


Society for Social Work and Research
Parental School Involvement
and Perceptions of School
Climate in California



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Parental School Involvement and Perceptions of School Climate in California



- Background
- Data: California School Climate Survey for Parents and Guardians (CSPS), 2011
- Main findings
- Discussion

The importance of parental involvement



- Parental involvement plays a significant role in the children's social-emotional, developmental, and academic school functioning
- Ways of parental involvement
- Parental involvement contribution and positive outcomes

Parental involvement, school climate and students' outcomes



- Call for increased academic achievements
- **School climate** and its positive contribution to students' social, emotional and academic outcomes
- More positive school climate is associated with increased parental involvement and school engagement.
- State and federal reform legislation requires plans to **reach families** to improve the quality and results of partnership practices.

Existing literature and research gaps



- A need for broad and comprehensive evaluations of parents' views of the school environment regarding **demographic**, and an evaluation of **parental perceptions of efforts made by the schools to encourage parental participation**.
- More research- to help leverage students' academic and non-academic outcomes, and reduce achievements gaps.

Collecting parents views in California



- California Healthy Kids Survey (CHKS).
- This addition of parental views offers an opportunity for parents to provide their views
- A model for states and regions interested in parental views of their children's schools

Parents' Perceptions of School Climate and Encouragement of their Involvement



- **SES**
- low-income parents preoccupied with satisfying their family's basic financial needs; face many more barriers to school involvement
- Schools in low SES communities are faced with more problems.
- Hypothesis: Parents of lower SES would have less positive perceptions of school climate, more problems in the school and experience less effort on behalf of the schools to encourage their participation

Parents' Perceptions of School Climate and Encouragement of their Involvement



- **Race and ethnicity**
- Schools often contribute to less involvement by parents of minority status.
- Language barrier as an obstacle; inequality in school funding, culturally biased curriculum
- Hypothesis: Racial and ethnic minority parents would experience more negative school climate and more school problems, and fewer efforts to encourage their involvement

Parents' Perceptions of School Climate and Encouragement of their Involvement



- **Grade level (age)**
- More positive experience of school climate among younger students; and greater parental involvement
- Middle and high schools- less personal and intimate, less positive student-teacher relationships
- Hypothesis: Parents of younger students experience greater parental involvement, more positive perceptions of school climate, less school problems and greater encouragement of their participation

The current study



- The first comprehensive school climate parental and guardian survey conducted in public schools throughout the state of California (Anonymous)
- **California School Climate Survey for Parents and Guardians (CSPS), 2011**

Study sample



- N= 15,829
- Hispanic or Latino(45.7%) , White or Caucasian (29.7%)
- 12% Asian or Asian American, multiethnic, African American, and Native-American Indian or Alaskan Native (by order of prevalence).
- Half (49.5%) free or reduced-price lunch.
- Middle school (40.2%), high school (39.1%), elementary school (19.6%), 1% of the children were in kindergarten.
- **Mirrors the demographics of California public schools.**

Measures:



- **School climate**- 14 items (Cronbach's $\alpha = .950$).
- **School encouragement of parental involvement**- 5 items (Cronbach's $\alpha = .870$).
- **School problems**- 8 items (Cronbach's $\alpha = .949$).
- * Likert type scales

Findings

Parents Perceptions of School Climate



- Free lunch: Those eligible for free lunch had slightly more positive assessment of school climate ($M = 3.13$, $SD = 0.54$) compared to those not eligible ($M = 3.10$, $SD = 0.52$; $t(15,120) = -3.45$, $p < .01$).
- Ethnicity/race: Only minor variability in ethnic reports on school climate
- Age: Elementary school students had significantly more positive perceptions of school climate, followed by, middle school and parents of high school students.

School problems



- Free lunch: Eligible indicated **more** school problems compared to those not eligible.
- Ethnicity/race: Native American Indian or Alaskan Native indicated the **highest** levels of school problems, followed by Hispanic or Latino, and Asian and Pacific Island origin, other or multiethnic, African American, and White.
- Grade levels (age): Middle school and high school indicated the **highest levels** of school problems, followed by elementary school, and kindergarten.

School's Encouragement of Parental Involvement



- Free lunch: No significant differences in encouragement of parental involvement
- Ethnicity/race: Significantly **lower** among Native American Indian or Alaskan Native parents
- Grade levels (age): **Greater** parental involvement among parents of younger children compared with those of older children

Discussion



- Contrary to the study hypothesis, study revealed only minor variability in **ethnic** reports on school climate.
- Parents of all SES were quite similar in their positive perceptions of school climate.
- Maintaining and promoting a positive climate in schools serving marginalized communities seem attainable

Discussion



- Some minority groups perceive positive school climate *and* many school problems
- Gap- parents of ethnic minorities, may not have profound knowledge and familiarity with their children's schools.
- What are the roles that the schools and policymakers play in supporting active school involvement of families from nondominant ethnicities in the community?

Discussion



- Recommendations:
- Schools- Encourage a **positive identity, respect** cultural differences, and reduce racial **prejudice**; recognize and appreciate other forms of education; encourage teachers to view parents as **irreplaceable experts** on their children ;
- States- Legislation in favor of curriculum and textbooks to Native students that recognize, sustain, and respect Native cultures

Expand the meaning of parental school involvement



- Address the unmet needs of parents- help parents become more involved by increasing their time, flexibility, skills, motivation, and energy.
- Reform efforts- acknowledge diverse forms of parental involvement practices to engage parents and communities of different backgrounds.

Discussion



- Schools- create involvement opportunities and welcoming environments to allow meaningful participation for parents of all backgrounds.
- Be aware of the potential contribution of parents in higher grades: encourage and use that involvement in the upper grades to support student outcomes.

Discussion



- Low-income parents experience more school problems, and less involvement.
- Ongoing support to schools anchored in educational policy to accomplish **meaningful parental participation** to improve school climate and support students outcomes.

Thank you!



- **Questions?**
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