Parent Involvement, Cultural Capital, and the Achievement Gap Among Elementary School Children

A presentation based on a study conducted by Jung-Sook Lee and Natasha K. Bowen


Summer 2006
UNC School of Social Work

Slides prepared by Matt Toth

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Introduction

This presentation is based on a study that examines the extent and impact of five types of parent involvement on elementary school children’s academic achievement by race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and parent educational attainment.
Background

- Education is seen as the foremost tool in addressing inequality issues in the United States (Allen & Hood, 2000)

- However, inequality is prevalent in the educational system through an achievement gap based on poverty and race/ethnicity
  - Poverty, low parent educational achievement, and African American and Latino ethnicity are associated with lower academic achievement (Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997; Hakkinen, Kirjavainen, & Uusitalo, 2003; Bali & Alvarez, 2004)
Background cont.

- Parent involvement is shown to be positively related to child academic success and mediates the effects of poverty, parent’s educational attainment, and ethnicity on achievement (Barnard, 2004; De Civita et al., 2004)

- Increasing parent involvement identified as a tool to reduce achievement gap
  - Parent involvement at school
  - Parent involvement with child at home

- However, effectiveness of parent involvement may be weakened
  - Barriers to parent involvement for some groups (Heymann & Earle, 2000)
  - Positive influence of parent involvement on educational success may be different across demographic groups due to inequalities in opportunities associated with these groups (Desimone, 1999)
Measures of Parent Involvement

- Differences in measuring parent involvement, including using a single measure for home and school, or using a different measures for different types of involvement at school and in the home (Barnard, 2004; Desimone, 1999)

- Studies involving parent involvement at school show a positive relationship between educational success and involvement (Jimerson, Egeland, & Teo, 1999)

- Inconsistent findings in terms of educational achievement and parent involvement at home
  - Some involvement (i.e. cooking, reading, outings with children) was not associated with academic achievement (Barnard, 2004)
  - However, parent educational involvement, as well as attitudes toward education were positively associated with child academic achievement (McWayne et al., 2004; Fan, 2001)

- Therefore, this study examines a number of separate measures of involvement
Parent Involvement, Family Characteristics, and Achievement

- Effects of Parent Involvement in Different Populations

  - Impact of parent involvement on academic achievement is significant across demographic groups, yet effects are moderated by demographic characteristics (Jeynes, 2003)
    - Parent involvement, including parent-teacher-organization involvement, monitoring and educational support had larger effects with European American students than with other minority populations (McNeal, 1999)

  - McNeal (1999) explains this difference as a difference in cultural capital
    - Parent involvement (i.e. communication with the school, checking homework, encouraging reading) benefited African Americans and Latinos more than Asian Americans (Jeynes, 2003)
    - This was a result of the absence of other cultural factors that encourage education (i.e. Asian Americans emphasize education)

  - Therefore, a greater understanding of the effects of multiple types of involvement across demographic groups at the school level may increase understanding of how to use parent involvement to address education gap
Social and Cultural Capital in the Parent-School Mesosystem

- Parent educational involvement represents two aspects of the mesosystem in the ecological model (Bronfenbrenner, 1986)
  - Connections among adults in two microsystems of child
    - Parent involvement at school promotes connections between adults in child’s school and home microsystems
  - Congruence in behavior, values, and attitude across settings
    - Parent educational involvement at home and school may increase congruence of messages child receives in the two microsystems

- Applying concepts of social and cultural capital may increase our understanding of the achievement gap

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Three concepts of social capital (Coleman, 1988)

1. Obligation and expectations in social relationships
2. Norms and social control
3. Information channels

Used as a means to promote school achievement

Parent engagement in the school system utilizes social capital by increasing information, skills (i.e., how to help with homework), access to resources, and sources of social control (i.e., school-home agreement on behavior expectations)

All of this can help parents promote child academic success

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The concept of social capital is further informed by Bourdieu’s model which emphasizes inequalities in the amounts of capital individuals have or are able to obtain (Lareau, 2001).

A source of this inequality is the fit between the individual’s culture and the culture of the larger society or the institutions in that society.

- “Habitus” is a system of dispositions that results from social training and past experience (Brubaker, 2004; Lareau, 2001)

- “Field” is a structured system of social relations at the micro and macro level (Grenfell & James, 1998; Lareau & Horvat, 1999)

When a individual’s habitus is consistent with the field he/she works in, the this individual enjoys a social advantage (Grenfell & James, 1998; Lareau & Horvat, 1999)
Social and Cultural Capital in the Parent-School Mesosystem cont.

- Cultural capital for parents related to the educational system involves (Grenfell & James, 1998; Robbins, 2000):
  - Attitudes gained from experience
  - Connections to educational objects (i.e. books, computers)
  - Connections to education-related institutions (i.e. schools, libraries, universities)

- Cultural capital is a function of the family’s habitus and the field of the school system in which the family operates
Social and Cultural Capital in the Parent-School Mesosystem cont.

The greater individual cultural capital, the greater the advantage of obtaining additional capital to benefit the family.

In contrast, individuals with less cultural capital experience barriers to institutional resources (Lareau, 2001).

Cultural capital represents the power to promote child academic achievement (Grenfell & James, 1998).
Differences in habitus may result in variations of parent school involvement (Grenfell & James, 1998)

- For example, parent habitus may include low levels of education, lessening involvement in school due to low levels of confidence, lack of familiarity, and past negative experiences.

Yet, while variations in habitus may result in lower cultural capital, in terms of school involvement, the same parents may be active at home in a way that is consistent with the values of the school

- Parents across social classes highly value education (Grenfell & James, 1998)

Finding variations in types of involvement by social background supports Bourdieu’s claim that families vary in terms of educational habitus
Social and Cultural Capital in the Parent-School Mesosystem cont.

- Cultural capital is an advantage gained by middle-class European American parents whose habitus is consistent with the field of the school system.
  - Advantage accrues when enacting the type of involvement most valued by the school.
  - Advantage accrues by having family and work situations that permit involvement at times most valued by schools.
  - Low-income or working class parents may be less able to enact the same types of involvement due to inflexible work schedules, lack of child care, and lack of transportation (Heymann & Earle, 2000)
Disadvantage may accrue for parents who are unable to attend school functions, as they miss out on opportunities for social, informational, and material rewards.

Also, disadvantaged parents may be viewed as uncaring, potentially having a negative impact on their child’s academic performance:

- Teachers perceive that parents involved at school value education; this is associated with higher ratings of student’s academic performance (Hill & Craft, 2003)
- The opposite may also be true—teachers perceive parents not involved at school as not valuing their children’s education, negatively impacting child’s performance

Differences in types of school involvement between the dominant and minority group may indicate the dominant group has more cultural capital as a result of a better fit between the habitus and the educational field.
Social and Cultural Capital in the Parent-School Mesosystem cont.

- Differences in parent habitus and educational field may result in the family feeling less comfortable and less welcome than other parents.

- Effects of educational involvement at home may vary across groups:
  - Restricted access to resources of school may negatively impact parent’s home educational involvement.
  - Economic stress may effect home educational involvement.
  - Low education attainment may effect parent’s ability to help with homework and access to educational resources in the community.
Social and Cultural Capital in the Parent-School Mesosystem cont.

Cultural capital is best understood in terms of practical consequences (Grenfell & James, 1998)

- Therefore, finding that involvement of parents from non-dominant groups has a lesser impact on child educational achievement than dominant group parents, supports Bourdieu’s claim that non-dominant groups have less cultural capital.
Purpose

To determine whether the levels and effects on achievement of five types of parent involvement differed among families of different social status

- Race/ethnicity
- Socioeconomic status
- Parental educational attainment

Different *levels* of parent involvement may reflect differences in parents’ habitus for educational involvement

Different *effects* of parent involvement reflect differences in cultural capital

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Hypothesis

- Parents from different social backgrounds have different types of involvement
  - And, types enacted by European American parents, parents not living in poverty, and more educated parents, would be the types more strongly associated with child academic achievement

- African American, Latino, low-income, and less educated parents would benefit less from their involvement than European American parents, more highly educated parents, and parents not living in poverty
Method

- **Sampling**
  - 415 students in the grades three through five from a representative sample of a community bordering a major urban center in the southeastern United States
  - Latino students were over-sampled to increase representation
  - All students were African American, Latino, or European American
    - 40% received free and reduced lunch
    - 15% Latino
    - 34% African American
    - 51% European American
    - Average parent education was “some college or vocational training” and “completed 2-year degree”

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Method cont.

Measures

- Demographic variables
  - Parent educational attainment:
    - 6 point ordinal scale assessing level of education at which parents completed
  - Socioeconomic status:
    - Participation in the free and reduced lunch program
  - Race/Ethnicity
    - Dummy coded to represent African American, Latino, European American
Measures cont.

- Five categories of parent involvement at school and at home
  - Parent involvement at school
    - Attendance at parent-teacher conferences, volunteering at school, attended school functions
  - Parent-child educational discussion
    - Frequency of discussion on child’s experience at school and current events
  - Homework help
    - Frequency of parent discussing, checking, or helping with homework
Method cont.

- Measures cont.
  - Categories of parent involvement
    - Time management
      - Frequency of parents limiting time of watching TV, playing on school nights, and enforcing homework time
    - Educational expectations
      - Attitudes and expectations of child’s academic success; how far the child is expected to go in school
  - Child academic success
    - Dependent variable created by standardized scores of teacher report of child grades and whether the child was at grade level in reading and math
Results

- Table 1 shows correlations between variables

- Parent involvement at school and parent educational expectations were most highly correlated with academic achievement

- Time management and homework help had the lowest association with academic achievement
Table 1: Bivariate Correlations among different types of parent involvement and academic success

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measures</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Parent Educational Expectations</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>.15**</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.30**</td>
<td>.30**</td>
<td>.39**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Time Management</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>.33**</td>
<td>.43**</td>
<td>.11*</td>
<td>.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Homework Help</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>.52**</td>
<td>.21**</td>
<td>.11*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Parent-Child Educational Discussion</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>.31**</td>
<td>.21**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Parent Involvement at School</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>.45**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Academic Achievement</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
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<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*(p < .05), **(p < .01)

Results cont.

- Chi-square and T-tests were conducted to examine the differences in parent involvement and academic success across demographic groups.

- A hierarchical regression analysis was conducted to examine the impact of demographics and types of parent involvement on academic performance.
Levels of Parent Involvement

The next three tables highlight the differences in levels of parent involvement and academic achievement of children across demographic groups.

Differences across Race/Ethnicity

- Teachers reported significantly higher levels of achievement among European American students than among African American and Latino
  
  ▪ This is consistent with the national achievement gap between children of different demographic characteristics.

- Race/ethnicity was associated with differences in parent involvement scores
  
  ▪ EA parents were more involved at school, and less involved in time management than AA and Latino parents.

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Table 2: Comparison of Race/Ethnicity Means for Parent Involvement and Academic Success

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Parent Involvement, school</th>
<th>Educational Discussion</th>
<th>Homework Help</th>
<th>Time management</th>
<th>Educational expectations</th>
<th>Academic Achievement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>13.85** (3.35) A</td>
<td>16.80** (2.34)</td>
<td>10.57 (1.61)</td>
<td>9.61** (1.93) A</td>
<td>4.51 (1.42)</td>
<td>-.70** (3.27) B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino</td>
<td>13.10 (3.59) A</td>
<td>16.19 (3.27) A</td>
<td>10.32 (1.81)</td>
<td>10.00 (1.88) A</td>
<td>4.49 (1.76)</td>
<td>-1.69 (3.44) A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European American</td>
<td>16.99 (3.42) B</td>
<td>17.24 (1.97) B</td>
<td>10.63 (1.44)</td>
<td>9.13 (1.98) B</td>
<td>4.79 (106)</td>
<td>1.32 (3.06) C</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* (p < .05), ** (p < .01)

Results cont.

- **Differences across socioeconomic status**
  
  - Participation in free and reduced lunch school program was associated with different levels of parent involvement

    - Participants of the school lunch program reported less frequent involvement at school and parent-child educational discussions, and lower educational expectations

    - However, parents participating in free and reduced lunch school program reported higher levels of time management
Table 3: Comparison of Free and Reduced Lunch Participation Means for Parent Involvement and Academic Success

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Receipt of free or reduced-price lunch</th>
<th>Parent Involvement-school</th>
<th>Educational Discussion</th>
<th>Homework Help</th>
<th>Time management</th>
<th>Educational expectations</th>
<th>Academic Achievement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>YES</td>
<td>13.22** (3.35)</td>
<td>16.60* (2.69)</td>
<td>10.57 (1.63)</td>
<td>9.70* (1.92)</td>
<td>4.15 (1.62)</td>
<td>-1.60** (3.04)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NO</td>
<td>16.70 (3.46)</td>
<td>17.15 (2.10)</td>
<td>10.56 (1.52)</td>
<td>9.25 (1.98)</td>
<td>4.98 (.95)</td>
<td>1.33 (3.13)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* (p < .05), ** (p < .01)


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Results cont.

Table 4 shows the differences across parent educational attainment

- Parents who have earned 2-year college degree or higher reported more frequent involvement at school, more frequent parent-child educational discussions, and higher expectations
Table 4: Comparison of Parental Educational Attainment Means for Parent Involvement and Academic Success

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parental educational attainment</th>
<th>Parent Involvement- school</th>
<th>Educational Discussion</th>
<th>Homework Help</th>
<th>Time management</th>
<th>Educational expectations</th>
<th>Academic Achievement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Below sample mean</td>
<td>13.99** (3.73)</td>
<td>16.58** (2.54)</td>
<td>10.57 (1.50)</td>
<td>9.42 (1.92)</td>
<td>4.23** (1.53)</td>
<td>-1.00** (3.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above sample mean</td>
<td>16.92 (3.28)</td>
<td>17.35 (2.06)</td>
<td>10.56 (1.64)</td>
<td>9.43 (2.03)</td>
<td>5.15 (.75)</td>
<td>1.57 (2.85)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* (p < .05), ** (p < .01)


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Association of Parent Involvement with Student Achievement

The next three tables represent the results of a hierarchical regression analysis used to examine the effects of demographic characteristics and types of parent involvement on children’s academic performance.

Table 5 includes only the demographic variables, which accounted for 24% of variance.

Poverty and African American ethnicity were significantly and negatively associated with academic achievement.
### Table 5: Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Academic Achievement (Demographics)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographics</th>
<th>Beta</th>
<th>SE B</th>
<th>Standardized Beta</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>.23</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School lunch (1=recipient)</td>
<td>-1.68</td>
<td>.37</td>
<td>-.24**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Education</td>
<td>.52</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.22**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Race/ Ethnicity (0 = European American)</strong></td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino</td>
<td>-.93</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>-.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>-1.13</td>
<td>.35</td>
<td>-.16**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$R^2$</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F for Change in $R^2$</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>32.19**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* (p < .05), ** (p < .01)
Association of Parent Involvement With Student Achievement cont.

- Table 5 includes demographic characteristics along with types of parent involvement
  - Parent involvement explains an additional 9% of variance
  - Full model explains 33%

- Coefficient for parent educational attainment was no longer significant
  - Effects of parents’ educational level on academic achievement are mediated through the effects of types of parent involvement

- School lunch program participation and AA and Latino ethnicity were negatively associated with achievement in relation to EA

- Parent involvement at school and parent educational expectations significantly affect academic achievement
Table 5: Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Academic Achievement (Demographics and Parent Involvement)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographics</th>
<th>Beta</th>
<th>SE B</th>
<th>Standardized Beta</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>1.02</td>
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<tr>
<td>School lunch (1=recipient)</td>
<td>-1.08</td>
<td>.37</td>
<td>-.15**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Education</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Race/Ethnicity (0 = European American)</strong></td>
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<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino</td>
<td>-1.04</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>-.11*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>-.77</td>
<td>.35</td>
<td>-.11*</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Parent involvement</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involvement at school</td>
<td>.19</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.21**</td>
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<tr>
<td>Educational discussions</td>
<td>.02</td>
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<td>.01</td>
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<td>Homework Help</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time management</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational Expectations</td>
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<td>.12</td>
<td>.23**</td>
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<tr>
<td>$R^2$</td>
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<td>.09</td>
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<td>$F$ for Change in $R^2$</td>
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<td>11.01**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* (p < .05), ** (p < .01)
Association of Parent Involvement With Student Achievement cont.

- Table 6 includes the demographic variables, parent involvement, and the significant interaction terms

  - Determines whether the effects of different involvement varied across demographics
  - Explains an additional 5% of variance
  - Full model explains 38% of variance in academic achievement

- Parent involvement at school was positively and significantly associated with academic success

  - The effects of the other three types of involvement were moderated by demographic variables
Table 6: Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Academic Achievement (Demographics, Parent Involvement, and Interactions)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographics</th>
<th>Beta</th>
<th>SE B</th>
<th>Standardized Beta</th>
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<tbody>
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<tr>
<td>School lunch (1=recipient)</td>
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<td>.35</td>
<td>-.14**</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parent Education</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race/Ethnicity (0 = European American)</td>
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<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino</td>
<td>-.39</td>
<td>.49</td>
<td>-.15**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>-.96</td>
<td>.34</td>
<td>-.13**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent involvement</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involvement at school</td>
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<td>.05</td>
<td>.20**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational discussions</td>
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<td>.09</td>
<td>.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homework Help</td>
<td>-.39</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>-.18**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time management</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>-.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational Expectations</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>.44**</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interactions</td>
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<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lunch X Educational Expectations</td>
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<td>.23</td>
<td>-.22**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American X Homework Help</td>
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<td>.17**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino X Homework Help</td>
<td>1.04</td>
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<td>.22**</td>
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<td>-.17**</td>
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<td></td>
<td>8.73**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* (p < .05), ** (p < .01)
Association of Parent Involvement With Student Achievement cont.

- Effects of parent educational expectation on academic achievement is moderated by socioeconomic status (Figure 1A)
  - Low expectations were associated with low achievement regardless of socioeconomic status
  - Higher expectations were associated with higher levels of academic achievement
    - This association is weaker among lunch program participants
Interaction Graphs of Socioeconomic status by Educational Expectations; Race/Ethnicity by Educational Discussion

Figure 1 A:

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Association of Parent Involvement With Student Achievement cont.

- Educational discussion effect on academic achievement is positive among European American parents and negative among Hispanic/Latino (Figure 1B)

- Low levels of educational discussion were associated with the same academic achievement level, regardless of group

- An increase in frequency of educational discussion was associated with a decrease in academic performance of Hispanic/Latinos, and an increase in European Americans

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Interaction Graphs of Socioeconomic status by Educational Expectations; Race/Ethnicity by Educational Discussion

Figure 1 B:

European American-Hispanic/Latino Parent Discussion Interaction

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High levels of homework help were associated with similar levels of academic achievement in Hispanic/Latinos and European Americans (Figure 1C)

- However, lower levels of help was associated with higher academic scores for European American, and lower for Hispanic/Latinos
- Increased help is associated with better achievement in Hispanic/Latino, but not European American
Interaction Graphs of Parent Involvement by Race/Ethnicity

European American-Hispanic/Latino Homework Help Interaction

Figure 1 C:

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Association of Parent Involvement With Student Achievement cont.

- Increased help is associated with higher levels of academic achievement for African American students (Figure 1D)
  - Higher frequency of homework help is associated with lower academic performance for European American students
Interaction Graphs of Parent Involvement by Race/Ethnicity

Figure 1 D:

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Discussion

The authors hypothesized that parents from different social backgrounds would exhibit different types of parent involvement based on structural constraints and preference.

The types of involvement from the dominant group (EA, non-lunch program participants, higher educational attainment) would have the strongest association with achievement.

Parents from the non-dominant group would have fewer benefits from involvement on academic achievement.

The results illustrate the achievement gap:
- Higher levels of academic achievement among students not living in poverty, European American, and students with higher educated parents.
- Race/Ethnicity and poverty predicted academic achievement beyond the effects of parent involvement.
Levels of Parent involvement

- In line with other findings, parents with diverse ethnic, economic, and educational backgrounds are involved with their child’s education (Bempechat, 1998; Drummond & Stipek, 2004; Lopez, Scribner, & Mahitivanichcha, 2001)

- Consistent with Bourdieu’s notion of educational habitus, this study found variances in parental involvement across groups
  
  - May be due to different perceptions of involvement (Hill et al. 2004; Lopez et al., 2001)
  
  - Different levels of access with regards to types of parental involvement (Heymann & Earl, 2000)
Discussion cont.

- Levels of Parent Involvement
  - Great difference in levels of parent involvement at school
    - Involvement at school occurred more frequently for those parents whose culture and lifestyle were congruent with school’s (Habitus and Field)
    - For non-dominant groups, psychological barriers such as awareness of racism and lack of confidence in interaction may impact parent involvement (McKay et al., 2003; Lareau, 1994)
    - This study illustrates the strong correlation between parent involvement at school and academic success.
    - Therefore, regardless of reason for the level of parent involvement at school; less involvement at school may represent a serious disadvantage to their children.
Discussion cont.

- Levels of Parent Involvement
  - Less consistent differences in levels of parent involvement at home
    - Educational discussions were more frequent with parents of the dominant group
    - Expectations were higher among parents not participating in the reduced lunch school program
      - Economically disadvantaged less optimistic of child’s education (Cronsoe, Mistry, & Edler, 2002)
    - African American and Latino parents participating in the school lunch program reported more frequent attempts to control TV time and efforts to encourage non-homework reading.
    - No difference in time management found between High and Low educated parents
Discussion cont.

- Levels of Parent Involvement
  - Differences in parent involvement at home
    - African American, Hispanic/Latino, and low-income parents reported similar levels of homework help as European American and higher income parents.
    - More frequent time management efforts may reflect that increased involvement coincides with child’s academic difficulty.
    - However, another explanation may be that some groups believe more strongly than others that it is important to help with homework and manage time, regardless of child’s academic achievement.
      - This ‘habitus’ may represent a strength of AA, Latino, and low income parents, and should be considered as an avenue to address the achievement gap.
    - All parents showed willingness to be involved in their child’s education at home, but the emphasis of their efforts may have been influenced by individual habitus.

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Association of Parent Involvement With Student Achievement

- This study found a relationship between family demographic characteristics and achievement outcomes

  - Race/Ethnicity and school lunch program participation were significantly associated with achievement, much more so than the effects of parent involvement (Table 6)

  - Positive impact of parent education on achievement is mediated by parent involvement
    - Consistent with Coleman’s (1988) concept of social capital in that parent human capital (parent’s educational attainment) can only benefit children if parents direct social capital toward their children (parent involvement)
Discussion cont.

Association of Parent involvement with Student Achievement

- Table 5 shows that parent involvement at school and parent educational expectations strongly associated with academic achievement
  - Same types of involvement demonstrated more frequently by dominant group
    - Demonstrates cultural capital in terms of the benefits derived from congruence between family habitus and educational field

- Parent involvement at school is associated with higher levels of academic achievement across groups.
  - The cultural disadvantage of non-dominant groups seems to present as barriers to being present at school, rather than what transpires when the parent is at the school

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Discussion cont.

Association of Parent involvement with Student Achievement

- High educational expectations were associated with higher levels of academic achievement across groups.

  - However, this relationship was weaker among parents who participate in the school lunch program.
    - The same level of expectation among poor and non-poor families was associated with lower academic outcomes among poor families than non-poor families.

  - This interaction between poverty and educational expectations is consistent with Bourdieu’s notion of inequalities in access to cultural capital.
Discussion cont.

Association of Parent involvement with Student Achievement
  - Parent management of activity time
    - African American, Latino, and low-income parents engaged more frequently in time management efforts than their counterparts
      - Consistent with hypothesis, time management activities had a weak effect on academic outcomes among all groups
Discussion cont.

- Association of Parent involvement with Student Achievement
  - Effects of parent-child educational discussions were positive among European Americans and negative among Latinos
    - Educational discussion among Latino’s were associated with negative academic outcomes
      - Probably because Latino parents engage in educational discussion when their child’s academic performance is poor
    - Parental homework help was negatively associated with academic achievement in European Americans, and positively associated with academic achievement among African Americans and Latinos
      - Likely that European American parents help with homework when children are not performing well
      - Suggests that African American and Latino parents make extensive efforts to achieve academic benefits
      - Yet, as a whole, European American students performed better than African American and Latino students, regardless of homework help
Discussion cont.

Association of Parent involvement with Student Achievement

- These findings support Bourdieu’s concept of inequality in relation to parent involvement in the mesosystem

- Difference in levels of involvement among parents of different social backgrounds support Bourdieu’s notion of habitus
  - Parent involvement at school and high expectations among parents of dominant group strongly associated with academic achievement, suggesting a better fit between family habitus and educational field

- However, dominant and non-dominant groups benefited similarly from some types of involvement and differently from others
Limitations

- This study used correlation data, and cannot determine causality
  - Not possible to rule out all possible causes of child academic achievement

- Responses to measurements may be biased

- Race/Ethnicity was confounded with children’s academic achievement, school lunch program participation, and parents’ educational attainment
  - The clustering of demographic characteristics was consistent with theories suggesting that cultural, social, human, and economic capital can be interrelated.
Implications for Research and Practice

- Continued studies on how social background moderates effects of different types of parental involvement

- Parent’s involvement in school is important. As such, attempts need to be made to reduce barriers among African American, Latino, low-income, and less educated parents to engagement in child education at school
  - Strategies to overcome barriers relating to work schedule, transportation, and day care

- Strategies must be based on each family’s unique strengths (Hill & Craft, 2003)

- Schools ought to understand and acknowledge all efforts and types of involvement

- Addressing the achievement gap must involve recognizing common values among parents and schools and changing the ways in which opportunities and resources for parent involvement at school, and at home, are made available to all parents.
References


References cont.