

Assessing the Impact of Parent Involvement Programs: Research from Outside the World of Program Evaluation

Eric Dearing
Department of Psychology

UNIVERSITY
OF WYOMING



My Collaborators

Holly Kreider

Ellen Mayer

Heather Weiss

Harvard Family Research Project
Harvard Graduate School of Education

Kathleen McCartney

Harvard Graduate School of Education

Sandra Simpkins

Department of Family and Human Development
Arizona State University

Research from Outside the World of Program Evaluation

Four Empirical Themes with Implications for Evaluation Work:

1. Involvement is **co-constructed**.
2. Involvement is a **dynamic process** that can vary *within* families.
3. Involvement often has **indirect effects** on children's achievement.
4. Involvement **effects can vary** across children.

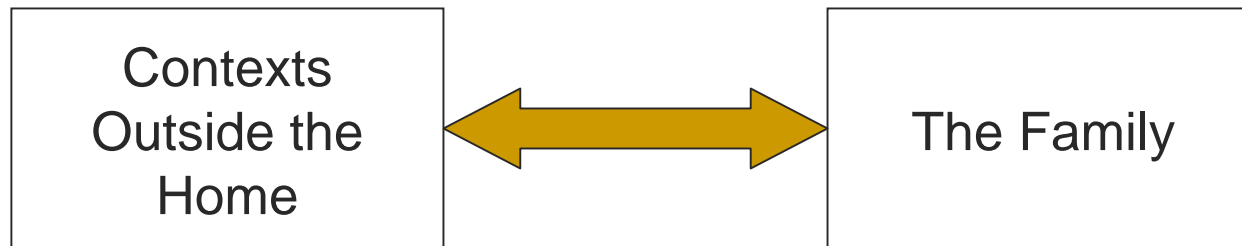
The School Transitions Study

- A follow-up investigation of 390 low-income children and their families who participated in the Comprehensive Child Development Program
- Families were 37% African American, 36% European American, and 24% Latino American
- Children were followed from kindergarten through the fifth grade

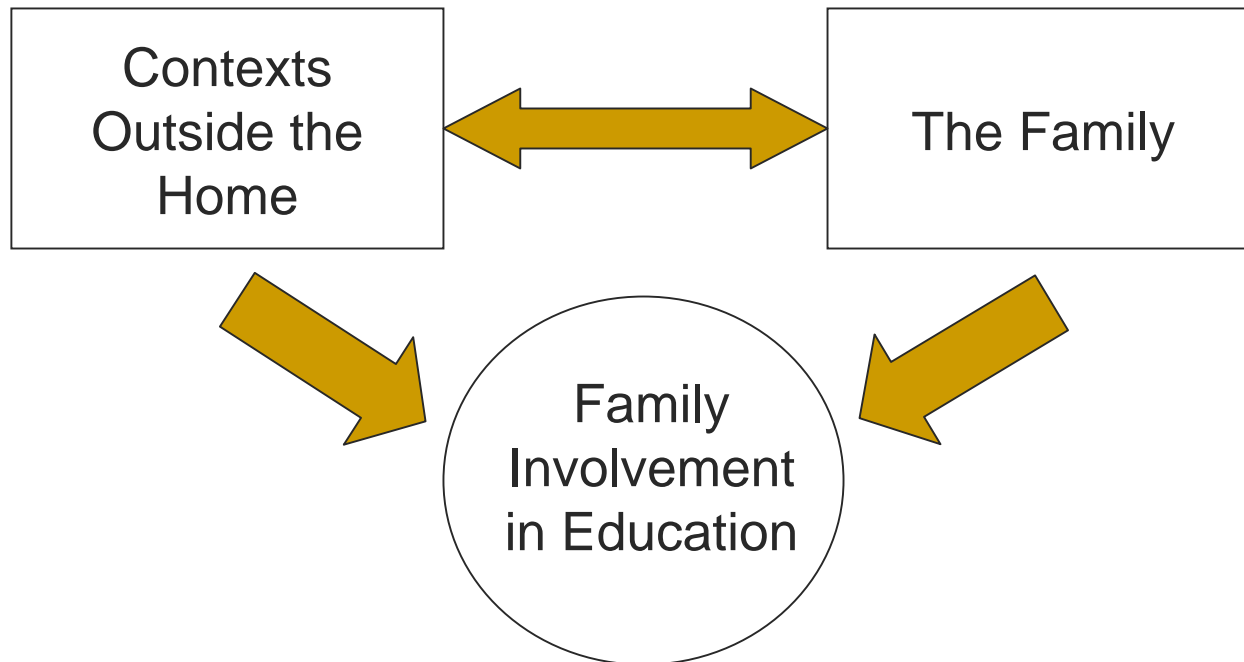
Our Operational Definition of Involvement

- Home (e.g., reading to/with the child)
- School (e.g., attending PTA/PTO meetings)
- Home-school communication (e.g., parent-teacher conferences)
- Unconventional (e.g., parent-to-parent communication)

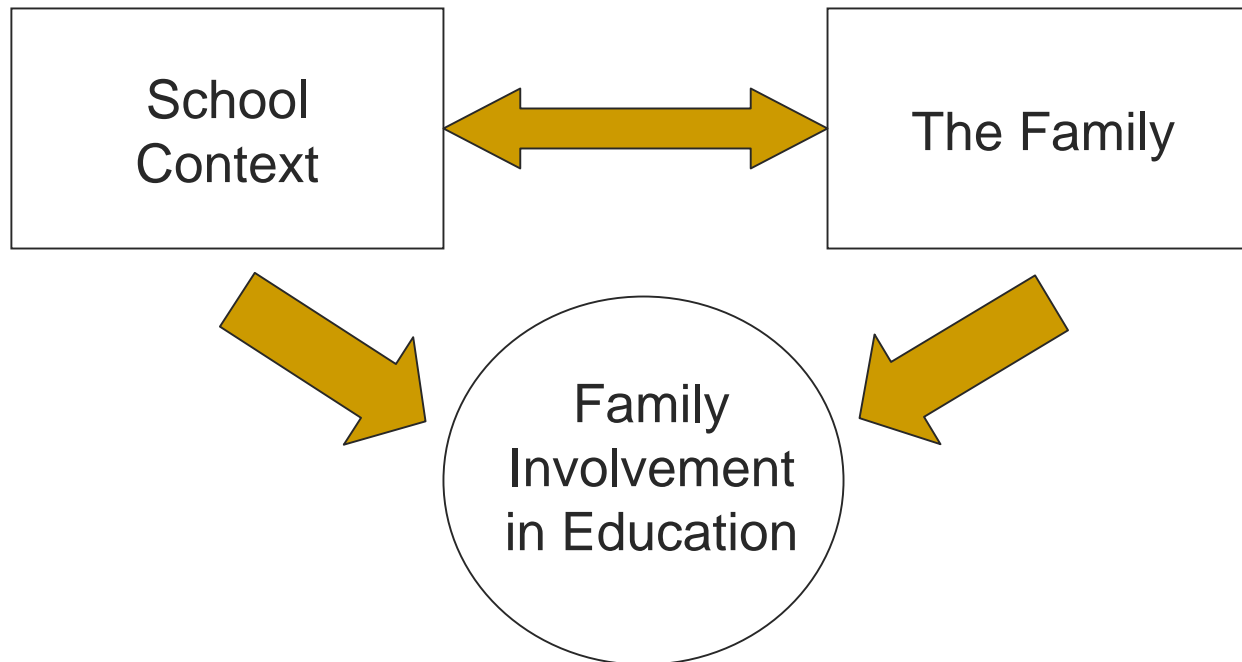
Involvement is Co-constructed



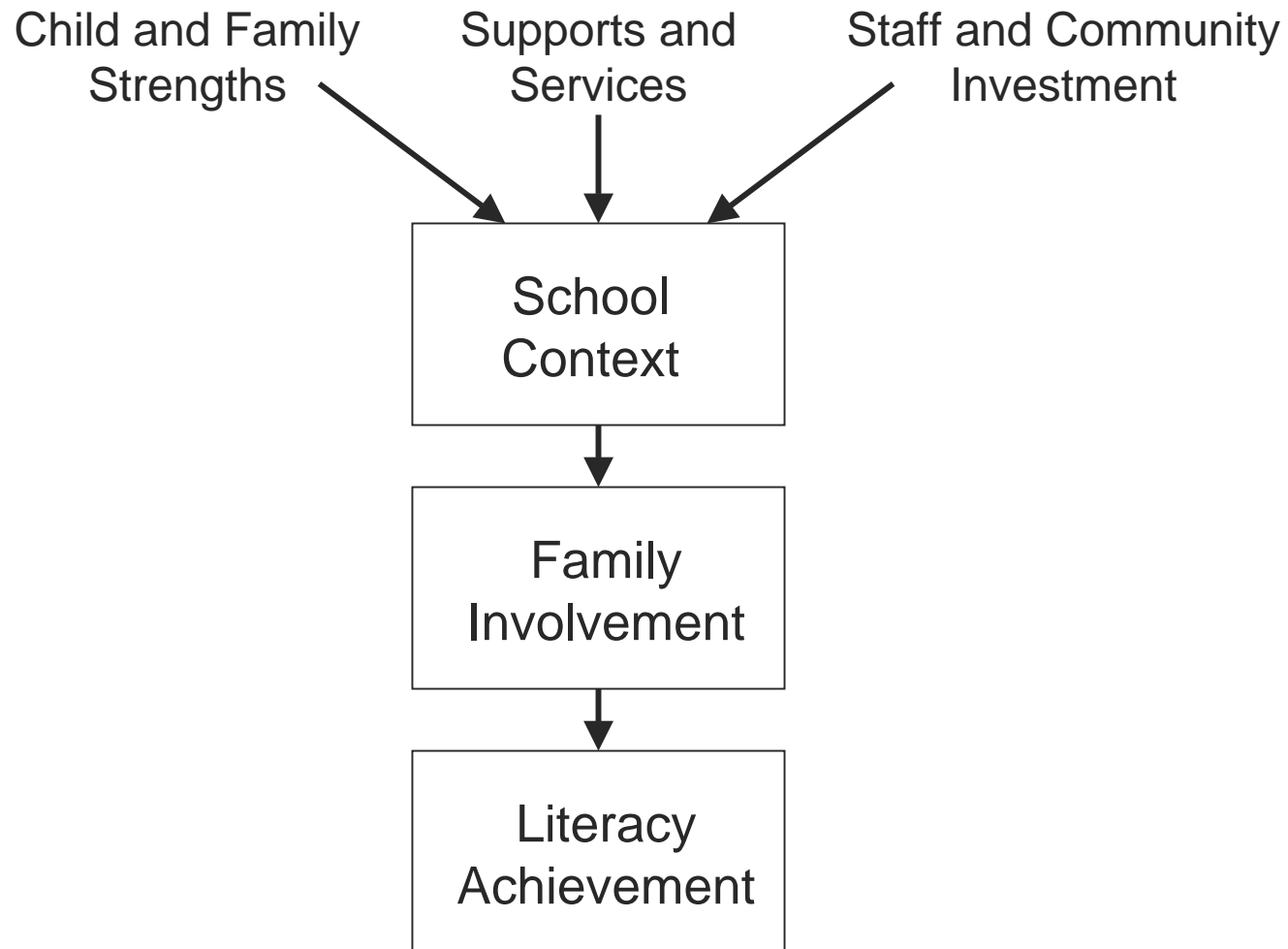
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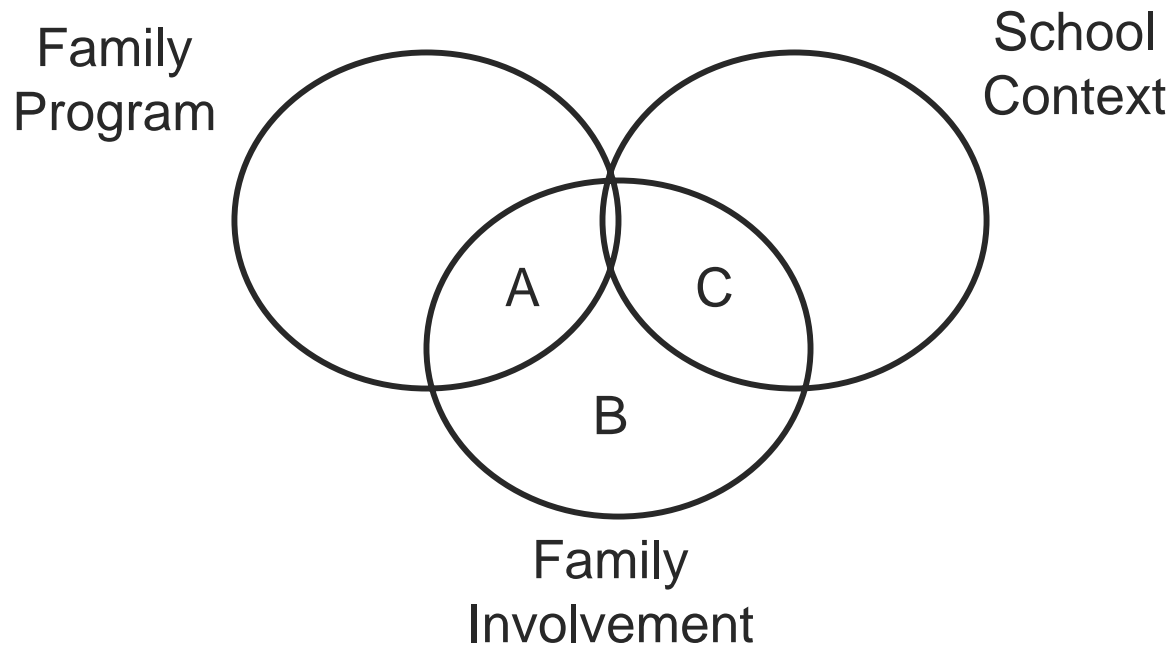
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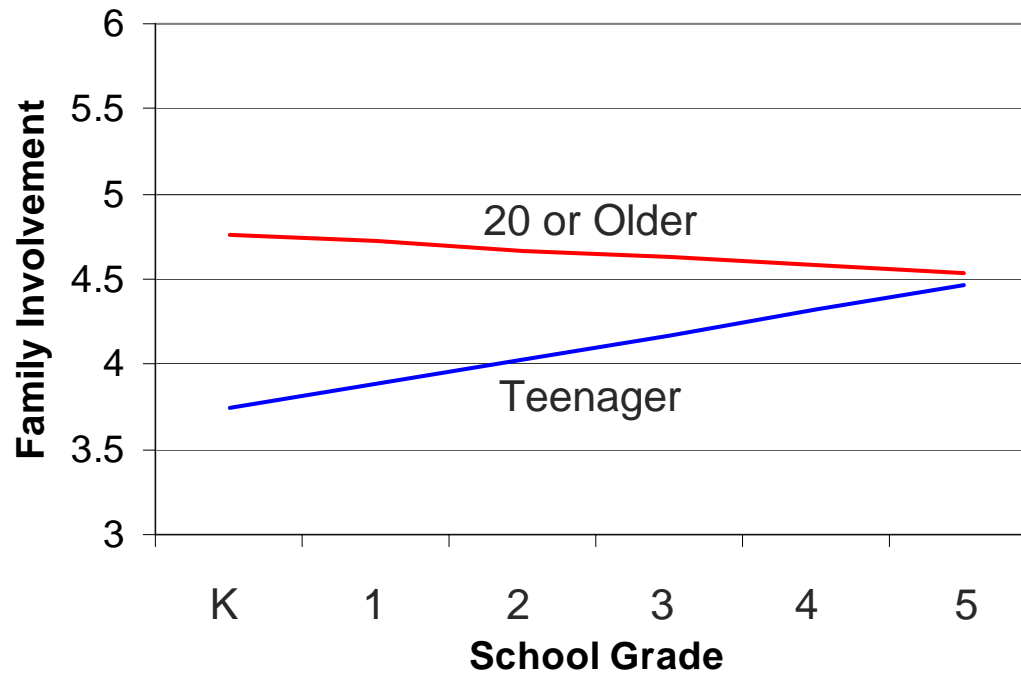


The Statistical Importance of Including Context



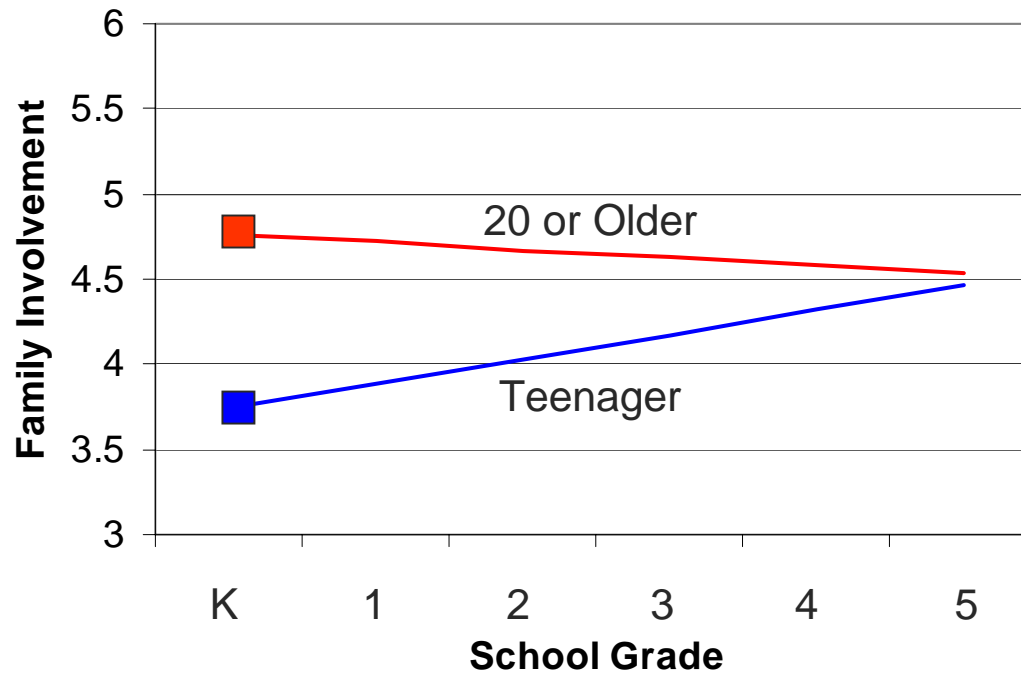
Involvement is a Dynamic Process

Changes in Family Involvement in the School Transitions Study by Maternal Age



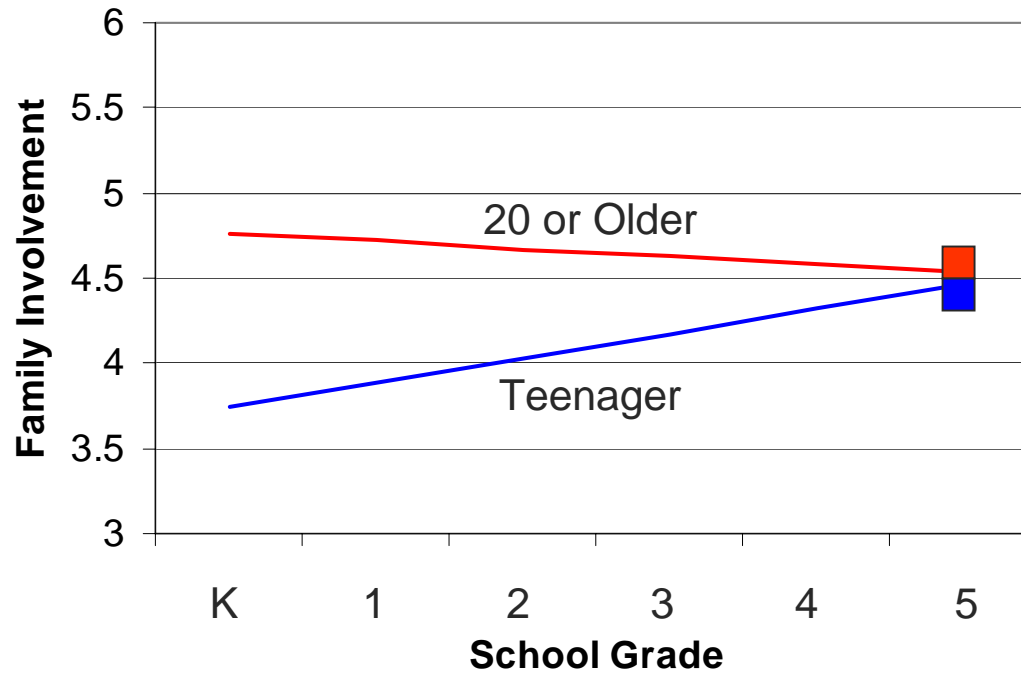
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Changes in Family Involvement in the School Transitions Study by Maternal Age



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Changes in Family Involvement in the School Transitions Study by Maternal Age

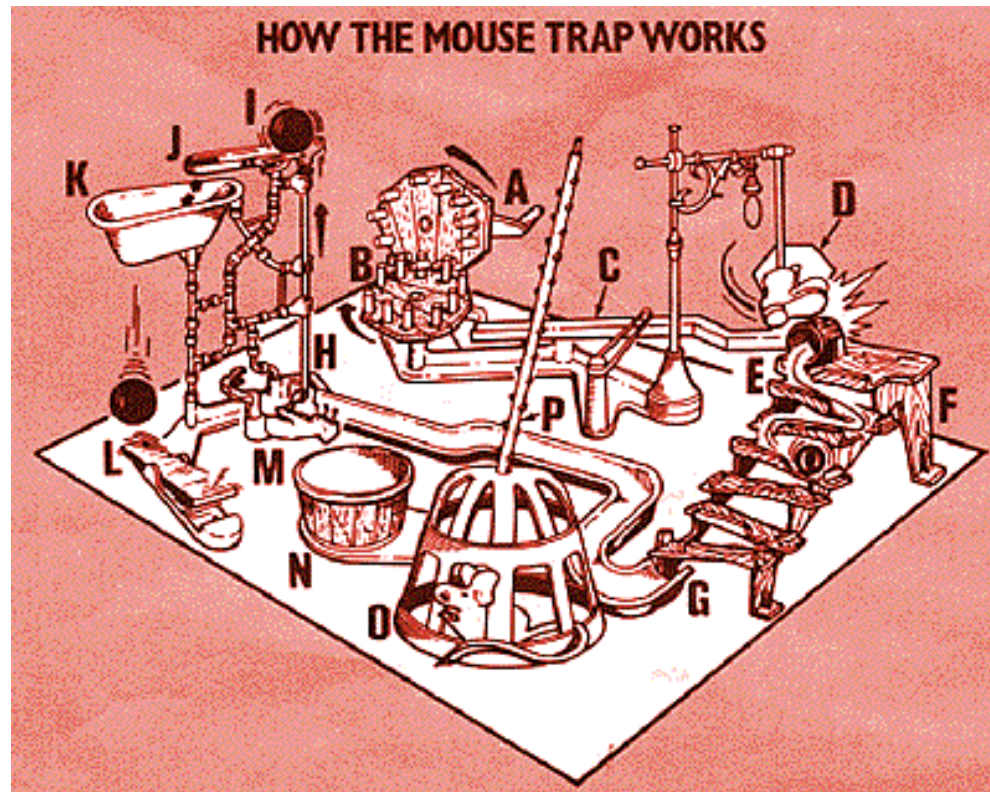


Involvement as a Dynamic Process

In the School Transitions Study:

- Between-family differences in average level of involvement across the study were positively associated with between-child differences in average level of literacy performance across the study.
- Above and beyond these between-family differences, however, **increased involvement within families** was associated with increased literacy performance for children.
- In fact, the within-family effect size for involvement was nearly twice as large as the between-family effect size.

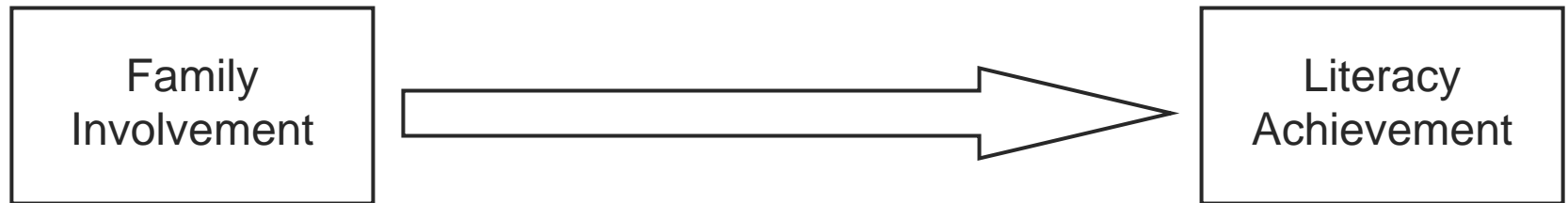
The Indirect Effects of Involvement on Children's Achievement



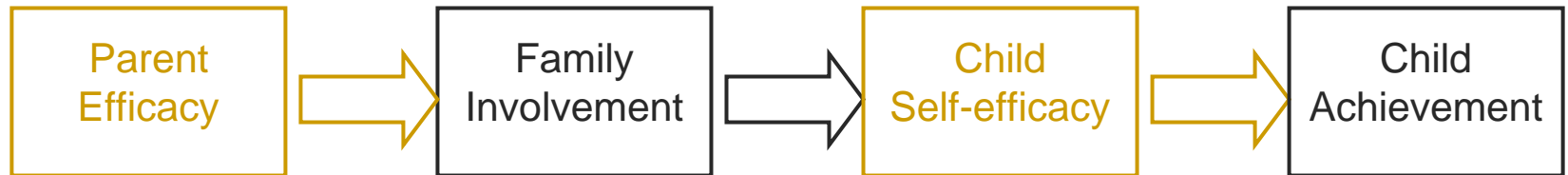
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e.g., Hoover-Dempsey & Sadler, 1995; Eccles & Harold, 1993; Bandura et al., 1996

The Indirect Effects of Involvement on Children's Achievement

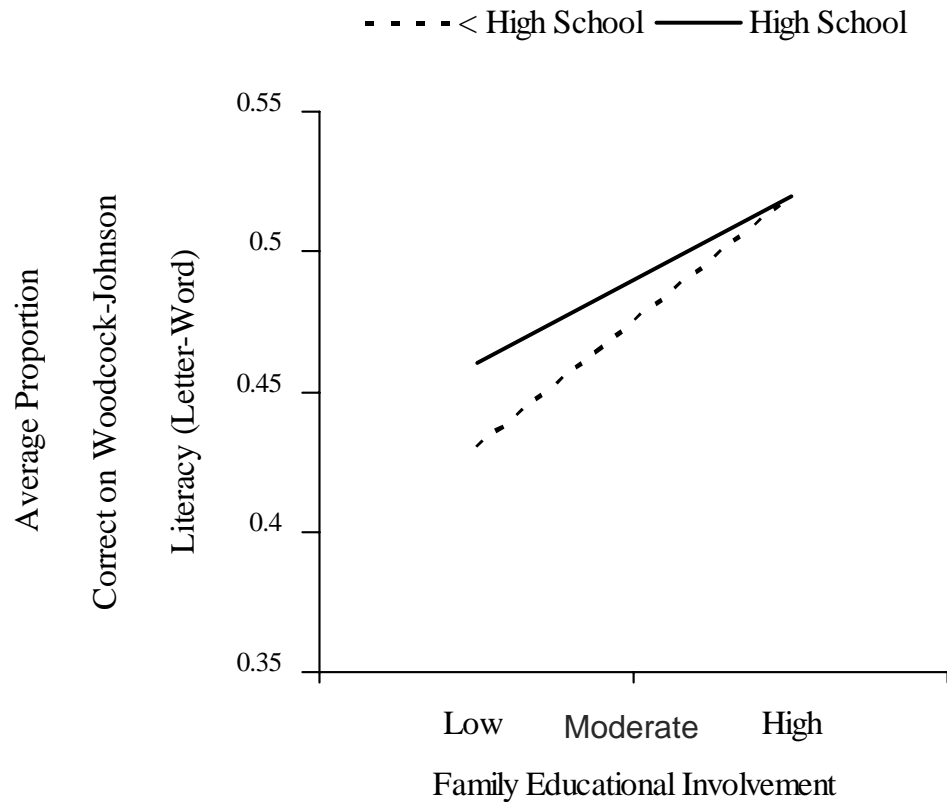
<http://www.unc.edu/~preacher/sobel/sobel.htm>

<http://www.public.asu.edu/~davidpm/ripl/mediate.htm>

<http://users.rcn.com/dakenny/mediate.htm>

Involvement Effects Vary Across Children

The Moderating Effect of Maternal Education in the School Transitions Study



Involvement Effects Vary Across Children

Some moderators that have been demonstrated empirically in the family involvement literature:

1. family education (e.g., Dearing et al., 2004).
2. parent-child relationship (e.g., Simpkins et al., 2004).
3. ethnicity (e.g., Hill & Craft, 2003).
4. child age (e.g., Fan & Chen, 2001).

The search for moderators should begin with child, family, or community characteristics that may:

1. strengthen or weaken program effects.
2. modify the meaning of constructs of interest.

Research from Outside the World of Program Evaluation

The Implications for Evaluation Work:

1. Assessment of contexts that help determine family involvement can improve the precision of estimated program effects.
2. Longitudinal assessments of within-family variations in family involvement can improve the ecological validity of involvement indicators.
3. Assessing intermediate mechanisms relaying program effects to children can help capture program effectiveness.
4. Estimating variations in involvement effects can help clarify for whom involvement matters most.