

The Immigrant Parent Disadvantage: Parent Linguistic Capital and Student School Performance

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Abstract

Researchers, teachers and policy makers continue to wrestle with understanding why children of immigrants perform more poorly in school than their counterparts with native born parents. While parental involvement through checking of homework and participation in school events have been identified as relevant factors, the findings of research are not conclusive. This study re-examines the relationships of these two factors with school performance among the children of Spanish-speaking immigrants by introducing a third variable: parental English proficiency. The results reveal that after controlling for parental English proficiency, homework checking no longer has a significant impact and the effect of parental school involvement is reduced; English language abilities of parents, on the other hand, have a significant effect on student performance. This finding suggests that improving parental English proficiency and cultural awareness can produce a positive impact on the school performance of the children of non-native English speaking parents.

Introduction

One of the main issues that researchers and policy makers face in the field of education is the student-achievement gap. This phenomenon, which is displayed through patterns in grades, test scores, graduation rates, and frequencies of college attendance, has been considered “the most compelling educational dilemma facing schools in the twenty-first century” (Downey, Steffy, Poston, and English 2009: 2). This variation in the success of students by demographic characteristics, such as family socioeconomic status and race, results in variation in occupational achievement and can be correlated with widening economic inequality. Immigrants and their children are one of the groups that is affected by the school achievement gap, perhaps because their social and cultural capital is not equivalent to the forms of capital that are encouraged and reinforced in educational institutions within the United States. As of 2015, over 41 million immigrants were recorded as living in the United States and account for about 12.6% of the current US population (Renwick and Lee 2015).

There are relatively few studies that have documented the impact of parental involvement on academic outcomes for varying racial and ethnic groups (Robinson and Harris 2014). The challenges immigrants face when striving for academic success or assisting their children in navigating institutional education are much different from those of native born populations. One obstacle that is unique to non-native born persons is the use of language. In 2015 there were over 60 million people over the age of five who were recorded as speaking a language other than English in the home, and over 25 million people who spoke English less than “very well” (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009-2013 American Community Survey). Also 79.05% of bilingual children are of Latino origin who are often from low socioeconomic status and attend urban schools with limited resources (Montrul 2013). There is no official language reported for the United States; however, English-only

education prevails in American schools (Montrul 2013; Portes 2005). This predominant use of English in school information materials and curriculum can limit immigrant parents' ability to understand the needs of their children and the requirements and expectations of the school, to play active roles in the school selection process and academic career planning, and to assist their children with their school work. If the involvement of immigrant parents is less valuable or effective because of linguistic obstacles related to sociocultural capital, this finding would support the production and implementation of adult education programs for these low-fluency parents, the production of school information materials in multiple languages, and the foreign language and cultural training of teachers and administrators. These potential measures could aid in bridging the gap in communication between parents and schools and may diminish the student-achievement gap for students.

Parental Involvement and Educational Achievement

Much research has been conducted on parental involvement and its effect on the educational achievement of students. It has been noted that parents "actively manage their child's school career in ways that can have direct consequences for their child's educational achievement" (Baker & Stevenson 1986: 156) and teachers have expressed that family support is more important than curriculum, mode of instruction and school characteristics in educational outcomes (Bol and Berry 2005). However, findings on the tangible impact of parental involvement have been inconsistent. Scholars have suspected that these inconsistencies lie in the measures and types of parental involvement as the way that parental involvement is measured impacts the estimated effects of that participation on children's schooling (Domina 2005; Epstein 2001; Reay 1998; Sui-Chu and Willms 1996). Many scholars find, for example, that there is a significant positive effect of parental involvement in the home on student achievement and attitude toward school (Epstein & Becker 1982; Lareau 1987; Nord, Brimhall and West 1997; Steinberg, Lamborn, Dornbusch, and Darling 1992; Tan & Goldberg 2009; Zhan 2006) but there has been evidence to suggest that parental involvement in the school, or outside of the home, does not have a significant effect on student achievement (Zhan 2006). Other studies reported finding that parental involvement within the home, through practices of supervision and involvement with homework, as well as parental involvement in the school, through the formation of contracts with the school, seemed to be negatively correlated with grades and test scores (Catsambis 1998; Fan and Chen 1999, Izzo, Weissberg, Kasprow, Fendrich 1999; Shumow and Miller 2001). However, these negative findings may be the result of a lack of variation in parent reported practices of parent involvement as significant and positive results were found using teacher ratings of school involvement (Barnard 2004). It is also possible that higher levels of parental involvement in educational activities in the home may have been found to be negatively correlated with student achievement as parents were more likely to provide help at home if their child is already struggling (Shumow and Miller 2001). Independent of past school behavior and success, the influence of home learning guided by parents through direct involvement with school activities, such as helping with homework, advising, and behavioral supervision, has been noted as having positive effects on student outcomes (Steinberg, Lamborn, Dornbusch, and Darling 1992). It is important to note the importance of parental involvement in the context of social reproduction. Sewell and Hauser (1980) suggest that, through the Wisconsin Status Attainment Model, parental involvement in the form of encouragement at

home is the primary mediator of the connection between family social class and student academic performance. This relationship between encouragement from parents and student achievement may be mediated by students' attitudes that are the result of parental support.

Teachers have also noted the importance of parental involvement as they observed the influence of parental assistance at home with learning activities. Epstein and Becker (1982) note that "some teachers suggested that short periods of time spent on learning at home can be beneficial if the time is well planned" (104), like activities such as going over word cards and timed reading. The importance of parent help at home is also supported by the teacher reports that most assignments given in class are completed with parent assistance at home (Epstein and Becker 1982). Through consistent and mindful practice, researchers argue that the effects of parental involvement are tangible even when they are small (Epstein & Becker 1982). Teachers also reported that the student gains they observe are influenced by parents who help their children without guidance but also in families in which parents are guided to help with the home learning of their children (Epstein 2011). Parental involvement in school related activities creates "greater potential for actively involving parents in important exchanges with the teacher that may assist their own children's progress in school" (Epstein & Becker 1982: 113). In a study by Lareau (1987), teachers all promoted parental involvement and believed that there was strong relationship between parental involvement, particularly reading at home to the children, and academic performance. Overall it has been noted that "parental involvement is a component of effective schools that deserves special consideration because it contributes to successful family environments and more successful students" (Epstein 2011)

Linguistic Capital and Parental Involvement

In analyzing the impact of immigrant parents' characteristics and behaviors on parental involvement and the educational outcomes of students it is essential to conceptualize the different forms of capital held by these parents and how the capital they possess varies from that of the dominant class. The dominant class will be defined as members of the white middle class for this study as they are more likely to exhibit the cultural practices and attitudes that are reflected in educational institutions. It is also important to compare the performance of groups to this dominant class as Hispanic and black 12th grade students were found to score lower than white 8th graders in reading and math (Thernstrom and Thernstrom 2003). The three forms of capital that need be addressed to explain the influence of parental characteristics on student achievement include human capital, cultural capital, and social capital.

Human Capital

Economic, educational, and material resources as well as skills held by parents are defined as human capital (Becker 1975). In understanding the variations in the effects that parental involvement has on the educational achievement of students, many scholars point to the human capital of the parents. Spilerman et al. (1993) note that it is much more difficult for young people to gain advantages in life without utilizing material assistance from their family. Orr (2003) shows that wealth is a key factor in the likelihood that parents are involved in educational activities with their children. There has also been an observed positive association between assets of the family and

likelihood that parents express educational expectations to their children (Williams Shanks & Destin 2009). The well established relationship between family assets and children's educational outcomes has been acknowledged as being mediated by parental practices of verbalizing a clear emphasis on the importance of education through the act of expressing educational expectations to the children in the home (Williams Shanks & Destin 2009; Zhan 2006). Other forms of human capital such as level of educational attainment and income of parents have been noted as influencing the effect of parental involvement on students' educational outcomes (Zhan 2006). Lareau (1987) as well as Baker and Stevenson (1986) found that less-educated parents did not want to or could not become involved in their children's education. Although variations in the amount of economic resources a student's family can provide has been identified as having a strong significant relationship with the educational success of students (R. Stinebrickner and T. Stinebrickner 2003), parental involvement has been found to have a more powerful effect on these outcomes (Melby et al. 2008). Previous research has found that, across all income and education levels of parents, students with parents who are more involved were found to be more likely to make academic gains in math and reading over children with less involved parents (Shaver and Walls 1998) but parental involvement at home and school increased with parent's level of education and socioeconomic status (Robinson and Harris 2014). This may be due to immigrant and working class groups believing that education does not extend outside of the institution of the school (Barnard 2004; Gillies 2008). Children with involved parents of lower socioeconomic status were found to make greater gains than children with less involved parents of higher SES. However, parental involvement does rely on certain elements of human capital such as access to childcare and transportation (Lareau and Horvat 1999; Lareau 2003).

Cultural Capital

Originally defined within the cultural context of France by Bourdieu and Passeron, cultural capital has a rather broad spectrum of definitions. In relation to this research, cultural capital is defined as including linguistic aptitude and general cultural practices. Schools as institutions cannot be considered socially neutral as they reflect and reinforce the practices and beliefs of the dominant class (Lamont and Lareau 1988). However, schools can teach linguistic and cultural competencies to children who are outside of this dominant class but they can be academically disadvantaged due to the practices and attitudes of their habitus (Lamont and Lareau 1988). The habitus includes the life experiences a person possesses due to their environment and relationships that develop one's cultural capital (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977). Therefore, cultural capital has previously been used to account for the reproduction of educational inequality and the influence of family background on school experience and educational attainment (Lamont and Lareau 1988). Immigrant parents, especially from non-English speaking nations, can lack the cultural capital that is reflected in American schools and, through socialization, can pass on their cultural practices and beliefs, which are not conducive to educational success within the institution, to their children. The result of such cultural reproduction is immigrant parents displaying lower levels of parental involvement than the dominant white middle class, who are more comfortable with school staff because of the cultural capital they share (Lareau and Horvat 1999). It is also important to note that the cultural capital of parents has been observed as having an impact on the attendance and completion of higher education (DiMaggio and Mohr 1985).

Social Capital Within the Family

This form of capital is defined as existing in the relationships between people and is functional in the facilitation of productive activity (Coleman and Hoffer 1987). Social capital within the family is defined as the relations between members of the family inside and outside of the home. Social capital within the family is crucial as children will not have access to the benefits of their parents' human and cultural capital if they are not engaged in meaningful relationships with each other. In relation to academic achievement, social capital within the family is essential as parents who invest more time and effort in activities that support their children, such as shared non-academic activities or helping with homework, tend to produce more social capital within the family (Coleman 1988; Furstenberg and Hughes 1995), which children can access to experience greater success in school (Robinson and Harris 2014). The social capital of the family can outweigh the influence of human capital. An example of this is when low income Asian immigrant parents who review their children's school texts themselves so that they can understand the curriculum and aid in the home learning and achievement of their children (Coleman and Hoffer 1987).

Social Capital Outside of the Family

Within the community, social capital is defined as relations possessed by parents "within the neighborhood or places around the school, [with] local residents who have an interest in the school and [with] local groups that are based in the area" (Henderson and Mapp 2002: 10). An absence of shared cultural capital, often experienced by immigrants through linguistic and cultural isolation, can lead parents to be excluded from engaging with other parents and teachers and can also prevent them from accessing school information materials and school curriculum. This results in a social network without closure and can prevent parents from communicating with other parents and teachers, learning about schools, curriculum, or properly assessing the academic standing and needs of their children.

Parental English Proficiency and Parental Involvement

In 1980, census data indicated that 10 percent of dependent children in households were second-generation immigrants (Portes & Zhou 1993) and this figure has continued to grow among Latinos, Syrians, and West Indians. These children of immigrants will soon occupy a significant portion of the country's future labor force. Therefore, it is essential to view the unique obstacles these students face when seeking academic achievement and that their parents encounter when attempting to retain the role of active first teachers and informed academic advisors. Assuring that parents are equipped with the skills and techniques to play an active role in the education of their children will aid in leading this group of second-generation immigrants to play important roles in society as functioning and educated adults. Issues such as language abilities of parents have not been addressed in relation to the direct effect on student performance or on parental involvement even though a significant portion of k-12 students speak a language other than English at home.

Current research on the parental involvement of non-native English speaking parents in the schooling of their children has been limited (Panferov 2010). In this research I examine the direct effect of parents' English abilities on student performance through standardized reading scores and

on the relationship between parental involvement and educational achievement as parental involvement has been most important in student success in literacy and reading (Epstein 2011). Unique to non-native English speaking parents, the “challenges parents face in supporting their child in school are often magnified” for ELL parents “as the parents themselves may have minimal proficiency in English” (Panferov 2010: 106). English language learner parents who do not engage in literacy practices with their children at home have been observed to have children who spend more instructional time in pull-out programs, have reported in-school issues with behavior, and are more likely to drop out of school (Panferov 2010). The issue here of low performance on behalf of immigrants and children of immigrants in school does not appear to be correlated with the attitudes and beliefs of parents as it has been observed that these groups place a high value on education and want their children to succeed in school (Lucas 1997). These parents are often frustrated over the lack of school-home communication (Ramirez 2003) that is inhibiting their ability to be involved in the education of their children. Previous studies on the topic of parental language abilities and the relationship between parental involvement and students’ educational achievement are not nationally representative. Parental involvement has been recognized as critical for children from diverse cultural backgrounds, as they are more likely to perform better when their families and school faculty form relations that bridge the gap between the cultures of home and school (West Virginia DOE 2010).

Other factors have been considered when exploring varying levels of parental involvement and the effect it has on children’s educational achievement. Gender of parents has been quite noteworthy as mothers were more likely to be involved in the education of their children (Baker & Stevenson 1986) and fathers were usually only involved when an issue was reported within the school. This may explain why the positive effects of mother’s level of education have been observed to be greater than father’s level of education on student achievement. The impact of race and ethnicity on parental involvement has been less researched but evidence has indicated that the size of the impact of parental involvement on student achievement varies by race. For example, Asian and Hispanic American parents were often least involved in the educational activities of their children and Hispanic Americans were less likely to encourage success at home (Steinberg et al. 1992), which can result in lower levels of student achievement, though parental involvement appears to generally matter less for Asians.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

The specific research questions this study attempts to answer include: (1) Does parental involvement have a direct and significant impact on the academic success of students? For the purpose of this study, school success will be operationalized as standardized cognitive subject based test scores as academic performance through test scores has been noted as an important determinant of educational attainment (Behrman, Kletzer, McPherson, and Schapiro 1998; Hanushek and Pace 1995; Rivken 1995). (2) Is there variation in the effect of parental involvement within the home and parental involvement within the school? Parental involvement in the home, or social capital of the family, will be operationalized as supervision of homework which Mau (1997) claims is the most important parental involvement measure. Involvement of parents in activities within the school will be operationalized as attendance at school events. (3) Do the language abilities of parents have a significant direct effect on school performance and does parental English proficiency have an impact

on the relationship between parental involvement and student achievement? The following hypotheses, based in the previously stated findings of the literature review, will be used in order to investigate these questions:

H1: Parental involvement, both in the home and in the school, and parental English proficiency will have an effect on students' cognitive test scores. Students with parents who report higher frequencies of checking homework and attending school events and higher levels of English proficiency will be more likely to score higher on standardized reading tests.

This first hypothesis is supported by the evidence in the literature review that presents a generally positive trend between student achievement and parental involvement when considering the student's behavior and previous academic success. In their annual research synthesis, Henderson and Mapp (2002) noted that "the more families support their children's learning and educational progress, the more their children tend to do well in school and continue their education" (30). This study utilizes data only from students in eighth grade and it has been observed that students between first and eighth grade did consistently better if their parents took part in a greater number of school and education related activities (Miedel and Reynolds 1999).

English fluency has been observed as one of the key factors that positively influences the process of assimilation and social mobility of immigrants in the United States (Portes and Rumbaut 2014). Whether this linguistic capital also influences the academic success of the children of immigrants has not been closely researched. It has been observed that the Latino population in the United States, specifically children of Mexican immigrants, has experienced increasing levels of underachievement as measured through grades, test scores, dropout rates, and graduation rates (Valenzuela 1999). Also, it has been more recently observed that second generation Latino students have difficulties with passing standardized tests and are viewed by school staff as being poor students (King and Scott 2014). Therefore, this study is more specifically investigating the discrepancy in school performance of children of Spanish speaking parents as this second generation group appears to do worse in school than second generation students from Asian or Russian Jewish origins (Kasinitz 2008). It is important to note that within the sample used in this study, over 90% of participants who spoke a language other than English at home were Spanish speakers.

H2: The effect of parental involvement on student achievement will be explained partially by parental linguistic capital. Parents with low fluency will be less likely to be involved than high fluency parents and parental English proficiency may reduce or explain away the effects of parental involvement.

The unique obstacles that non-native speaking parents experience in helping their child with their school work, communicating with school faculty and administration, and interacting with school information materials presents the potential for these students to be disadvantaged even when parents are highly involved. Parents with low English fluency will not be able to educate themselves on the manner in which institutional education functions in America and this may inhibit their ability to assist their children with navigating the educational institution and to form meaningful relationships with their teachers. Due to linguistic insecurities, these parents may also not feel capable when assisting with school work or when communicating with school staff.

Methods

Data and Samples

The data set for this study, the National Education Longitudinal Study: Base Year Through Fourth Follow-Up, 1988-2000, was collected by the United States Department of Education National Center for Education Statistics and was retrieved from the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR). The base-year survey in 1988 utilized a clustered, stratified national probability sample of 1,052 public and private eighth-grade schools with almost 25,000 students across the United States participating. For the first follow-up in 1990, 21,000 students were sampled and an additional parent survey was added. Data collection was conducted through personal and telephone interviews, questionnaires, test scores, out-of-school rounds: computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) technology, and follow-up: computer-assisted personal interview (CAPI) technology.

An extraction was made of 55 variables from the base-year (eight grade) and the first follow-up (tenth grade). Cross sectional analysis was completed using bivariate linear regression procedures through SPSS statistics software to measure the trend, strength, and significance of parental involvement and English fluency variables on student grades and test scores. ANOVA and multivariate regression procedures were utilized to measure the combined impact of the independent variables and the effect of control variables on the relationship between independent and dependent variables.

An important limitation to recognize is the age of this data set. This study was conducted nearly 28 years after base-year data collection and changes in availability of information materials through modes such as widespread internet access and the use of social media may have had an impact on the ability of non-English speaking parents to utilize such tools to overcome some of the obstacles presented by a language barrier.

Measures

Student Academic Achievement

Students' eighth grade standardized reading scores (BYSRXTD) is the dependent variable. This variable is a continuous measure with values that range from 31.92 to 70.55 and were collected from school transcript data. Reading scores were chosen over a math scores or a combination of the two as parental involvement has been observed to be more influential on students' success with reading and literacy. Also, linguistic capital of parents may be more likely to affect reading scores over math scores as a parent's ability to assist their child with math may not rely heavily on English language use due to the universal nature of mathematics.

Parental Involvement

Two parental involvement measures were selected to act as independent variables. The dichotomous variable of parents' attendance at school events within the past year (BYS37D) was chosen as a measure of parental involvement in the school, while the variable of parents' practice of

checking homework (BYS38A) was chosen as a measure of parental involvement within the home. Parents' practice of checking homework included five ordinal responses; "Never", "Rarely", "Sometimes", and "Often", which were reverse coded so that higher values corresponded with more frequent checking of homework. Response items were collapsed into two categories of "Never/Rarely" and "Sometimes/Often". These two measures were collected through student reports and were not reported by the parents themselves as the perception of involvement by students may have greater significance. It is worth noting that student reports of parent actions can be trusted as it has been observed that adolescents are able to perform the roles of knowledgeable informants about their parents' parental behaviors (Golden 1969; Moskowitz and Schwarz 1982).

Parental English Proficiency

The information on how well parents reported speaking English (BYP26B), reading English (BYP26C), and writing English (BYP26D) were compiled into an index scale of parental English language proficiency. Each index item utilized the same five item ordinal response set with responses of "Not well at all", "Not very well", "Well", "Pretty well", and "Very well" in relation to the respondent's aforementioned abilities with English. The variables were reversed coded before they were indexed so that highest levels of English proficiency are correlated with higher numerical values. This index was rescaled so that the values range from one to thirteen with thirteen as the highest level of parental English proficiency.

Yearly Family Income

The first control utilized in the multivariate regression analysis as a measure of human capital was yearly family income (BYFAMINC). This ordinal measure includes 15 values that range from "None" to "\$200,000 or more".

Sex of Student

To account for gender differences, the sex of the respondent (BYS12) was retrieved from the base-year student reported data. Valid responses included "Male" and "Female".

Results

Table 1 displays the frequency and valid percent for all of the independent variables. The dichotomous variable of parental attendance at school events presents that 66.6% of parents attended a school event and 33.4% did not attend a school event. Univariate analysis of parents' practice of checking homework revealed that 73.0% of parents checked homework either sometimes or often and 27.0% of parents reported checking homework rarely or never. The values of the parental English fluency index ranged from 3 to 15 but was rescaled so that 1 was the lowest value and 13 is the highest value. The median English proficiency score was 12.0 and the mean score was 9.59 with a standard deviation of 4.07. The values of yearly family income ranged from no income to \$200,000 or more. The mean and median income level both fall on the income category of

\$25,000 - \$34,999. Univariate analysis of student gender revealed that the valid sample was 47% male and 53% female.

Bivariate regression analysis revealed that there is a significant relationship between parental practice of checking homework and students' standardized reading scores ($F(1, 10523) = 334.122, p < .001$)¹. Chart 1 displays the results of one-way ANOVA analysis of the correlation between the frequency of checking homework by parents and their child's standardized reading score. Students with parents who reported checking homework rarely or never had a mean reading score of 52.34 while students with parents who checked homework sometimes or often had a lower mean score of 51.10. This finding does not support the hypothesis that parental involvement in the home as measured by parental practice of checking homework is positively correlated with student achievement². This negative correlation may be the result of parents' preference to only engage in this form of parental involvement when their child is already experiencing lower achievement. The issue may also lie in the measurement of parental involvement within the home. Alternate measures such as parents' practice of providing additional learning materials for high achieving students may yield positive effects on student test scores.

Bivariate analysis revealed that there is a significant relationship between the parental practice of attending school events and student achievement in the form of standardized reading test scores ($F(1, 10931) = 17.235, p < .001$). Chart 2 displays the results of bivariate ANOVA analysis on parental school event attendance and student school performance. Students with parents who did not attend school events had a mean reading score of 49.11 while students with parents who did attend school events shared a mean reading score of 52.84. This difference of 3.73 points supports the hypothesis that parental involvement within the school positively influences student achievement³. The causal mechanism of this positive effect may lie in the closing of the home-school communication gap through development of rapport between parents and faculty. Through such interactions, parents may be able to more accurately assess their child's academic needs, while teachers can gain perspective on students from parent accounts. Students may also perform better due to positive effects of parental support through their parent's practice of attending school events.

Bivariate analysis revealed that there is a significant relationship between parental English proficiency and student achievement ($F(1, 1919) = 109.048, p < .001$). Chart 3 displays the bivariate one-way ANOVA results for the correlation between parents' level of English proficiency and student performance on standardized reading tests. Students with parents who received an English proficiency score of 1 had a mean reading score of 43.79. Students with parents who received the highest English proficiency score of 13 had a mean reading score of 51.31. This indicates that a student with a parent with the highest level of parental English proficiency may have a standardized test score that is 7.52 points greater than a student with a parent with the lowest level of English proficiency⁴, which confirms the hypothesis that English proficiency will have a positive effect on student school performance.

Bivariate analysis revealed that parent with higher English proficiency are more likely to attend school events but differences in the likelihood of checking homework were not discovered between groups. The coefficient for the effect of parental English proficiency on the frequency of attending school events is .029 ($p < .001$), which indicates that an increase in the level of parental English abilities results in an increase in the frequency of attending school events. The R square of the relationship is .054 ($F(1, 1871) = 107.270, p < .001$) indicating that a parent's English proficiency accounts for 5.4% of their likelihood to attend school events. This finding supports the hypothesis

that parents with lower proficiency in English will be less likely to participate in these forms of parental involvement than parents with higher levels of English proficiency.

Multivariate regression analysis was utilized to observe the combined effects of parental English proficiency and parental involvement in the home and the school on students' school performance. The results of multivariate regression are displayed in Table 3. When parental English proficiency was added to the regression equation, the effect of parental involvement in the home through the practice of checking homework became spurious with a regression coefficient of $-.936$ ($p > .05$). The direction and significance of the effect of parental English fluency, however, remained with a coefficient of $.564$ ($p < .001$). This indicates that the effect of parental practices of checking homework are explained away by the introduction of the parental English proficiency variable. The R square of the relationship $.055$ ($F(2, 1911) = 56.364, p < .001$) increased slightly from the direct effect of parental English proficiency on students' school performance as measured through standardized reading test scores⁵. This combined effect is, therefore, controlled primarily by parent's English abilities. This finding confirms the hypothesis that the introduction of the parental English proficiency variable may make the effect of parental involvement on student performance spurious.

Multivariate regression analysis revealed that the effect of parental involvement in the school through parental attendance of school events on student achievement was reduced by the introduction of the parental English proficiency variable. The coefficient for this effect was reduced from 3.733 to 2.712 ($p < .001$). This indicates that the size of the impact of this form of parental involvement on students' standardized reading scores is in some way reliant on the parental English proficiency of parents. This indicates that a parent who attends school events but retains a lower level of English proficiency will not observe the same gains in the school performance of their children that students with higher English proficiency parents may experience. The positive effect of parental English proficiency on student performance remained with a coefficient of $.485$ ($p < .001$)⁶. The slight decrease in the coefficient of this variable indicates that the effect of parental English fluency on student performance is somewhat impacted by parents' attendance of school events. Therefore, parents may need to engage in this form of parental involvement so that their linguistic capital can yield the greatest results on their children's academic achievement. The R square for the combined relationship is $.071$ ($F(2, 1809) = 69.714, p < .001$) indicating that these two variables account for 7.1% of a student's reading score.

Conclusion

Regression analyses confirm the hypothesis that parental school involvement in the school through attendance at school events has a positive effect on student performance as measured through standardized reading scores. The social capital that parents can develop through interacting with school faculty and staff at school events may close the communication gap between the home and school so that both parties can gain awareness of the unique characteristics and needs of the students so that they may receive more informed educational support in the classroom and at home. Therefore, this positive correlation can be viewed as reliant on the English abilities of parents as English is the medium most frequently utilized in educational institutions and between school faculty and parents. The results of this regression analysis reveal that low English proficiency parents not only are less likely to engage in this form of parental involvement, potentially due to insecurities

related to language use, but the positive effects observed in student school performance are less for these groups even when they do attend events at the school, which confirms the second hypothesis.

The hypothesis that parental school involvement within the home through checking of homework was not confirmed by the results of regression analysis as increases in the frequency of checking homework are associated with decreases in student standardized reading scores. The negative correlation may be in relation to the mode of measurement of this variable and an alternate indicator like the parental practice of providing additional educational materials may act as a more proactive measure of parental school involvement in the home over the potentially reactive method of checking homework, which may only occur in greater frequency if the student is already experiencing low performance in school. Parental English fluency, however, made the effect of checking homework on student test scores spurious. This confirms the second hypothesis as low English proficiency parents were noted as engaging in this form of parental school involvement less frequently than high proficiency parents and the effect was ultimately explained away by a parent's ability to engage with the curriculum through limitations of language use.

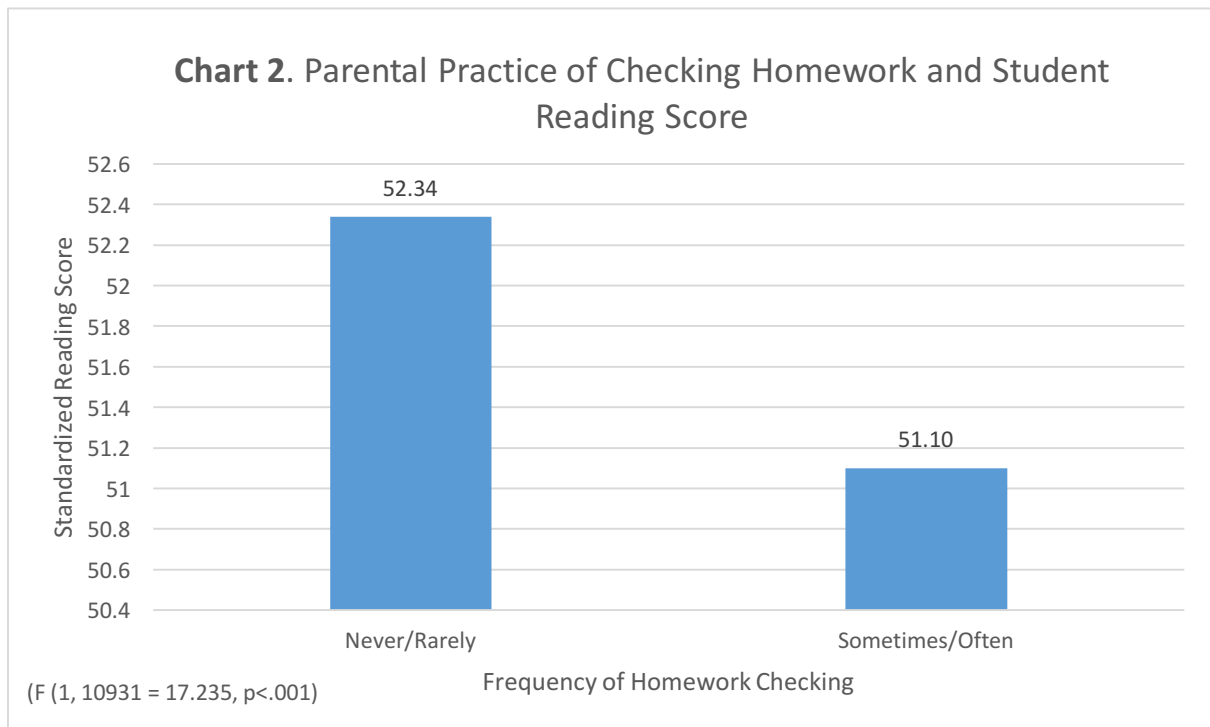
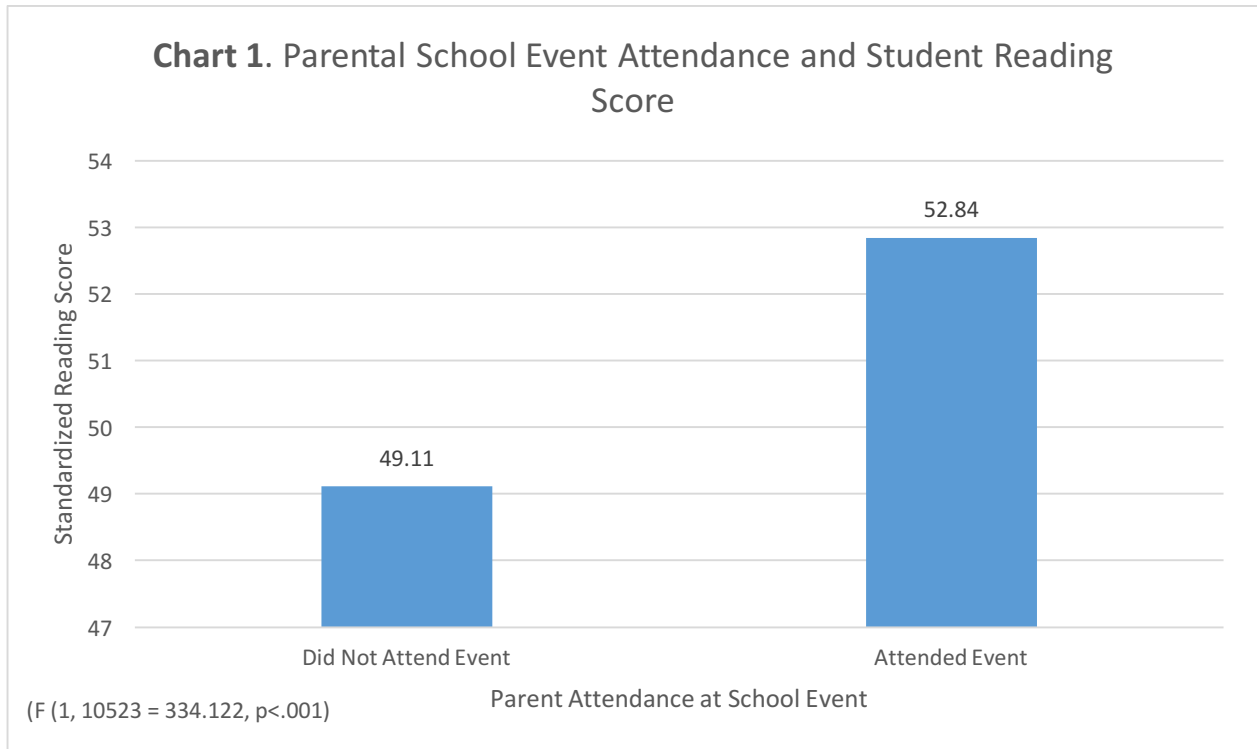
The findings of this study support previous literature that has observed positive correlations between parental involvement in the school and student school performance but do not support previous findings that noted a positive correlation between parental involvement in the home and student achievement. This study introduced a more in-depth analysis of the powerful effect that parental socio-cultural characteristics such as language abilities can have on student performance, parental school involvement in the school and at home, and the effects of parental school involvement on a student's academic achievement. This study recognizes the internal biases of institutionalized education through English only education that primarily supports the cultural capital of the dominant class with native born parents. Some of these effects may be combatted through methods of bilingual education as "Shifts in thinking about hierarchies and communication can create a more open classroom and greater success for all students" (King and Scott 2014). It is also important to understand the importance of adult education for the benefits that the parents will experience through increased assimilation and social mobility but also for the positive effects it can have on the academic success of their children. Therefore, English language classes, potentially hosted by the schools where their children attend, may provide low English proficiency parents with an opportunity to invest in their own linguistic capital. Finally, the use of mediating parties to aid in closing the gap in communication between school faculty and low English proficiency parents may yield positive results for these disadvantaged groups. Implications of this study support previous assumptions that "by providing bilingual professionals or volunteers to assist language minority families, many of the problems that do exist within school-home relations may subside" (Ramirez 2003: 105).

Appendix A: Tables and Charts

Table 1. Univariate Descriptive Statistics

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Did parent attend school event?	Did Not Attend	3642	33.4
	Did Attend	7256	66.6
How often did parent check homework?	Never/Rarely	3061	27.0
	Sometimes/Often	4944	73.0
Parental English proficiency score	1.0	111	5.6
	2.0	54	2.7
	3.0	39	2.0
	4.0	175	8.8
	5.0	49	2.5
	6.0	60	3.0
	7.0	136	6.8
	8.0	73	3.7
	9.0	65	3.3
	10.0	152	7.7
	11.0	6	2.8
	12.0	70	3.5
	13.0	946	47.6
Yearly family income	None	40	0.3
	<\$1,000	86	0.7
	\$1,000 - \$2,999	147	1.2
	\$3,000 - \$4,999	183	1.5
	\$5,000 - \$7,499	305	2.5
	\$7,500 - \$9,999	352	2.9
	\$10,000 - \$14,999	823	6.8
	\$15,000 - \$19,999	788	6.5
	\$20,000 - \$24,999	1078	8.9
	\$25,000 - 34,999	1967	16.2
	\$35,000 - \$49,999	2182	18.0
	\$50,000 - \$74,999	1450	11.9
	\$75,000 - \$99,999	397	3.3
	\$100,000 - \$199,999	395	3.3
\$200,000 or More	155	1.3	
Student's sex	Male	5308	47.0
	Female	5986	53.0

Source: NELS 88/2000



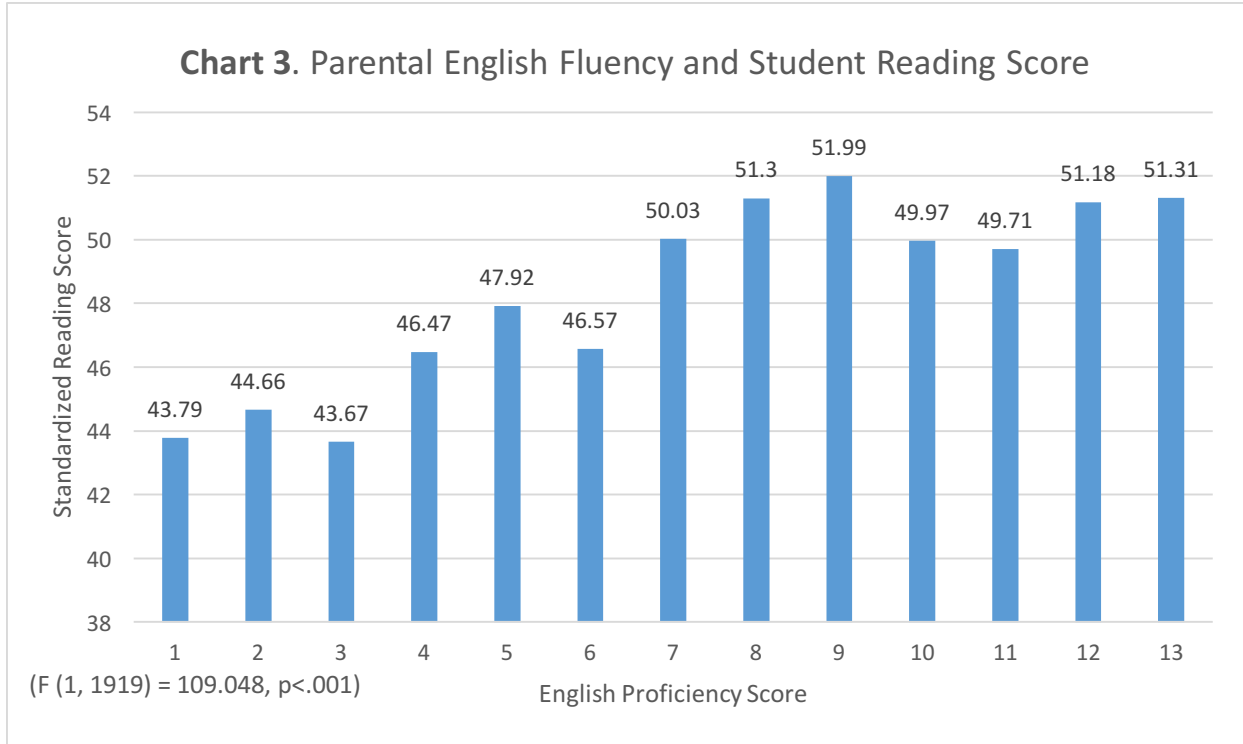


Table 2. Bivariate regression of predictors of student school performance on standardized reading tests

Predictors	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	β	SE	β	SE	β	SE
Checking of Homework	-	-	-1.235**	0.216	-	-
Attend School Events	-	-	-	-	3.733**	0.204
English Fluency	.563**	0.054	-	-	-	-
	(adjusted R = .053**)		(adjusted R = .003**)		(adjusted R = .031**)	

Source: NELS 88/2000

*p<.05

**p<.001

Table 3. Multiple regression analyses of predictors of student school performance on standardized reading tests

Predictors	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
	β	SE	β	SE	β	SE	β	SE
Checking of Homework	-0.936	0.224	-	-	-	-	-0.836	0.439
Attend School Events	-	-	2.712**	0.460	1.795**	0.447	1.848**	0.449
English Fluency	0.566**	0.054	0.485**	0.057	0.224**	0.058	0.225**	0.058
Family Income	-	-	-	-	1.159**	0.081	1.159**	0.081
Sex	-	-	-	-	1.236*	0.433	1.140*	0.437
	(adjusted R = .055**)		(adjusted R = .071**)		(adjusted R = .170**)		(adjusted R = .171**)	

Source: NELS 88/2000

*p<.05

**p<.001

Appendix B: Variables

Dependent

Name: BY2XRSTD

Label: READING STANDARDIZED SCORE

Independent

Name: BYS37D

Label: R'S PARENTS ATTENDED A SCHOOL EVENT

Question: Since the beginning of this school year, has either of your parents or guardians done any of the following? *"Attend a school event"*

Name: BYS38A

Label: HOW OFTEN PARENTS CHECK ON R'S HOMEWORK

Question: How often do your parents or guardians do the following? *"Check on whether you have done your homework"*

Index Items

Name: BYP26B

Label: HOW WELL R SPEAKS ENGLISH

Question: With regard to English, how well do you do the following? *"Speak English"*

Name: BYP26C

Label: HOW WELL R READS ENGLISH

Question: With regard to English, how well do you do the following? *"Read English"*

Name: BYP26D

Label: HOW WELL R SPEAKS ENGLISH

Question: With regard to English, how well do you do the following? *"Write English"*

Control Variables

Name: BYFAMINC

Label: YEARLY FAMILY INCOME

Question: Total family income from all sources.

Name: BYS12

Label: SEX OF RESPONDENT

Question: What is your sex?

Notes

¹ Results of regression analysis for bivariate relationships presented in Table 2 of appendix A.

² Similar direction and significance found in the correlation between parents checking homework and math scores but with a greater coefficient and a marginally larger R square.

³ Similar direction and significance found in the correlation between parents' attendance at school events and math scores but with a greater coefficient and a marginally larger R square.

⁴ Similar direction and significance found in the correlation between parental English proficiency and math scores but with a smaller coefficient and R square.

⁵ Multivariate analysis of math scores by checking of homework and parental English proficiency yielded similar results but with lower coefficients and a smaller R square.

⁶ Multivariate analysis of math scores by parental attendance at school events and parental English proficiency yielded similar results but with smaller coefficients and a smaller R square.

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