, and SES (National Education Association, 2008; Sheridan et al., 2019).

Research Questions

The research questions gathered evidence pertaining to perceptions of teachers and parents and data regarding student achievement.

1. How can parent involvement be described in two South Carolina school districts, in relation to Epstein's (1995) six types of parent involvement?
 - 1a. What are the mean differences between parent and teacher perceptions of parent involvement regarding Epstein's (1995) six typologies?
 - 1b. What themes emerge in differences between parent and teacher perceptions of parent involvement regarding Epstein's (1995) six typologies?
2. How can the mean differences of parent and teacher perceptions of parent involvement be described with student achievement?

Research Design

This research employed a mixed methods case study design. Case studies focus on one specific problem or case (Elman, Gerring, & Mahoney, 2016). Case studies are used to deeply understand the problem or case using real-world context (Guetterman & Fetters, 2018). Case studies typically use qualitative data and analysis, but multimethod research popularity has brought qualitative and quantitative research together within the same study (Elman et al., 2016). Case studies fuse well with mixed method research because the blend of quantitative and qualitative data allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the data (Guetterman & Fetters, 2018). According to Elman et al.

(2016), “the goal of a case study is at least in part to shed light on a particular casual effect, that is, X’s relationship to Y” (p. 383).

Guetterman and Fetters (2018) noted that “case study is a commonly used, though at times underappreciated, approach to research and evaluation” (p. 901) and “integrating quantitative research into case studies can reveal broader trends, statistical relationships, and generalizable inferences as long as the study has adequate sampling and a logical design” (p. 913), yet the number of mixed method studies is growing as increases in mixed methods dissertations and funded studies are seen (Guetterman & Fetters, 2018).

To fully understand the issue at the heart of this case study, the researcher chose to complete quantitative and qualitative data analysis. While quantitative data assume a fixed reality, qualitative data can be used to further understand the quantitative data. Triangulation allowed the researcher to support conclusions. Additionally, qualitative analysis is reported in the language of participants and made the analysis easier to understand for stakeholders, who may not have been familiar with statistical methods, to interpret the results.

As Creswell and Creswell (2018) stated, completing a mixed methods study will allow the researcher to compare “different perspectives drawn from quantitative and qualitative data” (p. 216) and explain “quantitative results with a qualitative follow-up” (p. 216). Specifically, an explanatory sequential mixed methods design was utilized. This research design allowed the researcher to gather, analyze, and interpret quantitative data before performing the qualitative data collection. The researcher was also able to gather qualitative data to further explain and explore quantitative results.

Population and Sampling

This case study was bound by the use of purposeful sampling to collect data. Purposeful sampling occurs when a candidate selects specific sites or people because the information gathered from them will help solve a problem (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Specifically, teachers and parents of students at five middle schools were included in the sampling population. Additionally, the researcher used 2019 student achievement data found on the state report card for each site.

According to the South Carolina State Department of Education (2018), School A was located in a suburban area with a population of approximately 1,000 students. The student-teacher ratio was 20:1, and the percentage of students receiving free/reduced lunch was 25%. School B was a rural school with only 400 students, a 23:1 student-teacher ratio, and 51% of students receiving free/reduced lunch. School C was an urban school with 550 students and a 20:1 student-teacher ratio. Approximately 75% of students received free/reduced lunch. School D was a rural school with 500 students, a 25:1 student-teacher ratio, and 54% of students receiving free/reduced lunch. The final school being studied was an urban school with 550 students, a 20:1 student-teacher ratio, and 80% of students receiving free/reduced lunch. All five schools housed Grades 6-8. Schools C and E qualified as Title I schools. Tables 6 and 7 show the participant demographics that are discussed further in Chapter 4.

Table 6

Participant Demographics (Survey 1)

Site	Teachers	Parents
School A	11	16
School B	4	14
School C	0	0
School D	0	0
School E	7	0
Total Respondents	22	30

Survey 1 was a quantitative survey consisting of Likert scale items. A total of 52 people responded to the survey, 22 teachers and 30 parents. Of the 22 teachers, there were 11 responses from School A, four from School B, and seven from School E. There were no responses from Schools C or D. Of the 30 parent responses, there were 16 from School A and 14 from School B. There were no responses from Schools C, D, or E.

Table 7

Participant Demographics (Survey 2)

Site	Teachers	Parents
School A	13	20
School B	5	6
School C	0	0
School D	0	0
School E	0	0
Total Respondents	18	26

Survey 2 was qualitative and received 44 total responses. A total of 18 teacher responses were received, 13 from School A and five from School B. Of the 26 responses received from parents, 20 were from School A and six were from School B. No responses were received from Schools C, D, or E during the survey window.

Teachers. Teachers at participating sites received a link to Survey 1

(quantitative) from the site administrator or representative. Additionally, teachers received an invitation to participate in the qualitative survey 1 week after the data collection window closed for Survey 1. This procedure ensured each participant could share more detail related to their perceptions of parent involvement.

Parents. Parents at participating sites received a link to a survey through the school's ConnectEd system. Parents were invited to complete the second, qualitative survey in order to share more specific details concerning parent involvement. The second survey was sent to parents 1 week after the data collection window closed for Survey 1.

Measures and Instruments

This study set out to measure school, family, and community partnerships through perceptions of stakeholders, specifically, parent and teacher perceptions regarding the six types of parent involvement. The six types of parent involvement include parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community. The study used two surveys to collect data. Specific information concerning the surveys is discussed throughout this section.

Survey 1. This instrument was designed to measure how stakeholders (parents and teachers) felt the site is involving parents, students, and the community. Specifically, this study used an adapted version of Epstein et al.'s (2019) *Measure of School, Family, and Community Partnerships* survey. The original survey was created by researchers at the National Network of Partnership Schools at Johns Hopkins University. The first edition was published in 1997. Epstein's permission to adapt the survey can be seen in Appendix A. The full survey protocol is included as Appendix B. Teachers and parents received the same survey.

The adapted survey began with three demographic questions asking about the participant's role, their specific site, and income. The answers to these questions were used to explore perceptions by role, site, and income level. The survey also contained six sections, one for each of Epstein's (1995) six types of involvement. The original survey contained seven to 15 statements beneath each type of involvement, and respondents could rate the statement on a Likert scale ranging from "never" to "frequently." The researcher added a choice of "I don't know" to the adapted survey. Adding the choice of "I don't know" ensured respondents were not forced to choose "never" if the item contains a situation that may happen, but the respondent is not aware that it does. Choices of "I don't know" were analyzed with the data set in order to determine when or if stakeholders were unaware of items occurring at their site. In the version adapted for this study, the survey contained five to seven statements beneath each type of involvement. The number of items that correlated to each of the six types of parent involvement is shown in Table 8.

Table 8

Number of Survey Items for Each Type of Parent Involvement

Type of Parent Involvement	Number of Survey Items
Parenting	5
Communication	7
Volunteering	5
Learning at home	5
Decision-making	5
Collaborating with the community	5

Each type of parent involvement had five survey items, apart from communication, which had seven. In the original survey, communication had the most survey items, and the researcher felt it necessary to use more for this study as well.

Respondents could rate each statement in the survey using Epstein et al.'s (2019) original Likert scale from “never” to “frequently,” and an option of “I don’t know” was available as well.

Survey 1 validity and reliability. As stated in the previous section, the survey for this study was adapted from the *Measure of School, Family, and Community Partnerships*. The original instrument was created to be an inventory for schools, and the authors suggested that individual researchers test the reliability of the scale they use in their own study (Epstein et al., 2019). The results of the reliability test are discussed in Chapter 4. As Herrell (2011) stated, “the survey instrument was based on Epstein’s parent involvement model that consisted of six major types of parent involvement, strengthening its content validity” (p. 64). This survey has been used in many studies and action plans for partnerships. Additionally, the survey has been published in every edition of *School, family, and community partnerships: Your handbook for action*. The book was originally published in 1997, and its fourth edition was published in 2019.

The *Measure of School, Family, and Community Partnerships* was created to provide a metric that allows the implementation of each partnership activity to be rated (Epstein et al., 2019). The instrument can be used to determine whether activities are prevalent and if they encourage all families to become engaged in different ways (Epstein et al., 2019). It is recommended by the authors that this survey be given annually to write action plans, or periodically to track progress in creating a welcoming school environment. Cronbach’s alpha was computed to determine if the items had adequate reliability and were working as intended. A Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of 0.7 or higher would suggest the scale had an acceptable level of reliability (Miller & Lovler, 2016).

Survey 2. All participants were invited to complete a second survey as either a teacher or a parent. The qualitative survey allowed the researcher to expand upon and gain clarity regarding stakeholder perceptions and collect new data. Additionally, the qualitative survey allowed the participants the chance to speak freely on the topic of parent involvement. Open-ended questions gave participants the opportunity to share information that they could not include on a Likert scale survey. The qualitative survey contained one question pertaining to each of the six typologies of parent involvement. Additionally, a final question asked participants for any other information they wished to share about parent involvement.

Survey 2 validity and reliability. Creswell and Creswell (2018) affirmed that “validity is one of the strengths of qualitative research and is based on determining whether the findings are accurate from the standpoint of the candidate, the participant, or the readers of an account” (p. 199). The researcher used a rich, thick description to convey findings and clarify any bias the researcher brought to the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Last, the researcher incorporated all evidence, positive and negative, that presented itself in themes.

The reliability of the study was enhanced by the survey protocol. Additionally, as suggested by Creswell and Creswell (2018), the researcher was sure to “cross-check the codes developed by different researchers by comparing results that are derived independently” (p. 202).

Quantitative and qualitative data alignment. All quantitative and qualitative data items were aligned to the study’s overarching research question. The alignment of items to the questions is shown in Table 9.

Table 9

Data Alignment

Research Question	Survey 1 Item Numbers	Survey 2 Item Numbers
1a. What are the mean differences between parent and teacher perceptions of parent involvement regarding Epstein's (1995) six typologies?	Parenting – 1-5 Communicating – 6-12 Volunteering – 13-17 Learning at Home – 18-22 Decision-making – 23-27 Collaborating with the Community – 28-32	None
1b. What themes emerge in differences between parent and teacher perceptions of parent involvement regarding Epstein's (1995) six typologies?	None	1-7
2. How can the mean differences of parent and teacher perceptions regarding parent involvement be described with student achievement?	Parenting – 1-5 Communicating – 6-12 Volunteering – 13-17 Learning at Home – 18-22 Decision-making – 23-27 Collaborating with the Community – 28-32	None

Research Question 1a. All survey items aligned with Research Question 1a.

Specifically, the first five items were statements pertaining to parenting. The next seven items focused on the communication aspect of parent involvement. The last 20 items contained five items for each of the next four types of parent involvement: volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community. All aforementioned items asked participants to answer a statement based on their parent

involvement perceptions.

Research Question 1b. All survey items within Survey 1 aligned to Research Question 1b. Additionally, all qualitative items on Survey 2 helped answer Research Question 1a. The qualitative survey items on Survey 2 gave more detail and insight into the data collected on Survey 1.

Research Question 2. All survey items within Survey 1 aligned to Research Question 2. There are no items in Survey 2 that align with Research Question 2.

Protecting Participants

To protect the participants, the researcher administered two anonymous surveys. The surveys were completed electronically, and no identifying questions were asked. The survey only asked participants their role at the site (teacher/parent), the site with which they are affiliated, and their income. Participants who chose to complete the second survey were asked the same demographic questions. Responses to the surveys were downloaded to the researcher's personal computer for use. The survey responses and all other evidences of the study will be kept in a secure location and destroyed after 3 years.

In addition to the previously stated procedures, the participants had to read and agree to the informed consent form (Appendix C) before participating in the study. The informed consent form contained the title of the study, candidate contact information, the purpose and procedures of the study, risks and benefits, confidentiality measures, and voluntary information. Participants electronically agreed to the statements in the form before participation in the study.

Quantitative Data Analysis

All quantitative data analysis was gathered through Likert survey responses on an adapted version of Epstein et al.'s (2019) *Measure of School, Family, and Community Partnerships* survey. The adapted survey has 32 items, all pertaining to one of Epstein's (1995) six types of parent involvement.

The survey was completed in Qualtrics, and the Statistical Package of the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to perform inferential and differential statistics on the data. The inferential statistics included a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) test. The MANOVA test allowed the researcher to determine if there are mean differences between the perceptions of parents and teachers in terms of the six parent involvement typologies. The factorial MANOVA test can be used with two or more dependent variables and two or more independent variables (Laerd Statistics, 2018). The dependent variables within the MANOVA test were the six typologies of parent involvement. The independent variable was the stakeholder groups (parent and teacher). "A factorial MANOVA may be used to determine whether or not two or more categorical grouping variables (and their interactions) significantly affect optimally weighted linear combinations of two or more normally distributed outcome variables" (Wuensch, 2015, p. 1). Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances was conducted prior to the analysis to evaluate the assumption of homogeneity of variances (Field, 2018). Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, and standard deviations also were used to analyze the survey results.

MANOVA test. The MANOVA is an "omnibus test statistic and cannot tell you which specific groups were significantly different from each other, it only tells you that at

least two groups were different” (Laerd Statistics, 2018, p. 1). The MANOVA test is often used to incorporate two or more dependent variables, instead of one in the one-way analysis of variance test (ANOVA).

The MANOVA “analyses the differences in the means of the dependent variable between groups” (Laerd Statistics, 2018, p. 3). The MANOVA forms a linear composite of the dependent variables and compares the groups. This analysis considers all the values within the groups so comparisons can be made between the individual groups (Laerd Statistics, 2018).

While many similar studies only used the independent sample *t*-test or the similar ANOVA test, the researcher decided to use the MANOVA test. Rather than conducting separate *t*-tests which causes inflated error, the researcher used a MANOVA test to determine the mean differences between the independent variables simultaneously (Field, 2018). The researcher was able to discuss the perceptions of both independent variable groups and within the six parent involvement typologies. In addition to the previously stated, the researcher ran an ANOVA test to determine if there was a significant difference between perceptions at the sites.

Qualitative Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis occurred through the second survey. The survey questions were confidential, and participants were urged to be honest. Survey responses were coded for themes, emotions, and descriptions. The codes were sorted and analyzed to determine larger themes within the responses. The researcher coded responses based on the conceptual framework and other topics found within the responses. Figure 5 shows an example of coding strategies.

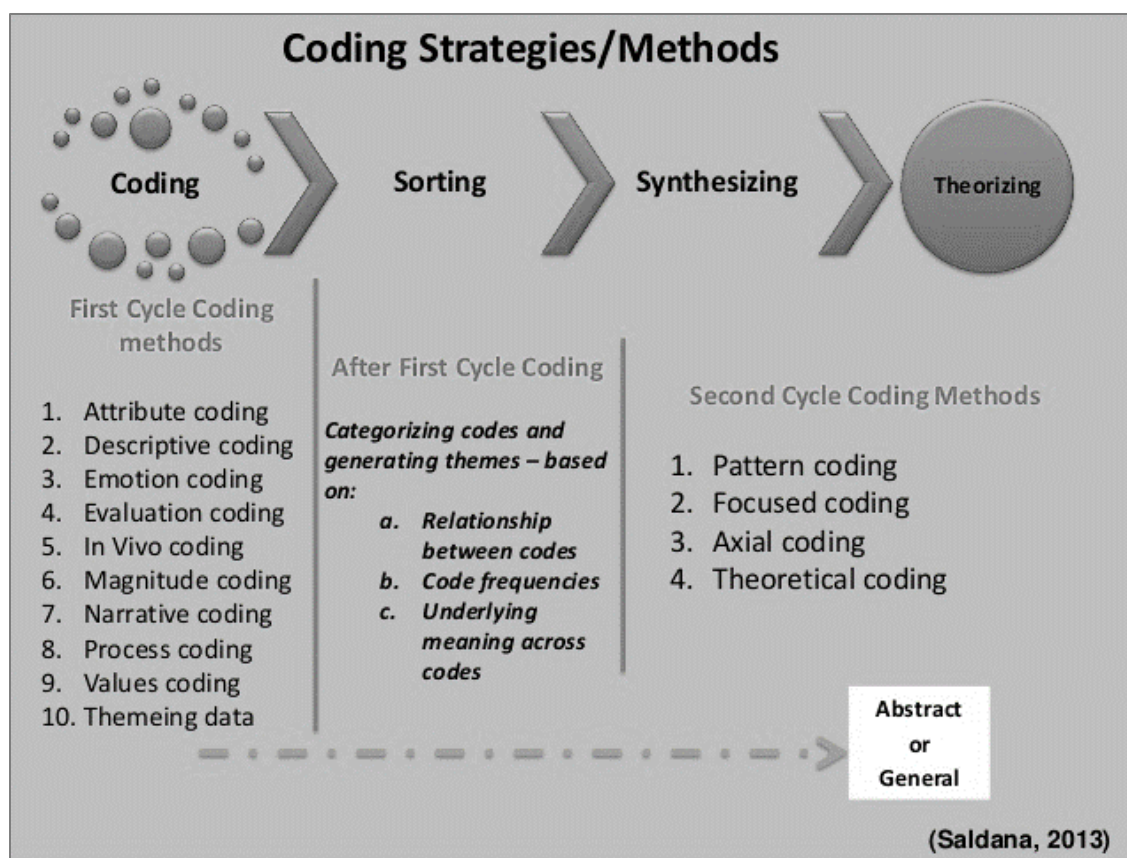


Figure 5. Coding.

As Creswell and Creswell (2018) stated, “coding is the process of organizing the data by bracketing chunks (or text or image segments) and writing a word representing a category in the margins” (p. 193). Coding occurs in cycles, which allows researchers to look for relationships and patterns in the codes. After completing the chosen coding method, a researcher sorts the codes by eliminating redundancy in the codes, looking at the frequency of codes, and grouping the codes into themes (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Last, a researcher might create a conceptual map to show patterns and findings or simply write a narrative with the theories found after data analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Researcher’s Role and Access to Site

The researcher worked in one of the participating districts and had full access to

communicate with the district and site principals regarding data. The researcher was a teacher at a middle school in the district for 7 consecutive years. The researcher previously had visited all middle schools in the district and had opportunities to meet students and families from all regions of the district. Since the researcher was a classroom teacher, she did not complete a survey in order to avoid bias in the data. The second district neighbored the first. The researcher attended school in the second district and knew students and families from all regions of that district.

The researcher's role in the study was to communicate with site principals, distribute survey information, and collect the survey information from the host sites. The researcher was both a teacher within the district and a parent. Being a teacher and a parent allowed the researcher to see the study from varied angles and points of view. The researcher could relate to and more fully understand the perspectives of all participants in the study.

Limitations and Delimitations

Limitations. A limitation within a qualitative study is “related to validity and reliability” (Simon & Goes, 2013, p. 1). Qualitative research occurs in the natural setting and is difficult to replicate; because of this fact, qualitative research comes with limitations (Simon & Goes, 2013). The researcher was not able to control how honest participants were with their responses. Additionally, the researcher was not able to control who volunteered to participate in the surveys and completed the surveys within the responding window. The researcher was not able to control the site principals who choose to share the study and survey with their staff and parents. The survey respondents were also a delimitation. Respondents may have chosen to participate in the study

because of strong feelings (positive or negative) regarding parent involvement, and their responses may not accurately represent the views of most parents or teachers.

Delimitations. Delimitations are characteristics that limit the scope of the study but are in the researcher's control (Simon & Goes, 2013). Using only two school districts in order to become educated and apply information learned directly to the districts is a delimitation of the researcher. Collecting data from only teachers and parents is a delimitation but one that allowed the research to be focused on these perceptions only. Basing the study on Epstein's (1995) work is also a delimitation that the researcher chose to use. A Likert scale survey is a choice that allowed for a more comprehensive data interpretation when paired with qualitative survey data.

Summary

The researcher gathered information from parents and teachers to determine their perceptions of parent involvement, as described by Epstein's (1995) typologies. Additionally, perceptions were analyzed in conjunction with demographic and family involvement data already gathered about the individual sites. Student achievement data and qualitative survey data were used to further explore parent involvement in the districts. All information was used to determine relationships in terms of parent perceptions of involvement, teacher perceptions of involvement, and how those relationships related to the overlapping spheres of influence of family, school, and community on children's learning.

Chapter 4: Results

Overview

The purpose of this mixed methods study was to determine perceptions of parents and teachers concerning middle school parent involvement in two South Carolina school districts and to correlate parent involvement and student achievement. This study was completed in the fall of 2019 with five of eight invited middle schools agreeing to participate in the study. Student achievement data from the 2019 state report card was used with survey responses to answer the research questions. This chapter outlines the research questions, data collection processes, and findings.

Research Questions

1. How can parent involvement be described in two South Carolina school districts, in relation to Epstein's (1995) six types of parent involvement?
 - 1a. What are the mean differences between parent and teacher perceptions of parent involvement regarding Epstein's (1995) six typologies?
 - 1b. What themes emerge in differences between parent and teacher perceptions of parent involvement regarding Epstein's (1995) six typologies?
2. How can the mean differences of parent and teacher perceptions of parent involvement be described with student achievement?

Data Collection Process

Data were collected through two surveys and South Carolina State Report Card data. One survey was a quantitative survey, and the other was a qualitative survey. Data were collected in October and November 2019.

Research Question 1. Research Question 1 asked, “How can parent involvement be described in one South Carolina school district, in relation to Epstein’s (1995) six types of parent involvement?” To more fully answer this question, two subquestions were created to allow for quantitative and qualitative data to be analyzed separately.

Research Question 1a: What are the mean differences between parent and teacher perceptions of parent involvement regarding Epstein’s (1995) six typologies? A quantitative survey was used to allow mean differences between parent and teacher perceptions to be determined. The researcher used an adapted version of Epstein et al.’s (2019) *Measure of School, Family, and Community Partnerships* survey. The survey contained 32 Likert scale items categorized into six groups based on Epstein’s (1995) six typologies. The survey was sent to five middle schools within two districts in South Carolina. In October, the survey was sent by administrators to teachers through district email. Parents received the same survey through a ConnectEd email from the principal. The survey stayed active for 2 weeks. At the end of the 2-week period, the survey link was disabled, and the data were downloaded for analysis.

Research Question 1b: What themes emerge in differences between parent and teacher perceptions of parent involvement regarding Epstein’s (1995) six typologies? A qualitative survey was used to determine themes between parent and teacher perceptions of parent involvement. The qualitative survey contained seven open-ended items, one for each of Epstein’s (1995) six typologies, and a final item asking for further thoughts. The qualitative survey was sent out 3 weeks after the quantitative survey. Sending the qualitative survey 3 weeks after the quantitative survey helped ensure parents and teachers were not overwhelmed with two surveys at once. The qualitative survey was

active for 2 weeks before being disabled to allow data collection.

Research Question 2. To answer Research Question 2, “How can the mean differences between parent and teacher perceptions of parent involvement be described with student achievement,” the researcher used the data collection for Research Question 1 and student achievement data. The 2019 South Carolina state report card data were used to gather achievement data. The researcher used the report card to determine what percentage of students from each site scored as “met” or “exceeded” on the SCREADY tests for the state. The researcher used both math and language arts SCREADY data.

Research Findings

Research Question 1. Data collected for Research Question 1 consisted of quantitative and qualitative data. Research Question 1a was analyzed with quantitative data, while Research Question 1b was analyzed with qualitative data.

Research Question 1a. A total of 52 responses were analyzed for Survey 1. Of the 52 respondents, 22 were teachers and 30 were parents. From School A, 16 parents and 11 teachers submitted responses. School B had responses submitted from 14 parents and four teachers, while School E had only seven teachers submit responses. Two surveys were not included in the results: one was blank, and one had a response that indicated the participant did not agree to the informed consent.

A MANOVA model was run to investigate the mean differences in the dependent variables. Prior to running the analysis, Levene’s Test of Equality of Error Variances was conducted to evaluate the assumption of homogeneity. The results for all dependent variables were nonsignificant apart from *communication*, $F(1,50) = 10.026$, $p < .003$. The results from the MANOVA omnibus test were significant, $\Lambda = .530$, $F(6,45) =$

6.663, $p < .001$. These results suggested that at least one of the univariate effects was significant. The researcher used the univariate ANOVA tests to explore the differences. Table 10 contains the results for the MANOVA analysis.

Table 10

MANOVA results

Dependent Variable	Wilks Lambda	F	Df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Omnibus	.530	6.663	45	.001	.470
Parenting		10.193	1	.002	.169
Communication		17.573	1	.001	.260
Volunteering		13.325	1	.001	.210
Learning at home		5.925	1	.019	.106
Decision-making		24.382	1	.001	.328
Community		9.812	1	.003	.164
Total		20.427	1	.001	.290

The univariate ANOVA tests also showed there were significant differences between parent and teacher perceptions of parent involvement within all six typologies. There were significant mean differences for overall parent involvement perceptions regarding the six typologies of parent involvement, $F(1,50) = 20.427$, $p < .001$. Analysis of parent involvement perceptions showed that overall, teachers had a significantly higher mean ($M = 91.818$) than parents ($M = 59.233$), indicating that teachers may be aware of more parent involvement activities at the school than parents. It should be noted that teachers may have a better understanding of parent involvement because of their professional knowledge.

There were significant mean differences for perceptions regarding the first typology, *parenting*, $F(1,50) = 10.193$, $p < .002$. Regarding *parenting*, teachers had a significantly higher mean ($M = 14.364$) than parents ($M = 10.100$). There were also significant mean differences for the perceptions within the second typology,

communication, $F(1,50) = 17.573, p < .001$. Analysis of *communication* perceptions indicated teachers had a significantly higher mean than parents ($M = 23.272$ and $M = 18.033$ respectively).

The third and fourth typologies concerning *volunteering* and *learning at home* also had significant mean differences. Analysis of perceptions of the third typology, *volunteering*, $F(1,50) = 13.325, p < .001$, indicated teachers had a significantly higher mean ($M = 13.000$) than parents ($M = 6.800$). The fourth typology, *learning at home*, had significant mean differences, $F(1,50) = 5.925, p < .019$. Within the *learning at home* typology, teachers had a significantly higher mean than parents ($M = 13.454$ and $M = 9.400$ respectively).

The last two typologies, *decision-making* and *collaborating with the community*, also had significant mean differences. When analyzing decision-making perceptions, $F(1,50) = 24.382, p < .001$, results indicated teachers had a significantly higher mean ($M = 15.227$) than parents ($M = 7.733$). The sixth typology, *collaborating with the community*, had significant mean differences, $F(1,50) = 9.812, p < .003$. Within the *collaborating with the community* typology, teachers had a significantly higher mean than parents ($M = 12.500$ and $M = 7.166$ respectively). The means and standard deviations for each dependent variable can be seen in Table 11.

Table 11

Mean and Standard Deviation

Dependent Variable	Teacher Mean	Teacher Std. Deviation	Parent Mean	Parent Std. Deviation
Parenting	14.363	4.424	10.100	4.985
Communication	23.272	2.979	18.033	5.268
Volunteering	13.000	7.050	6.800	5.208
Learning at home	13.454	6.780	9.400	5.236
Decision-making	15.227	5.218	7.733	5.539
Community	12.500	6.660	7.166	5.596
Total	91.818	25.887	59.233	25.537

The teacher means were consistently higher than the parent means for all types of parent involvement and the overall perceptions. All the means showed a significant difference, indicating that teacher and parent perceptions of parent involvement were significantly different. The standard deviations for parent responses within the six typologies were all similar and varied no more than 0.611 from each other. This result showed that the parent responses were spread out at about the same rate. Standard deviations for teacher responses varied more, with up to a 4.072 difference between standard deviations. Teacher responses for the *communication* typology were much more centralized, while the responses for *volunteering* were more spread out. The Cronbach's alpha reliability analysis was 0.942, affirming an acceptable level of reliability.

The quantitative data were used to determine if there were statistically significant differences between parent and teacher responses when asked questions regarding parent involvement. Further, the researcher ran statistical analyses to determine if parents and teachers had significant differences of perception within each of the six typologies of parent involvement. After analysis, the researcher found there were statistically significant differences between perceptions of teachers and parents regarding parent

involvement. Overall, teacher responses had higher means than parent responses. This finding indicated that teachers believed more parent involvement activities occurred at the school than parents did. The responses were also statistically significant regarding differences in parent and teacher perceptions of the implementation of the individual six typologies.

Research Question 1b. Data collected for Research Question 1b was qualitative in nature. A total of 44 responses were analyzed for Research Question 1b. Although 46 surveys were submitted, one had no responses and one participant did not agree to the informed consent. Of the 44 analyzed surveys, 18 were teacher responses and 26 were parent responses. Of the 18 teacher responses, 13 were from School A and five were from School B. The parent responses contained 20 from School A and six from School B. School E did not submit any responses for this survey. Due to the qualitative nature of the survey, some participants chose to give more than one response to some questions, while other participants chose not to respond to certain questions. The data were separated by typology and coded to determine themes regarding parent involvement. Specific examples listed in each response were quantified, and statements were coded to extrapolate meanings from the qualitative questions. The researcher sorted the data by stakeholder and read through all responses multiple times before coding began to ensure the views of the respondents were being interpreted correctly. Responses were coded and grouped to determine themes for analysis. Words, phrases, and concepts that were related to each other were highlighted to determine patterns in responses. The researcher coded and included all responses, regardless of their context.

Parenting. The item correlated to the parenting typology read, “In what ways

does the school help you learn about parenting your student throughout middle school?"

Responses for this question were varied. Table 12 shows the specific strategies mentioned and the number of respondents who mentioned that strategy.

Table 12

Ways Parents and Teachers Feel Schools Help Them Learn About Parenting

Example of parenting help	Parents	Teachers
They do not help	13	8
Seminars/guest speakers	2	1
Calls with information	1	0
Messaging apps	1	0
Parent-Teacher conferences	1	2
Website/online grades	2	0
Newsletters	0	1
Parent Contact	0	1
Email	1	0
Keeping parents informed	1	0
Parent orientation	1	0
Availability of counselor	1	0
Giving Advice/Tips	1	0

Of the 26 parent respondents, 13 (50%) stated that the school does not help them learn about parenting. Additionally, eight of the 18 teacher respondents (44%) also said that the school does not help parents learn about parenting. Overall, 21 of 44 respondents felt the schools do not help parents learn about parenting their children. A small number of parents and teachers mentioned guest speakers/seminars and parent-teacher conferences as ways the school helps parents learn about parenting. Newsletters and parent contact were only mentioned by teachers, while the topics of giving advice/tips, school counselors, parent orientation, keeping parents informed, email, messaging apps, and the school website/online grading system were mentioned only by parents.

One parent stated that they were not interested in receiving this information.

Another parent stated that the “school doesn’t really help on the parenting end. If I ask, they would help, but not much is done in being proactive in helping parents navigate middle school tweens!” Responding to the same topic, a teacher stated, “I wish I could tell parents how to do their job more effectively.” Another teacher explained,

I have offered advice during parent-teacher conferences when it comes to organization, a good night’s sleep, doing homework together, nutrition and hormonal balance. However, that reaches very few. I would love to have the time to do a video series on parenting students through the middle school years, but hey, I’m a teacher, so that isn’t going to happen.

The data suggested that teachers may think they are offering parenting advice through newsletters and parent contacts, but parents may not perceive the information that way. The varied responses to this survey question suggest that individuals may have different ideas about parenting advice.

Communication. The specific item regarding the communication typology was “What types of communication do you use to contact teachers/parents, or allow them to contact you? Is communication usually two-way?” Most parents and teachers agreed that communication was two-way. Specifically, 11 parent responses agreed, while only three said communication was not two-way. Additionally, 10 teacher respondents stated that communication was two-way, while only one said two-way communication did not occur. Many types of communication were mentioned in the surveys. Table 13 shows the types of communication mentioned and the frequency of responses.

Table 13

Type of Communication Mentioned by Parents and Teachers

Type of Communication	Parents	Teachers
Email	23	16
Remind, School App, Text	11	10
Website	0	3
Phone	8	14
Notes/Flyers	2	6
Face-to-face meetings	1	2

Digital communication (email, school messaging apps, text, and websites specifically) was mentioned as the number one method of communication between school and home. Digital communication was mentioned 63 times throughout the responses; one parent mentioned that “I only communicate with teachers if I reach out to them via email.” Another parent stated that “email is the easiest.” A teacher mentioned that “I try to keep communication through email. I like having the documentation if needed.” Contrary to the previous quotes, one parent stated that “I have emailed on several occasions and have yet to receive a reply email.”

Phone calls were the next most mentioned type of communication. Twenty-two responses mentioned phone communication between the home and school. Paper notes and flyers were mentioned six times, with one parent noting that “the only reply I have received is when I sent a paper note through my student and asked for a verbal response.” In addition to the previous types of communication, face-to-face communication and parent-teacher conferences were also mentioned three times.

Overall, regarding communication, parents and teachers agreed that digital communication is used most often, and communication is two-way. Paper notes, flyers, and face-to-face communication were the least used types of communication within the

survey responses.

Volunteering. The item related to volunteering in the qualitative survey asked respondents, “Can you describe any structures in place that help parents volunteer at the school site?” Of the 44 survey respondents, six (14%) mentioned that the school has no structures in place to help parents volunteer at the sites. Additionally, 16 of the 44 respondents (36%) mentioned the PTO, which was the most frequently mentioned structure. Table 14 shows the structures mentioned by respondents.

Table 14

Types of Structures That Help Parents Volunteer at the School Site

Type of Volunteering	Parents	Teachers
Phone	1	0
Remind App, School App	3	0
Website	2	2
PTO	8	8
Field trips	0	2
Teacher sign-up sheets	2	0
State testing	0	1
None	3	3

After PTO, the most frequently mentioned structure by parents was the Remind or School Info Apps. The second most mentioned structure for teachers was the school website and field trips, with state testing being third. In addition to PTO and apps, parents mentioned the phone, school website, and teacher sign-up sheets as structures that help them volunteer in the school. One parent stated that there is nothing other than PTO and “there seems to be no communication about how or what to volunteer for.” Another parent mentioned that “it has been difficult to find an area to volunteer in this year. The PTO is very limited on places to be plugged in to the school.” Conversely, one parent stated that “many opportunities arise and communication about volunteering is pretty

clear. We receive info directly from teachers, through email or weekly school announcements.” Only teachers mentioned that parents who want to volunteer must be cleared by the district and “middle school doesn’t get that many volunteers.” Full data analysis suggests that communication regarding volunteering opportunities may not be reaching all stakeholders. Volunteer opportunities and information may also vary depending on the grade level, teacher, or classroom.

Learning at home. The survey asked parents, “How does the school provide information to parents about helping students with their studies?” The results for this section showed differing opinions between parents and teachers. The data can be seen in Table 15.

Table 15

How the School Provides Information About Helping Students with Their Studies

Information Byway	Parents	Teachers
Email	6	2
Remind, School App, Facebook	5	3
Website/Google Classroom	2	4
Phone	0	2
PowerSchool	5	0
Parent-Teacher Conferences	2	4
Orientation	0	1
Tutoring	3	1
None	7	1

Seven of 26 parents (27%) stated that the school does not provide information about helping students with their studies, while only one of 18 teachers (0.05%) said the same. Six parents, or 23%, stated that the school provides information through email. Five parents, or 19%, mentioned the online grading website known as Powerschool, and the same number mentioned digital apps such as Facebook, Remind, and the School Info

App. Parents also listed the school website/Google Classroom (two responses or 7.6%), parent-teacher conferences (two responses or 7.6%), and tutoring (three responses or 11.5%). No parents mentioned the phone or orientation as ways to learn about helping students with their studies. One parent mentioned that they check Google Classroom, but not all teachers post assignments on there. Additionally, a parent mentioned that “I have had rubrics sent home and then the kids are told information that is different from the rubric.” Another parent stated that “next to nothing is communicated outside of school events.” A third parent stated that the teachers’ tutoring times are listed on the website.

Teacher responses showed that they feel parent-teacher conferences and the school website/Google Classroom are the top two ways they provide information to parents about the students’ studies. Both items were mentioned by four of the 18 teachers (22%). Three teachers (16.6%) stated that they inform parents about the students’ studies through Remind or the School Info App. Two teachers specifically mentioned email communication or phone communication (11%), and one teacher mentioned tutoring or orientation (approximately 6%). None of the 18 teachers mentioned PowerSchool as a way they provide information to parents about helping with the student’s studies. One teacher stated they screencast themselves doing problems and post them on Google Classroom and a private YouTube channel. Another teacher stated that “everyone (teachers) has their tutoring schedules provided for students/parents to read. Now whether they actually read it or not is the real issue.” Two teachers also stated that they have conversations with parents about how to help their child succeed during parent-teacher conferences.

Overall, the data showed that parents and teachers have differing opinions about

how the school provides information about how to help students with their studies. More parents felt that the school does not help provide information about helping students with the studies. Of parents who mentioned ways the school provides information, most stated that that information was communicated digitally through email, school messaging apps, or Facebook. Teachers, on the other hand, felt that more information was given through parent-teacher conferences or the school website/Google Classroom.

Decision-making. The item associated with decision-making at the site asked, “How does the school include parents in decision-making?” Of the 26 parent respondents, 14 (54%) stated that the school does not include parents in decision-making, while only one of the 18 teachers (6%) stated that the school does not include parents in decision-making. Table 16 shows the forms of parent inclusion respondents mentioned and the number of respondents who mentioned each type.

Table 16

How the School Includes Parents in Decision-Making

Form of Inclusion	Parents	Teachers
PTO	1	4
Surveys	0	2
School board representatives	0	2
Class placement	0	2
Committees	0	1
School Improvement Council	1	1
Volunteering decisions	0	1
Decisions about consequences	0	1
None	14	1

Two parents listed ways in which the school includes parents in decision-making as the PTO and the school improvement council. One parent stated that parents must volunteer in a parent organization to be included in decision-making. Another parent

stated that “it would be nice to know” how parents are included in decision-making. One final parent responded, “not sure they do include parents in decisions unless it is specifically about issues with our own children.”

The responses from teachers were very different from those of parents. Four teachers (22%) listed the PTO as a decision-making entity. Two teachers each (11%) listed surveys, the school board, or class placement. Each of the remaining examples (committees, school improvement council, volunteering, and decisions about consequences) was mentioned once as ways parents can be included in decision-making. One teacher stated that parents “make almost all the decisions regarding their children- placement in advanced courses, consequences, etc.” Another teacher mentioned that parents are included in decision-making “whenever they call and complain about something.” A third teacher responded in detail by stating, “I’m not certain that parents are included in the decisions that are made. Unless it’s a discipline issue, then the parents may complain, and their child may receive a different consequence.” Qualitative data showed that parents and teachers had differing opinions regarding decision-making in the school.

Collaborating with community. Research participants were asked, “In what ways does the school collaborate with the community to strengthen school programs and activities?” Of the 26 parent respondents, eight (31%) stated that there is no collaboration between the schools and the community. Likewise, three of the 18 teacher respondents (17%) said the same. Other responses varied and can be seen in Table 17.

Table 17

How the School Collaborates with the Community

Form of Collaboration	Parents	Teachers
Committees (arts, etc.)	0	1
Partnerships with companies	0	2
Fundraising	1	1
Donations (time or money)	3	4
Dine out nights	1	0
PTO/School Improvement Council	1	1
School festivals/events	1	3
School events (Career Day, Veterans Day, STEAM Day)	0	1
No collaboration	8	3

Although most parents did not perceive that there were any opportunities for collaboration, three parents (12%) listed donations, and this response was the most frequently mentioned way that parents perceived a specific opportunity for collaboration. Other forms of collaboration mentioned by parents were fundraising, dine out nights, PTO/school improvement council, and school festivals. One parent mentioned each of those items. One parent specifically mentioned that community collaboration would be “nice,” and they are “hopeful they do something.”

Teachers also mentioned donations more than any other type of collaboration with four teachers (22%) mentioning donations. Three teachers (17%) mentioned school festivals, and two (11%) mentioned partnerships with local companies. Committees, fundraising, PTO/school improvement council, and school events were also mentioned by one respondent each. Teachers were able to more specifically list ways the community helps the schools. Two teachers mentioned churches donating supplies and meals for less fortunate students.

The data show that parents are less aware of any collaboration between the school

and community. Teachers mentioned seven of the eight types of collaboration noted in the survey, and parents mentioned six of eight of the types. Teachers and parents agreed that donations are one way the school collaborates with the community.

Other thoughts. The final item of the second qualitative survey asked respondents, “Is there anything else you would like to share regarding parent involvement at your site?” Responses varied from no entry to a couple paragraphs long, with teachers writing more overall. Responses also varied in content and tone.

Parent responses included statements about strengthening parent involvement, such as “the school should let parents help more,” “it would be nice to know a little more about what goes on at the school,” and “I wish there were more opportunities for involvement.” One parent even asked, “Where can I find information?” Other respondents mentioned the state of parent involvement; for example, “we have great parent involvement” and “the school does fine as it is.”

Some parent responses explained areas of concern. Those responses included “the process to get approved (to volunteer) took three months.” Additionally, one parent stated, “if my child goes the office or is involved in an incident then some notification would be nice.” One parent wrote about a specific teacher and how she is the “worst ever,” including examples such as the teacher’s “horrible attitude” and “lack of communication as a whole.” One parent explained,

A lot of parents would like to be more involved and contribute to the school.

However, the school lacks in communication and volunteer opportunities. This seems to be primarily coming from the district level, as opposed to school administration choice.

Further, some parent responses mentioned ways parent involvement could be improved. One parent stated, “the weekly emails are helpful. However, the calls that are almost daily, are a nuisance. One day I received three calls within a short period, and it was to communicate a miscommunication ... I thought something was seriously wrong.” Another parent responded, “provide educational information for parents to work with their children.” One parent response was especially detailed:

Not a lot of information is shared. Conferences are for those struggling and if the teacher requests one. I am sure I could request one, but it would be nice to be given a choice to have one instead of hunting one down. Information about the social issues happening at the school would be nice ... this can be done every so often, not necessarily when an incident happens. Seems like there is a dramatic drop in communication from elementary school to middle and the children/ adolescents need a balance of autonomy and parenting, which happens “in loco parentis” at school.

Although responses varied, most responses noted ways parents felt parent involvement could be improved. Only two of the 11 parent responses to this question noted that the parent involvement was great or fine as it is. All other responses noted ways in which the schools are failing or could improve their parent involvement.

Only six teacher participants responded to the final item. The responses varied greatly. Two participants mentioned the lack of parent involvement, stating “middle school doesn’t typically have a lot of parent involvement” and parent involvement is “very limited unless you are in PTO or volunteer at the concession stand or dances.” Alternatively, two responses noted that parents “are involved and are interested in

supporting their kids” and “the school has a big turnout of parents when anything goes on during the school year.” The former gave examples of parent-teacher conferences, open house, sporting events, and Awards Day. The last two responses were stand alone with one teacher mentioning that they “would like to see more involvement at home. I think when that happens, involvement at the school will naturally increase.” One teacher went so far as to say, “while they (parents) seem to help some, I think the lack of involvement isn’t so bad. Some of these parents are a mess and any more time with them wouldn’t be for the better.”

Themes. The qualitative survey showed several themes throughout the six typologies of parent involvement. Within the first typology of parenting, approximately half of each stakeholder group (50% of parents and 44% of teachers) felt that schools do not help parents learn about parenting middle schoolers. Both parents and teachers agreed that digital communication is the number one way the school and home communicate. The data show email and messaging apps are the best way for many stakeholders to communicate. Within the typology of volunteering, the parents and teachers surveyed showed that the PTO is the number one way parents volunteer.

Parents and teachers had differing opinions when asked how schools provide information about how to help students with their studies. More parents noted that the school does not provide information about this issue. Additionally, teachers stated that parent-teacher conferences and the school website/Google Classroom give parents information about schoolwork, while parents stated that email and school messaging apps give them information. Parents and teachers also had differing ideas when it came to decision-making at the school. Most parents felt that the school did not include them in

decision-making. More teachers noted that the PTO included parents in decision-making. Within the last typology, collaborating with the community, more parents than teachers mentioned that the school does not collaborate with the community. Both teachers and parents noted donations to the school as a way the school and community collaborate.

Overall, parents and teachers had similar opinions when it came to the typologies of parenting, communication, and volunteering. Parents and teachers had differing opinions within the typologies of learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community. Other information shared, not aligned with a specific type of involvement, showed that ideas about parent involvement may vary greatly between some parents and teachers. Those same ideas about parent involvement may also vary greatly between groups of teachers and between groups of parents.

Research Question 2. Research Question 2 explored how the mean differences between parent and teacher perceptions of parent involvement could be described with student achievement. Three years of past student achievement data were analyzed early in the research. The researcher gathered the most recent scores from the South Carolina Department of Education (2019) to determine how the current state of student achievement could be described with the mean differences of parent and teacher perceptions of parent involvement. The 2019 student achievement data for the three schools that participated in the study can be seen in Table 18.

Table 18

Percent of Students Scoring Met or Exceeding on the 2019 SCREADY Tests

	School A	School B	School E
ELA	60%	38%	38%
Math	58%	37%	27%

School A continued to have the highest percentage of students scoring Met or Exceeding on the SCREADY assessments in 2019, with all other schools being at least 20% lower. Schools B and C both had 38% of students meet or exceed the state ELA standards, while School A indicated that 60% of their students did the same. School E showed the least amount of achievement in math, with only 27% of students at least meeting state standards. School A had 58% of students meet or exceed the state math standards, and School B fell in the middle with 37%. The mean differences of overall perceptions at each study site can be found in Table 19.

Table 19

Mean and Standard Deviation

Study Site	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
School A	28	68.964	22.049
School B	17	64.941	33.023
School E	7	108.857	29.796

There were 28 respondents from School A. Of those 28 surveys, 12 were completed by teachers (43%) and 16 by parents (57%). The mean within those responses to Survey 1 was 68.964 with a standard deviation of 22.049. School B had a total of 17 submitted surveys. Parents submitted 14 surveys (82%), while teachers submitted three surveys (18%). School B had a mean score of 64.941 and a standard deviation of 33.023. Only seven surveys were submitted from School E, and all of the respondents were teachers. The means from School A and B are similar ($M = 68.964$ and $M = 64.941$ respectively). School A had a smaller standard deviation, meaning School A's responses were not as spread out as School B's. School E's mean was much higher than that of the other two schools ($M = 108.857$), and the standard deviation was close to the other

schools at 29.796. The data indicated that while School E had a much higher mean score on the survey, the responses were not as spread out as the other sites. It is important to note that the data from School E may have been skewed due to all the responses being those of teachers. In addition to comparing means and standard deviations, the researcher ran an ANOVA test to determine if there was a significant difference between perceptions at the sites. Table 20 shows the results from the ANOVA.

Table 20

ANOVA Results

Dependent Variable	F	Df	Sig.	Mean Square
Between Groups	7.206	2	.002	5280.109

The ANOVA test showed there was a significant difference between the different schools regarding parent involvement perceptions. There were significant mean differences for overall parent involvement perceptions regarding the six typologies of parent involvement, $F(2,52) = 7.206, p < .002$. Analysis of parent involvement perceptions between the different sites shows there is a significant difference in parent involvement perceptions at each of the different schools. Table 21 shows the mean scores and standard deviations at each site as well as the percent of students scoring Met or Exceeding on the SCREADY state standards for math and ELA. The high standard deviations show there was a high level of variability among the sample.

Table 21

Mean Differences, Standard Deviations, and Student Achievement

Study Site	Mean	Std. Deviation	Math	ELA
School A	68.964	22.049	58%	60%
School B	64.941	33.023	37%	38%
School E	108.857	29.796	27%	38%

When looking at the mean differences and student achievement together, School A had a mean score of 68.964 on the parent involvement survey and higher student achievement scores (58% and 60%). School A also had the smallest standard deviation, meaning the scores were not as spread out as they were at other sites. School B had a lower mean score than School A (64.941) and lower student achievement (37%, 38%). School B also had a higher standard deviation (33.023), meaning the scores were more spread out. Within Schools A and B, a larger mean on the parent involvement survey was related to higher student achievement. School E had the highest mean value (108.857) and a standard deviation of 29.796. The student achievement scores at School E were 27% and 38%. Compared to the other results, School E's results were markedly different, with the mean score being much higher than either School A or School B; however, School E's achievement data did not follow the same pattern as either School A or B; it was lower than School A and the same as School B. The results for School E might be attributable to the low number of respondents or the fact that all respondents were teachers. Previous analysis of the data showed that the mean of teacher responses was higher than the mean of parent responses on the surveys. There were significant differences on the survey between the schools. Those significantly different responses correspond to different student achievement levels at the sites. When looking at Schools A and B, it appeared as though survey responses could be related to student achievement results at the site. This idea did not hold true for School E. This result may have been due to the low number of survey responses or that only teachers completed the survey at School E.

Given the differences in the quantitative data and the variation in qualitative data,

improving parent involvement has the potential to increase student achievement at these schools. Poor student achievement is related to the mean differences of the quantitative survey at two of the three sites (66%). There are also significant differences between the responses of the sites regarding the quantitative survey.

Summary

This chapter provided an in-depth view of the research findings. Quantitative analyses showed there were significant differences between teacher and parent perceptions of parent involvement within all six of Epstein's (1995) typologies. Qualitative analyses further showed that teacher and parent perceptions of parent involvement differ within the six typologies. While parents and teachers had similar responses in the areas of parenting, communication, and volunteering, they had differing opinions in the typologies of learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community. The data analyses were triangulated and discussed. Student achievement data were gathered to determine how parent involvement perceptions could be described with student achievement.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Overview of the Study

This study explored how parent involvement could be described using Epstein et al.'s (2019) six typologies of parent involvement. Parent involvement in this study referred to the caregiver's participation in the student's education and with the school. In recent years, parent involvement frameworks have moved to models that focus on a family, school, and community partnership (Epstein et al., 2019) that focuses on stakeholders working together to create successful learning environments within the school and beyond. Family and community involvement allow more opportunities for student success (Epstein et al., 2019; National Education Association, 2008; Oswald, 2017). All races and income levels show increases in student achievement when family and community involvement is high (National Education Association, 2008; Sheridan et al., 2019). The framework for this study was Epstein et al.'s (2019) noted six typologies of parent involvement: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with community.

Research Questions

Two research questions, along with two subquestions, guided this study:

1. How can parent involvement be described in two South Carolina school districts, in relation to Epstein's (1995) six types of parent involvement?
 - 1a. What are the mean differences between parent and teacher perceptions of parent involvement regarding Epstein's (1995) six typologies?
 - 1b. What themes emerge in differences between parent and teacher perceptions of parent involvement regarding Epstein's (1995) six

typologies?

2. How can the mean differences of parent and teacher perceptions of parent involvement be described with student achievement?

Findings and Implications

Research Question 1. The researcher collected quantitative and qualitative data to answer Research Question 1, “How can parent involvement be described in two South Carolina school districts, in relation to Epstein’s (1995) six types of parent involvement?” In order to more effectively answer this research question, the researcher created two subquestions for data analysis.

Research Question 1a. The quantitative findings for Research Question 1a, “What are the mean differences between parent and teacher perceptions of parent involvement regarding Epstein’s (1995) six typologies,” were statistically significant. Specifically, the overall mean scores of parent and teacher perceptions of parent involvement were significantly different. Further, the mean scores of parents and teachers regarding each typology of parent involvement were also significantly different. In summary, parents and teachers had significantly different responses within every parent involvement typology and overall. Similarly, Herrell (2011) found significant differences between parent and teacher perceptions of parent involvement; although in Herrell’s study, parent and teacher perceptions of *volunteering* did not show a significant difference. Boyd (2005) found that overall, parents were looking for much more from the school in terms of initiating involvement. Likewise, many of the qualitative survey responses indicated that parents in this study felt the same way.

All these discrepancies between parents and teachers could potentially be lessened

through the typology of *communication*. According to Fiore (2016), “one of the most important aspects of positive, successful relationships is the ability to communicate effectively” (p. 72). Allowing teachers and parents to understand the communication expectations might allow all parties to be on the same page and communicate more efficiently and effectively. As an example, if administrators set expectations as to what parents need to be contacted about, when they should be contacted, and how often communication should occur, many of these differences regarding perception might be lessened. Additionally, administration needs to effectively communicate information on a regular basis. Effective communication is everyone’s job (Fiore, 2016). Increasing effective, regular communication has the potential to increase parent involvement perceptions regarding the other five typologies. Increasing overall communication from the school could be the start. Continuing to evaluate the state of parent involvement and perceptions of parent involvement is necessary for continuous sustainable change (Epstein et al., 2019; Fiore, 2016).

Research Question 1b. The qualitative findings for Research Question 1b, “What themes emerge in differences between parent and teacher perceptions of parent involvement regarding Epstein’s (1995) six typologies,” supported Research Question 1a. Specifically, parent and teacher responses were quite different when asked about learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community. Herrell (2011) found learning at home to be the second most effective typology of parent involvement. Within the current study, responses of parents and teachers sometimes aligned when asked about parenting, volunteering, and communication. Rodriguez et al. (2014) found that schools with successful parent involvement communicate with parents in a variety of ways.

Although Epstein's (1995) typologies are not considered a hierarchy, Herrell found that 90% of parents in the study felt communication was the most effective type of parent involvement. Data indicated that the faculty/administration of schools in the current study may be successful at communicating with parents in a variety of ways, which may have contributed to the alignment of parent and teacher responses within that typology. Qualitative survey results showed that parents receive communication in a variety of formats and that communication is frequent. Parents mentioned they receive regular emails, phone calls, and application notifications. Some parents mentioned getting weekly newsletters, updates, and calendars regarding events at the school. Like this study, Herrell found parent and teacher perceptions to be similar when asked questions regarding the volunteering typology. Both this study and Herrell suggested that, overall, parents and teachers understand what volunteering is and how it can be implemented at the school. Although parent and teacher perceptions of the volunteering typology align, parent volunteers do decrease at the middle school level (Smith, 2015). More research needs to be conducted to determine why volunteerism declines during the middle school level within these districts.

When the researcher analyzed both subquestions together to analyze the overarching research question, "How can parent involvement be described in two South Carolina school districts, in relation to Epstein's (1995) six types of parent involvement," the data indicated that parent involvement perceptions can be very different, depending on the stakeholder. A study by Herman and Reinke (2017) found that teacher perceptions about parents and their involvement likely affect their interactions with students. Barnard (2004) sampled over 1,000 students and found that teacher ratings of parent involvement

in elementary school predicted the student's outcomes in high school. Altering perceptions to be more favorable could promote better outcomes for students (Herman & Reinke, 2017), and training teachers to be more mindful could also alter their perceptions of parent involvement. Herman and Reinke found that "teacher bias may undermine parent willingness and ability to support their child's educational achievement and social development" (p. 91). Aligning perceptions of parents and teachers could also create more favorable student achievement outcomes. Herman and Reinke also stated, "positive teacher perceptions of parent involvement may lead to improved teacher-student interactions and higher levels of student engagement, both of which contribute to better student behaviors and academic performance" (p. 91).

While teachers and parents agreed that communication was mainly digital, the reason behind the communication and effectiveness of the communication was not agreed upon. Many teachers believe they give parents advice to help their students with their studies at home; however, 27% of parents did not feel that was the case. Smith (2017) found most parents did not initiate concerns with teachers. Instead, they waited for teachers to make contact. In some cases, parents may be concerned about a particular issue, but if the teachers are not, they would have no reason to initiate contact with the parents. Further, middle school teachers typically have many more students than elementary school teachers, making it harder to contact all parents on a regular basis. An increase in communication may lead to more aligned perceptions of parent involvement. For example, some teachers mentioned they post items on Google Classroom to inform parents how to help with their child's learning; but if this information is not conveyed to parents, they are unaware of this resource. Additionally, many parents commented that

they would like more information, suggesting that they are unaware of what resources are available.

Both parents and teachers agreed that the PTO was the main way to be involved with volunteering at the site, suggesting that this organization needs to be supported to allow for future growth. While many teachers and parents felt that there were ways for parents to be involved, some parents did not feel the same. One parent stated, “there seems to be no communication about how or what to volunteer for.” Approximately 16% of parents believed there were no opportunities to volunteer at the site. Again, this perception may be due to a lack of communication. One parent voiced an opinion about the length of time it takes for parents to become approved to volunteer with the school, another decision that is out of the specific school’s hands.

Teachers mentioned that PTO was the most prevalent way parents could become involved with decision-making, and only 6% of teachers believed there was no way for parents to be involved in decision-making. However, the majority of parents (54%) believed there was no way for them to be involved in school decision-making. A similar study by Boyd (2005) found parent organizations (such as the PTO/PTA) were mentioned by parents and principals as part of volunteering but not decision-making. Additionally, some teachers in this study stated that parents are too involved in decision-making when it comes to course placement and discipline issues. Teachers also believed that parents who “complain” are more involved in decision-making.

This research indicated that most parents want to be informed and engaged with their child’s schooling. Hornby and Lafaele (2011) found the way parents view the role they have in their child’s education plays a large part in their parent involvement. The

findings of this study also indicated that most teachers want parents to be involved with their child's schooling, although some disagreed with those thoughts. Specifically, one teacher mentioned that "the lack of involvement isn't so bad." The teacher went on to say that "some of these parents are a mess and any more time with them wouldn't be for the better." Another teacher mentioned that parents are too involved in some decisions. Both teacher comfort with parents and their experiences with parent contacts influence their perceptions of parent involvement (Herman & Reinke, 2017). Within this study, parents continuously mentioned that they would welcome more information.

Parent involvement is essential to a student's academic success (Benner et al., 2016), and parent involvement should be a joint effort throughout the middle grades (National Education Association, 2008). If their perceptions do not align, parents and teachers may have more difficulty working together for the benefit of the student. Parents see obstacles such as a lack of knowledge or resources, while teachers believe they communicate resources to help parents to the fullest. For substantial, permanent change to occur regarding parent involvement, stakeholders must be able to accept and understand the opinions of other stakeholder groups.

Epstein's (1995) six typologies of parent involvement provide a starting point for stakeholders to understand what effective parent involvement may look like. The data showed that teacher and parent perceptions regarding parent involvement do not align within any of the six typologies of parent involvement. Further investigation showed that some parent involvement decisions may be coming from the district- or administrative-level decisions. Teachers' hands are sometimes tied due to building or district-level administrative choices. Recommendations to improve district and administrative parent

involvement practices are discussed in the recommendations section.

Research Question 2. To answer the second research question, “How can the mean differences of parent and teacher perceptions of parent involvement be described with student achievement,” the researcher used student achievement data and quantitative data. The mean of parent involvement perceptions was more positive at School E. This result shows that the parents and teachers at School E rated the parent involvement more positively than those affiliated with other schools, indicating that School E’s parents/teachers are more involved or feel there is more parent involvement at this school; however, School E indicated the lowest student achievement. When comparing only School A and School B, a more positive mean regarding parent involvement perceptions indicated higher student achievement. The results of School E may have been skewed, as there were only seven respondents from that site and all were teachers. Between Schools A and B, it appears as though more positive perceptions of parent involvement indicate more student achievement. Further research needs to be completed to determine if this relationship holds true for larger populations or other geographic locations.

Many research studies have shown a positive relationship between parent involvement and student achievement (Cotton & Wikelund, 1989; Epstein, 1996, 2011; Epstein et al., 2019; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005; Smith, 2015), and several studies have been conducted to determine exactly how parent involvement correlates to student achievement (Cotton & Wikelund, 1989; Epstein, 1996, 2011; Epstein et al., 2019; Erdener, 2016); however, few studies have explored the perceptions stakeholders have pertaining to parent involvement. Cotton and Wikelund (1989) stated that more active parent involvement (working with students at home, going to school activities, and

volunteering at the school) have greater student achievement benefits than more passive parent involvement measures such as signing forms and going to parent-teacher conferences. Herrell (2011) suggested that research involving parent involvement should be expanded to include the perceptions parents and teachers have regarding parent involvement. This study adds to the research by including the perceptions of stakeholders and analyzing the research in different ways. The data suggest that more positive perceptions of parent involvement may increase student achievement. Numerous studies have indicated that by taking measures to improve parent involvement, schools and districts could improve the achievement of students (Cotton & Wikelund, 1989; Epstein, 1996, 2011; Epstein et al., 2019; Erdener, 2016).

Parent involvement begins to decline in middle school, when parent involvement is crucial (Smith, 2015). While this study showed that parent and teacher perceptions regarding parent involvement do not always align, one common trend is that parents and teachers indicate they want parents to be involved during middle school. Survey results indicated a common theme of parents wanting to know how to get more information about getting involved, yet teachers stated how they made resources available for parents to be involved. If parents and teachers all want parent involvement to occur, the largest hurdle has been jumped. The next step is determining how parent involvement can be jumpstarted at individual sites and how that parent involvement can be maintained and improved over time.

Limitations and Delimitations

Limitations are items that affect the study but cannot be controlled by the researcher. The researcher offered the study to two school districts, for a total of eight

middle schools. Only stakeholders representing three schools submitted responses during the survey window. There were only 52 responses to the first (quantitative) survey.

Within those 52 responses, there were seven, 17, and 28 responses from the individual schools. Additionally, one survey did not include responses, and one had a response that indicated they did not agree to the informed consent. The researcher had no control over which schools agreed to participate in the study or when the information was sent out.

Additionally, the researcher could not control who completed the surveys or how honest they were with their responses. It is possible that both the quantitative and qualitative data results used to answer the research questions were affected by dishonesty.

Additionally, the number of respondents from each site might have skewed the data.

Also, the number of teacher and parent responses to each survey could have changed the data set for Research Question 2, considering parent and teacher responses were statistically different regarding Research Question 1.

Delimitations are variables the researcher chose to limit in the study. The researcher chose to ground the study in Epstein's (1995) framework and use a modified version of Epstein et al.'s (2019) survey. Using only two school districts is a delimitation that allowed the researcher to ensure the qualitative data could be coded thoroughly and promptly. Opening the survey to only parents and teachers is a delimitation that was needed to focus the research on perceptions of those stakeholders only. Offering the survey to administrators, community members, or students would have allowed the researcher to gain more insight into the full scope of parent involvement at the site.

Recommendations

Both the quantitative and qualitative findings led the researcher to create research-

based recommendations for everyday practice and future studies. The recommendations were created as research-based suggestions to help close gaps between parent and teacher perceptions of parent involvement.

Everyday practice. This research showed significant differences between teacher and parent perceptions of parent involvement. A study by Herman and Reinke (2017) suggested that allowing teachers to reflect on their perceptions of parent involvement and teaching them to be more effective with parent interactions should increase parent involvement. In order to help close gaps and ensure parent involvement, as well as to ensure perceptions are fully understood and less disjointed, the researcher recommends individual schools create an Action Team for Partnerships (ATP). As Epstein et al. (2019) mentioned, an ATP is “a committee charged with planning, implementing, evaluating, and continually improving the school’s program of partnerships to engage all partners and increase student success” (p. 87). ATPs have between six to 12 members and include at least two parents, two teachers, and an administrator as well as others involved with families and students. ATPs create action plans and recruit others to be active participants in family and community involvement activities. The ATP does not take the place of the PTO but instead works in conjunction with other parent organizations. One-year action plans are created and evaluated by the ATPs in order to strengthen the six types of parent involvement. The researcher encourages schools interested in ATPs to join the National Network of Partnership Schools to gain resources and support for creating ATPs.

Parent involvement and community partnerships decline in middle school (Epstein et al., 2019; Wehrspan et al., 2016). Middle school teachers may have over 100

students a semester, making it hard to communicate effectively with all parents. If teachers are more thoroughly trained in parent involvement, they could be more successful at working on parent involvement on a large scale, instead of working with just one parent at a time (Herman & Reinke, 2017). Results from numerous studies indicate that district administrators should implement plans to help strengthen parent involvement at the middle school level (Epstein et al., 2019; Wehrspan et al., 2016). Fiore (2016) specifically stated that “planning, implementation, and assessment--are the key words in developing our school-community relations plans” (p. 2). The researcher recommends district leaders take steps to create district-wide action plans to improve parent involvement. Additionally, the researcher encourages administration and faculty at all schools to further explore and implement parent involvement practices. By creating intentional practices to increase parent involvement, the district leaders will be able to evaluate and improve current or future practice to create sustainable change (Epstein et al. 2019; Fiore, 2016).

Increasing two-way communication has the potential to make gains within the other five types of parent involvement. Smith (2017) found that perceptions of parent involvement may be correlated with how the school communicates with the family. Specifically, parents in Smith’s (2017) study “viewed parent involvement as supporting whatever the school or teacher communicates to them as being necessary for success” (p. 107). According to Calzada et al. (2015), teachers should focus on communication that is clear and effective to help engage parents from a variety of cultural backgrounds. To increase communication, the researcher suggests schools ensure communication is made available to all families through a variety of platforms including but not limited to flyers,

emails, phone calls, and messages through applications. According to Fiore (2016), school-community relation plans must be built on two-way communication (p. 3). Communication through digital means is necessary, but it is also necessary to include more traditional forms of communication (notes, flyers) for families who do not have access to technology. At the middle school level, students must understand their own role in their education. Middle school students must be active participants in school-family communication (Epstein et al., 2019). Students are responsible for carrying information to and from school in the form of notes, verbal messages, and materials. Teaching students the importance of their responsibility to their education and school-family communication may lessen parent misunderstandings. One way Fiore (2016) suggested was creating student advisory councils that allow students to know their voice is being heard and they are active participants in their education. More administrators need to become cognizant of the role students play in the advancement of the school. As Fiore stated, “students really are our most important stakeholders” (p. 78). Additionally, Fiore suggested appointing key communicators, representatives who have access to the community and the ability to communicate with stakeholders. Examples of key communicators are police officers, Chamber of Commerce members, and business/church leaders. Ideally, key communicators visit the school regularly so they can have two-way communication. This step allows the community to be informed of school business and the school to be aware of community concerns.

Teachers and parents had statistically different perceptions within the learning at home typology. Some parents believed the school did little more than post grades online, while teachers believed they made resources available for parents to help students with

their studies at home. Fiore (2016) suggested that parents be encouraged to ask teachers for materials that can help their students at home. Implementing a school-, grade-, team-, or content-wide platform for parents to find resources to help students is one way to ensure parents have access to resources that can assist them in helping their students with schoolwork. Additionally, creating interactive homework assignments might help parents stay involved with their child's learning at home. Requiring student-parent conferences or including parents in student goal setting may help parents understand what is being done in class and how they can help their child (Epstein et al., 2019). Past researchers worked with teachers to design, implement, and evaluate a process known as Teachers Involve Parents in Schoolwork (TIPS; Epstein et al., 2019). This process allows all parents to stay informed and involved with schoolwork, without asking parents to teach their students. The process also includes a section for parent-teacher communication. The process has been found to increase communication between the school and home and inform parents how to help their students. Additionally, TIPS can be used with any grade or content area.

Future studies. The findings from this study allowed the researcher to create recommendations for further study. This study was conducted throughout two districts in one state. Additional studies using other districts and/or states would allow the research to be compared to that of different geographical areas. Alternatively, conducting research at one specific site or district would allow the researcher to make more specific recommendations to increase parent involvement throughout that site or district.

Including student perceptions of involvement in the analysis might allow researchers to gain a more complete view of parent involvement. A study completed by

Anderson (2017) showed that students wanted their voices to be heard even though most studies have not included students in the analysis. Students have a role in the parent involvement partnership as well.

While teachers and parents participated in the study, the researcher did not collect data regarding the length of time the stakeholder was affiliated with the school or the prior knowledge of the participant. Perceptions of stakeholders new to the area might have differed from those with more knowledge of the school's history. Collecting information regarding the length of time the stakeholder was affiliated with the school might allow future researchers to analyze perceptions of those new to the school versus those who have a standing history with the school.

In this study, most parents and teachers felt there was little to no assistance when it came to helping parents learn how to effectively parent their middle school-aged child. This topic is less explored in the literature. Conducting a more in-depth study pertaining directly to the *learning at home* typology might allow researchers to make more specific recommendations to help increase the type of parent involvement throughout sites. Finally, future researchers might benefit from reproducing a like study with a larger sample size of stakeholders.

Conclusion

This study was grounded in Epstein's (1995) six typologies of parent involvement. The research highlighted the differences and similarities that occurred between parent and teacher perceptions of parent involvement, and results magnified the gaps between the perceptions of parents and teachers. The research also increases awareness of the important role parent involvement plays in the academic success of a

middle school student. The findings showed significant differences between teacher and parent perceptions of parent involvement, as well as a positive relationship between perceptions of parent involvement and student achievement.

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Appendix A

Permission to Adapt Survey

Permission to Adapt Survey

8-8-18

To: Jessica Van Valkenburgh

From: Joyce Epstein

Re: Permission Granted

Thank you for note and kind words. I am glad to know that our research is helpful to you in your own study.

This is to grant permission to you to use, adapt, or translate our *Measure of School, Family, and Community Partnership*. I understand this will be used for your dissertation at Gardener-Webb University in a study of parent and teacher perceptions of family and community engagement at the middle school level.

The new reference for the *Measure* is just published:

Epstein, et al. (2019). *School, family, and community partnerships: Your handbook for action*. Fourth edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

As you note below, if/when you are ready, your school and district are welcome to join NNPS to become part of the national agenda and to continually improve your program of family and community engagement for student success in school.

Best of luck with your project.



Joyce L. Epstein, Ph.D.
Director, Center on School, Family, and
Community Partnerships and
National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS)
Professor of Education and Sociology
[2701 North Charles Street, Suite 300](https://www.johnshopkins.edu/education/2701-north-charles-street-suite-300/baltimore-md-21218)
[Baltimore, MD 21218](https://www.johnshopkins.edu/education/2701-north-charles-street-suite-300/baltimore-md-21218)

Phone: (410) 516-8807
Fax: (410) 516-8890

Appendix B

Survey Protocol and Instruments

Survey Protocols and Instruments

Survey 1

This survey is anonymous. The first question will contain the informed consent statement. Please ensure you read the informed consent. You will only move forward in the survey if you agree to participate in the study. Basic demographic data such as your role, school affiliation, and income will be collected for research analysis purposes only. The survey includes 32 questions about parent involvement. It should take approximately 15 minutes. This survey will help determine how parents and teachers perceive involvement efforts at the school.

At this time, your school may conduct all, some, or none of the activities listed. Not every activity is appropriate at every grade level. Not every activity should be conducted often, some may only be implemented once or twice a year.

I appreciate you taking the time to complete this survey so that I may explore the perceptions of our stakeholders. As you review each survey item, select the response that comes closest to describing how the activity is implemented at your school. If, at any time, you wish to stop the survey, you may do so.

Survey

I have read the informed consent linked here and agree to participate in this study.

Demographic Items

Are you a teacher or a parent?

With which school are you affiliated?

What is your yearly household income?

Directions: Use the scoring rubric below to rate your school. As you review each item, select the response that comes closest to describing how the activity is implemented at your school.

I don't know: I am unaware if the statement occurs at our school.

Never: Strategy does not happen at our school.

Rarely: Conducted in one or two classes OR with a few families. Not emphasized in the school's programs.

Sometimes: Conducted in a few classes or with some families. Receives minimal emphasis in the school across grades. Quality of implementation needs to improve.

Often: Conducted in many, but not all, classes, or with many, but not all, families. Given substantial emphasis in the school across the grades. Quality of implementation is high, only minimal changes are needed.

Frequently: Occurs in most or all classes and grade levels, with most or all families. An important part of the school's programs. Quality of implementation is excellent.

This school:

1. Conducts workshops or provides information for parents on child or adolescent development.
2. Provides clear, usable information to all families who want or need it, not just the few who can attend workshops/meetings.
3. Asks families for information about children's goals, strengths, and talents.
4. Provides families with age-appropriate information on developing more conditions or environments that support learning.
5. Respects the different cultures represented in our student population
6. Has clear two-way channels for communications from home to school and school to home.
7. Conducts a formal conference with every parent at least once per year.
8. Conducts an annual survey for families to share information and concerns about student needs, reactions to school programs, and satisfaction with their involvement in school and home.
9. Conducts an orientation for new parents.
10. Teachers, counselors, and administrators use email and/or the school website to communicate with parents/
11. Produces a regular school newsletter with up-to-date information about the school, special events, organizations, meetings, and/or parenting tips.

12. Provides communication in the language of parents who do not speak or read English well.
13. Conducts annual surveys to identify interests, talents, and availability of parent volunteers to match their skills and talents with school classroom needs.
14. Encourages families and the community to be involved by creating flexible volunteering opportunities and schedules.
15. Schedules special events at different times of the day and evening so all families can attend.
16. Trains volunteers so they use their time productively.
17. Recognizes volunteers for their time and efforts.
18. Provides information for families on how to monitor and discuss schoolwork at home.
19. Provides specific information to parents on how to assist students with skills they need to improve.
20. Assists families in helping students set academic goals and selecting courses/programs.
21. Provides information and ideas for families to talk with students about college, careers, postsecondary plans.
22. Schedules regular interactive homework that requires students to demonstrate and discuss what they are learning with a family member.
23. Involves parents in organized, ongoing, and timely ways to improve school programs.
24. Recruits parent leaders for committees from all racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, and other groups in the school.
25. Develops formal social networks to link all families with their parent representatives.
26. Includes students (with parents) in decision-making groups.
27. Deals with conflicts openly and respectfully.
28. Provides a resource directory for parents and students on community agencies, services, and programs.
29. Involves families in location and using community resources.
30. Works with local businesses, industries, libraries, parks, museums, and other organizations on programs to enhance student skills and learning.
31. Provides a “one-stop shop” at the school for family services through partnerships of school, counseling, health, recreation, job training, and other agencies.
32. Offers afterschool programs for students with support from community businesses, agencies, and volunteers.

Survey 2

This survey is anonymous. The first question will contain the informed consent statement. Please ensure you read the informed consent. You will only move forward in the survey if you agree to participate in the study. Basic demographic data such as your role, school affiliation, and income will be collected for research analysis purposes only. The survey includes seven open-ended questions. This survey will help determine how parents and teachers perceive involvement efforts at the school.

I appreciate you taking the time to complete this survey so that I may explore the perceptions of our stakeholders. As you review each survey item, please answer as truthfully as possible. If, at any time, you wish to stop the survey, you may do so.

Survey

I have read the informed consent linked here and agree to participate in this study.

Demographic Items

Are you a teacher or a parent?

With which school are you affiliated?

What is your yearly household income?

1. What types of communication do you use to contact parents/teachers, or to allow them to contact you? Is communication typically two-way?
2. In what ways does the school help parents learn about parenting their student throughout middle school?
3. Can you describe any structures in place that help parents volunteer at the school site?
4. How does the school provide information to parents about helping students with their studies?
5. How does the school include parents in decision-making?
6. In what ways does the school collaborate with the community to strengthen school programs and activities?
7. Is there anything else you would like to share regarding parent involvement at your site?

Appendix C
Informed Consent Form

Gardner-Webb University IRB
Informed Consent Form

Title of Study:

Middle school parent involvement: Perceptions in two South Carolina school districts

Researcher:

Jessica VanValkenburgh, Doctoral Candidate

Purpose

The purpose of the research study is to determine if relationships exist between parent and teacher perceptions of parent involvement. It is important to examine how perceptions are related in order to strengthen relationships and improve student learning.

Procedure

What you will do in the study:

If you decide to participate in this study, you will be asked to complete an online survey regarding your perceptions of parent involvement. You may stop the survey at any time.

Time Required

It is anticipated that the first survey will require about 15 minutes of your time.

It is anticipated that the second survey will require an additional 15 minutes of your time.

Voluntary Participation

Participation in this study is voluntary. You have the right to withdraw from the research study at any time without penalty. You also have the right to refuse to answer any question(s) for any reason without penalty. If you choose to withdraw, you may request that any of your data which has been collected be destroyed unless it is in a de-identified state.

Confidentiality

Survey data will not collect any identifying information. The data will be downloaded and stored on the researcher's personal computer. Data will be kept for three years and then it will be deleted from the researcher's computer.

Data Linked with Identifying Information

The responses that you submit in the study will be handled confidentially. Your responses will contain no identifying information

Anonymous Data

The information that you give in the study will be handled confidentially. Your data will be anonymous which means that your name will not be collected or linked to the data.

Risks

There are no anticipated risks in this study.

Benefits

There are no direct benefits associated with participation in this study. The study may help us to understand the way school personnel and families work together at your site and within the district. Multiple studies have shown that when families and schools work together, student achievement increases (Cotton & Wikelund, 1989; Epstein, 1996, 2011; Epstein, Simon, & Salinas, 1997, Smith, 2015).

The Institutional Review Board at Gardner-Webb University has determined that participation in this study poses minimal risk to participants.

Payment

You will receive no payment for participating in the study.

Right to Withdraw from the Study

You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. If you choose to withdraw from the study, your audio (or video) tape will be destroyed.

How to Withdraw from the Study

- Since the survey is completely anonymous, you will not be able to withdraw after completing the survey.

If you have questions about the study, contact the following individuals.

Jessica VanValkenburgh
 Doctoral Candidate
 Gardner-Webb University
 Boiling Springs, NC 28017
 XXX-XXX-XXXX
 xxxxxxxxxxxx@gardner-webb.edu

Dr. Jennifer Putnam
 Associate Dean of Graduate Studies, School of Education
 Gardner-Webb University
 Boiling Springs, NC 28017
 XXX-XXX-XXXX
 xxxxxxxxxxxx@gardner-webb.edu

If the research design of the study necessitates that its full scope is not explained prior to participation, it will be explained to you after completion of the study. If you have concerns about your rights or how you are being treated, or if you have questions, want more information, or have suggestions, please contact:

Dr. Sydney Brown
IRB Administrator
Gardner-Webb University
Boiling Springs, NC 28017
Telephone: XXX-XXX-XXXX
Email: xxxxxxx@gardner-webb.edu

Voluntary Consent by Participant

I have read the information in this consent form and fully understand the contents of this document. I have had a chance to ask any questions concerning this study and they have been answered for me.

_____ I agree to participate in the confidential survey.
_____ I do not agree to participate in the confidential survey.

_____	Date: _____
Participant Printed Name	
_____	Date: _____
Participant Signature	

You will receive a copy of this form for your records.