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PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT: TYPES AND EFFECTS

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Abstract. The achievement gap of disadvantaged students has always been large, and is still widening. Even more now, during the Covid-19 pandemic. Parental involvement is seen as an important strategy for closing this gap. The ultimate objective is to expand the academic and social capacities of students, especially those of disadvantaged backgrounds determined by ethnic minority/immigrant origin and low socioeconomic status. This article focuses on possible roles of parents in education and aims at answering two questions: (1) What types of parental involvement can be discerned? and (2) What are the effects of parental activities on their children’s attainment? To answer both questions, a review of the literature was conducted, and a synthesis of the results from twelve meta-analyses was performed. The review pointed to a considerable diversity in parental involvement typologies, classifications, roles, forms, and activities. Nevertheless, they can be ordered along the lines of just a few perspectives, namely locus (at home/at school), style (formal/informal), action (active/passive), and actor (parent/student/school). From the synthesis of the meta-analyses it can be concluded that the average effect of involvement on attainment is small. In addition to many positive effects there are also substantial numbers of null and even negative effects. The type of involvement with the strongest effect appeared to be parents having high aspirations and expectations for their child. No differences in effects of involvement on attainment according to ethnic/immigrant and social background could be established. Prudence is called for, however, as there are many limitations to studying parental involvement in a reliable and valid way.

Key words: parental involvement; parental participation; parental engagement; parent-school partnership; disadvantaged students; effectiveness; meta-analyses; review; effect size

INTRODUCTION

In many countries, educational underachievement resulting from socioeconomic and ethnic/immigrant factors in the home environment is perceived as a serious and – above all – persisting problem (Goodman et al., 2015; OECD, 2012). Concrete indicators of underachievement are, for instance, weak test results, repeating grades, low tracks of secondary education, unqualified school leaving/school drop-out, and limited transfer to higher education. The interest in the achievement gap between children from lower socioeconomic milieus and ethnic and immigrant backgrounds on the one hand and those from higher milieus and ethnic majority backgrounds on the other hand started in the 1960s and still continues (OECD, 2015; Stevens & Dworkin, 2019). This distinction between milieu and ethnicity/migration, for that matter, often is seen as a rather analytic one, as the two demographics are strongly intertwined, i.e., many ethnic/immigrant students are from lower socioeconomic milieus. Several studies have shown that despite the implementation of various policies to prevent and combat educational disadvantage and the investment of staggering supplementary budgets, all the measures taken did not have the effects desperately hoped for (Demeuse et al., 2012; Driessen, 2012; Goodman & Burton, 2012). Even more disappointing is the conclusion of quite a number of recent studies, which demonstrate that the educational gaps by social class and ethnic/immigrant origin have not closed but are actually widening (Hanushek et al., 2019; OECD, 2018; Passaretta & Skopek, 2018). Reardon (2011) is of the opinion that this is a consequence of growing income inequality and an increased investment of wealthy parents in their children's cognitive development, for instance by sending them to (expensive) private schools, paying for individual homework assistance and special exam preparation courses. Really worrisome is the finding that now, as a result of the present Covid-19 pandemic, school closures have enlarged this achievement gap even more. Reasons given are that disadvantaged students tend to have less access to technology (internet, laptops), have no physical space for studying at home, receive no or only little support from their parents, and spend less time learning compared with their more affluent peers (Lally & Birmingham, 2020; Quilter-Pinner & Gill, 2020).

For a long time, the dominating explanation given for the origin of the achievement gap has been sought in the distance (or incongruence) between the home and the school environment. It is assumed that there exist various forms of so-called linguistic (language use; Bernstein, 1971), cultural (norms and values; Bourdieu, 1986) and social capital (social networks; Coleman, 1988), which are typical of the modal school environment and which prepare students for a successful educational career. Such vital educational luggage is available to children from middle and upper socioeconomic and ethnic majority backgrounds; it is, however, largely absent in working class and minority/immigrant families (Driessen, 2001; Lee & Brown,

2006). To compensate for this “deficit” a diversity of educational compensatory and stimulation programs and activities have been developed and implemented, both for educational institutions, such as preschools and primary schools, and also for parents at home. More recently, however, Agirdag and Merry (2020) argue that this “blaming the victims”, i.e., the children and their parents, and insinuating that their educational disadvantage is a result of the families’ language delays, their lacking reading habits, their material deprivation, and their deviating parenting styles and skills, is not the right and fair perspective. According to them, this “deficit thinking” is not innocent, but actually part of the problem. Such “hidden” demands of the established educational system reinforce the harmful stereotype of the disadvantaged student and their family, who do not own the correct cultural capital, who do not read a paper and who do not visit museums. However, many studies show that it is precisely such stereotypes that threaten the normal functioning of disadvantaged students and result in achievement gaps (Appel et al., 2015; Van den Bergh et al., 2010). Agirdag and Merry (2020) assume that what really makes the difference is the professionals, not the parents or students. Essential are teachers, school staff and management who possess specific cultural and pedagogical competencies and who have a deep knowledge of and a sincere affinity with the local communities and therefore can better understand the needs of their students and help them accordingly with the personal development they are entitled to.

Notwithstanding this alternative perspective (or paradigm), most stimulation and compensation programs and activities have a traditional basis (Goodall & Vorhaus, 2011; Karsten, 2006; Ross, 2009). Ultimately, the emphasis in nearly all cases is on (acquiring) the country’s official language. Several countries have developed a system where schools with many disadvantaged students receive extra funding (Vandevoort et al., 2020; Vignoles et al., 2000). To a certain degree the schools are free to spend these supplementary budgets, for instance on class size reduction, special (language training) programs, and individual help for students (Driessen, 2017). Lately, there is a (renewed) interest in the preschool and early school phase. Early Childhood Education (ECE) provides educational stimulation and compensatory programs in preschools and the early grades of primary school. It is expected that the earlier the interventions to prevent and reduce the achievement gaps take place, the more effective they will be at eliminating them in the long run (Reardon, 2011). Though the accent mostly is on the children’s linguistic and cognitive development, many programs also include social, emotional, physical and health components, and this is often combined with educational and pedagogical support for the parents at home (Driessen, 2020). Parents, for instance, learn how best to play with their children and how to read with and to them. However, parents not only have an important role in the upbringing and development of young children at home, but also in that of older children and at school. Therefore, in educational disadvantage policies and programs all sorts of parental involvement and participation activities

receive much attention. In the remainder of this article we will focus on the role of parents in education: what types of parental involvement can be discerned, and what are the effects of all of such parental activities on their children's attainment.

TYPES OF INVOLVEMENT

For many years now, stimulating parental involvement and participation in their children's schooling is viewed as an important strategy to advance their educational careers and – in the long run – chances in the labor market, especially for children from disadvantaged backgrounds determined by low socioeconomic status and ethnic minority or immigrant origin (Barger et al., 2019; Carter, 2002; Fleischmann & De Haas, 2016; Wilder, 2014). Bridging the existing school-home divide by actively engaging parents both at school and at home therefore is viewed as an essential instrument to improve the educational chances of all children, regardless of their family background (Epstein et al., 2002). In addition, it is not only important to focus on the relation between home and school, but also to engage and include the local community in the activities to collectively combat educational disadvantage (Smit et al., 2001).

In the scientific literature, various definitions and terms are used when referring to forms of cooperation and collaboration between parents, teachers, schools, and the local community (Boonk et al., 2018; Fox & Olsen, 2014; Gumuliauskienė & Starkutė, 2018; Punter et al., 2016; Smit & Driessen, 2009). Some examples are: parental involvement; parental participation; parental engagement; school-family relations; school-family-community partnerships; and educational partnerships. For the sake of readability, henceforth we will use “parental involvement” wherever possible. Research on parental involvement has shown that there are considerable differences in the level of involvement and that this variation to a high degree depends on the socioeconomic position and ethnic/immigrant background of the parents (Antony-Newman, 2019; Boethel, 2003, 2004; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Wilder, 2014). More and more the term “partnership” is being used in connection to the concept of meaningful cooperative relations between schools, parents and the local community (Desforges, 2003; Epstein et al., 2002). In such a partnership the various participants involved aim at mutually supporting each other and attuning their activities with the objective of supporting the motivation, learning and development of the children, and particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds. In the rest of this section we will present the results of a review of the literature and describe a few examples of such typologies and classifications.

Based on many studies and many years of work by educators and families in elementary, middle, and high schools, Joyce Epstein developed her seminal framework of six major types of parental involvement (Epstein et al., 2002). Central is the notion of partnership in combination with a theory of overlapping spheres

of influence. In this theory, various perspectives on social institutions which can influence the education and socialization of children are integrated. The three institutions, or contexts, distinguished are: family, school, and the local community. It is assumed that they to a certain extent share vital goals, which therefore can be best reached by communicating and cooperating. The three institutions are viewed as spheres of influence which overlap to a greater or lesser degree. This congruence is of importance for the optimal development of children, and partnership is considered as an essential agent to realize this. Teachers, parents and community members and institutions are all regarded as partners with their own and their shared roles, tasks and responsibilities. At the core of the six types of involvement are two central notions of caring: trusting and respecting. In Table 1 we present Epstein's six types of involvement and their relation with caring and several key elements.

Table 1. Types of parental involvement for comprehensive programs of partnership (adapted from Epstein et al., 2002)

<i>Type</i>	<i>Caring</i>	<i>Key</i>
Parenting	Supporting, nurturing, and child rearing	Assist families with parenting and childrearing skills, understanding child and adolescent development, and setting home conditions that support children as students at each age and grade level; assist schools in understanding families
Communicating	Relating, reviewing, and overseeing	Communicate with families about school programs and student progress through effective school-to-home and home-to-school communications
Volunteering	Supervising and fostering	Improve recruitment, training, work, and schedules to involve families as volunteers and audiences at the school or in other locations to support students and school programs.
Learning at home	Managing, recognizing, and rewarding	Involve families with their children in learning activities at home, including homework and other curriculum-related activities and decisions
Decision making	Contributing, considering, and judging	Include families as participants in school decisions, governance, and advocacy through PTA/PTO, school councils, committees, action teams, and other parent organizations
Collaborating with the community	Sharing and giving	Coordinate community resources and services for students, families, and the school with businesses, agencies, and other groups, and provide services to the community

Barger et al. (2019) were interested in the various forms of parental involvement and their specific effects on various children's outcomes. They departed from the definition of parental involvement as parents' commitment of resources, such as time, energy, and money, to the academic context of their children's lives (cf. Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994). Based on a review of the literature, they first distin-

guished between two broad forms of parental involvement, namely school-based involvement, and home-based involvement, and then discerned several more specific modes of involvement. In the upper panel of Table 2 we give an overview of this classification; in the lower panel of the table we continue with a number of child outcome domains.

Table 2. Parents' involvement and possible effects on child outcomes (adapted from Barger et al., 2019)

<i>Parents' involvement</i>	
<i>School involvement</i>	
Participation	Attendance of open houses or school programs, volunteering in the classroom, field trips, communication with the teacher
Governance	Membership in the PTA, PTA board, school board
<i>Home involvement</i>	
Discussion and encouragement	Discussion of school with children, encouragement of children's learning, knowledge, interest, awareness about school
Cognitive-intellectual	Joint book reading, trips to libraries or museums
Homework involvement	Homework assistance, making environment conducive to completing homework, rules about homework

<i>Children's outcomes</i>	
Achievement	Grades, standardized test scores, academic competence
Engagement	Persistence, truancy, dropout, classroom conduct
Motivation	Perceived competence, expectations, perceived control, intrinsic motivation, mastery goals, aspirations, school value
Social adjustment	Social competence, social dominance
Emotional adjustment	Internalizing symptoms, self-esteem, emotion regulation
Delinquency	Substance use, sexual behaviors and attitudes, externalizing

On the basis of a multi-stage study and combining input from a review of the literature, empirical research and a subsequent consultation of an expert focus group, Smit et al. (2007) developed yet another typology of parents and school strategies aimed at the creation of effective partnerships. The strategies discerned focus on the following core elements: developing a vision of parental involvement; expanding the visibility and approachability of the school team by creating contact moments; taking into consideration the concerns of parents; connecting to what parents find interesting and have an affinity with; bearing in mind the quality of the communication between school and parents; stimulating creativity and initiative; and giving parents time to learn something from the school team. The list of characteristics was condensed into six profiles in terms of the extent to which the parents show formal versus informal involvement in their child's school and education. The six types are: the supporter, the absentee, the politician, the career-maker, the

tormentor and the super parent. In Table 3, we present these types in relation to six key characteristics.

Table 3. Types of parents and their key characteristics (adapted from Smit et al., 2007)

	<i>The supporter</i>	<i>The politician</i>	<i>The tormentor</i>
Education	Low/medium	Medium/high	High
Characteristics	Satisfied and involved, prepared to help with practical matters, willing to work, an excellent helping hand, pleasant partner, active, available on demand, has sufficient time	Desire to help make decisions, exert influence, and be involved; satisfied as long as he/she can participate in meetings; critical consumer; extroverted; pays attention to “democratic” quality of the choice of school	Feels offended and misunderstood as a result of the school’s attitude and own educational experiences; denounces errors on the part of the school as a critical consumer; is an unguided missile for the school team; is only satisfied when the school cringes and takes responsibility for suboptimal functioning
Key words	Helpful, nice, solid, friendly, creative, sympathetic, joint thinker, harmonious, supportive, enlightening, willing to serve, naïve, well-adjusted	Critical, precise, optimistic, desire to inspire, persuasive	Know-it-all, cold, insensitive, aggressive, conflictual, fighter, theatrical, impatient
Suited for	Lending a helping hand, parent committees	School advisory board, school board	School advisory board, school board
Not suited for	School advisory board or school board without first following one or more training courses	Actual conduct of helping-hand services	Helping-hand activities, parent committees
How to approach	Appeal to sense of solidarity, existence of an alliance, partnership with shared goals	Appeal to desire to influence school policy, be heard, and hear oneself speak; in order to fully utilize the capacities of this parent, ask him/her to participate on the behalf of parents in the school advisory board or school board	Show real interest in the motives of this parent and his or her (new) ideas regarding child raising and education; be professional but see that the parent remains comfortable; keep your goals in mind; be well-prepared; pose good questions; send a thank you note after meeting; take notes on the conversation; keep the line of communication open

	<i>The absentee</i>	<i>The career-maker</i>	<i>The super parent</i>
Education	Low/medium	Medium/high	High
Characteristics	Does not consider him/herself suited to make a contribution, may only participate when asked explicitly, moderately dissatisfied, uninvolved; school has no priority (anymore), leaves choice of school up to chance, impossible to contact, introverted, unapproachable	Places responsibility for child raising, child care, and education on the school; one-stop-shopping approach; satisfied as long as school takes on all tasks; critical with regard to choice of school; has attitude of “school is for the parents” and sees teachers as an extension of parents	Feels responsible for child raising and education together with the school; is prepared to support the school alongside a busy job; is willing to invest in the school relation; thinks critically along with the school; contributes good ideas; is prepared to utilize own networks; is satisfied when the school does its best for the performance and wellbeing of own child and other students
Key words	Loner, quitter, has (almost) no contact with other parents, no friendship relations with the school, uncommunicative, wrestles with cultural gap due to different cultural background	Aloof, “no news is good news”, businesslike, basically all take and no give	Loyal, ambitious, strengthener, innovative, communicative, inspiring, walking encyclopedia, grows
Suited for	School support network, can serve as a bridge to other absentee parents or group of parents	School advisory board or school board, provided this fits his/her career prospects	Thinking about problems, finding solutions, handling crises, acquisition of funds, school board (chair)
Not suited for	School advisory board, school board, or parent committees without first following one or more training courses	Time consuming helping-hand services	Supportive school network
How to approach	Look for contact, show interest, enter to discussion of cultural background and children, show empathy, see where you can help, win trust	Enter into conversation about work, career, education; mention the functions of school advisory board and school board, interesting people participating in these, and what such participation could mean for career	Show a warm interest in the opinions and expectations of the parent with regard to child raising and education, gauge the need for (greater) involvement, be open to ideas of this parent

The last model we present here is based on a review study into definitions of parental involvement. Fox and Olsen (2014) developed a conceptual model of parental engagement combining modes of parental involvement and children’s outcomes; see Table 4.

Table 4. Parental engagement conceptual model (adapted from Fox and Olsen, 2014)

<i>Locus</i>	<i>Modes of parental involvement</i>	<i>Short term outcomes</i>	<i>Longer term outcomes</i>
Family-led learning	High expectations	Belief in the importance of education Self-efficacy Academic competence/confidence Motivation and engagement in learning Persistence Skills for learning Social and emotional wellbeing	Academic achievement: literacy and numeracy Mental health and wellbeing Mitigating the impacts of disadvantage on educational outcomes
	Shared reading		
	Parent-child conversation around learning, social issues, family stories		
	Homework support that provides an appropriate environment for learning		
	Cognitively stimulating environment		
Family-school partnership	Support for social and emotional wellbeing, peer relationships, teacher relationships		
	Communication about children's wellbeing and progress		
	Communication about what children are learning and what families can do		
	Engagement in the school community and positive attitudes to school		

The examples of parental involvement presented here point to a considerable diversity in typologies, classifications, roles, forms, and activities. At the same time, and notwithstanding this apparent diversity, almost all are ordered along the lines of just a few perspectives, namely locus (at home/at school), style (formal/informal), action (active/passive), and actor (parent/student/school). Important, however, is the question whether all of this involvement leads to the desired effect, which is the improvement of educational chances in general, and specifically those of disadvantaged students. In the next section, we will try and answer this question. We are not just interested in the effects of parental involvement in general, but even more in the effects of specific activities on specific outcome measures of differing categories of students.

EFFECTS OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

The results of many hundreds of studies have shown that a stronger parental involvement in their children's schooling is positively related to their cognitive and social functioning (Carter, 2002; Fan & Chen, 2001; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Jordan, 2001). However, there are also numerous studies that show null effects, or even negative effects (Boonk et al., 2018; Driessen et al., 2005; Gorard & Huat

See, 2013; Hattie, 2009). Regarding the latter, several researchers warn against a one-sided too optimistic picture because according to them studies with null or no effects often are not submitted to scientific journals or have a lesser chance of being accepted, the so-called file-drawer effect (Barger et al., 2019; Slavin, 2020).¹ Furthermore, most of the studies on parental involvement in education are based on cross-sectional and correlational designs, which – strictly speaking – do not permit causal interferences as to what affects what (Shute et al., 2001).² In this section we will not focus on individual studies, but on review studies and (statistical) meta-analyses. An advantage of the latter is that effects are expressed in some form of quantitative effect-size, a compact coefficient that gives an idea of the strength of a relation or effect. According to Barger et al. (2019), larger meta-analytic databases provide greater opportunity to analyze a wider range of moderator effects with more precision. This does not mean, however, that meta-analysis is a methodology without any problems (Cheung & Slavin, 2016). One very practical one is that most meta-analyses build on overlapping individual studies, that is, the results to a more or lesser degree are based on the same studies. In our search for appropriate studies we first performed a web-based search (incl. Google Scholar and ResearchGate) using many combinations of (alternatives for) “parental involvement” and (alternatives for) “student achievement”, and “meta-analysis” or “review study”, with a limitation to studies published after the year 2000. In addition, we made use of the “snowball method” and the author’s bookshelves to locate more studies. In the following overview we present the results of our findings, thereby concentrating on three aspects, viz. the overall effect of parental involvement, the effects of specific types of involvement, and their relationship with socioeconomic and ethnic and immigrant background.

In a synthesis of nine meta-analyses, i.e. a meta-analysis of meta-analyses, carried out between 1984 and 2007, Hattie (2009) found an effect size (Cohen’s *d*) of 0.51 for the average effect of parental involvement on achievement, which is regarded as a medium effect.³ Hattie established that there is much variance in the influence of parental involvement. When it involves a surveillance approach, the effects are negative; there are weaker effects in case the involvement relates to early interventions, and much stronger effects when it comprises parental aspirations and expectations, and when parents are more actively involved. More precisely, parental aspirations and expectations are strongest correlated with achievement (0.80), while modes of communication (such as interest in homework and school-work, assistance with homework, and discussing school progress) has a moderate

¹ In several studies this funnel effect or publication bias effect was examined, but could not be confirmed, though; e.g., Castro et al. (2015), Danişman (2017), Erdem and Kaya (2020), and Kim (2020).

² But this a general problem in social research.

³ According to Cohen’s rule of the thumb an effect size of 0.20 is small, an effect of 0.50 is medium, and an effect of 0.80 is large (Cohen, 1992).

effect (0.38). The effect of parental home supervision (like rules for watching tv, and home surroundings conducive to doing school work) has the weakest effect (0.18). In his overview, Hattie stresses the importance of the need for schools to work in partnerships with parents.

Shute et al. (2011) performed a review of the literature on effects of parental involvement on achievement, thereby specifically focusing on the secondary school level.⁴ According to these researchers identifying the influence of parental involvement is complicated by several factors: different definitions are used; hardly any experimental studies exist; mediating factors and interacting variables are often ignored. In their analyses Shute et al. therefore not only were interested in (bivariate) correlations between the parental involvement variables and achievement, but also in outcomes of structural equation modelling and controlling for mediating variables. In total they found 74 studies that met their criteria for inclusion. Their most important finding can be summarized as follows: there is seldom more than a small-to-moderate association between any of the various forms of parental involvement and academic achievement.⁵ The strongest associations appear to be: discussions about school activities between parent and child (positive); parents' aspirations and expectations for their children (positive); and parental styles, in particular an authoritative style (positive) and authoritarian and permissive styles (both negative). In addition to small positive associations, the researchers also reported several negative associations. They stress the need to be cautious about interpreting correlational data. An illustrative example is the following. The variable "parents checking homework" is often negatively associated with achievement. The reason for this probably is that parents tend to check homework more vigilantly in case their child has learning or behavioral problems, making checking homework an effect rather than a cause of poor academic achievement (also see Barger et al., 2019; Castro et al., 2015).

Jeynes (2012) performed a meta-analysis specifically focusing on urban areas. According to him this is necessary because the context and circumstances there differ greatly from other areas. He synthesized 51 studies analyzing the relation between parental participation programs and academic achievement of students from pre-kindergarten to 12th grade secondary school. The studies were published between 1964 and 2006. Unlike earlier studies he concentrated on involvement *programs*, distinguishing between a general involvement program and a range of specific types of involvement programs. He did not differentiate between different types of achievement measures, however. The effect sizes he computed ranged from $d = 1.91$ to -0.21 ; all but two effects were positive. The overall involvement program produced an effect size of 0.30. He found a somewhat smaller effect size in

⁴ They presented no date range.

⁵ Unfortunately they used not one type effect size, but several, which complicates reporting in a uniform quantitative way.

the educational levels of kindergarten and primary school (0.29) than in the secondary education stage (0.35). Regarding the estimates for specific types of involvement, the effect size estimates were: shared reading 0.51; partnership/collaboration teachers-parents 0.35; checking homework 0.27; communication parents-teachers 0.28; Head Start 0.22 (n.s.); English as a Second Language 0.22 (n.s.).

In their review study, Bakker et al. (2013) examined a total of 111 studies into effects of parental involvement on academic achievement and on the non-cognitive outcomes motivation, well-being, and self-esteem of students of different ages. The results of these studies, which were published between 2003 and 2013, showed that for students of all ages involvement of parents at home is the most effective strategy. Significantly less important is the involvement in school and the contact between parents and teachers. The researchers do not report exact effect size coefficients; they conclude, nevertheless, that effects in general are small or even very small. On a total of 135 effects, 78 percent was positive, was 19 negative, and 4 percent was a null effect.⁶ Bakker et al. conclude that regarding the effectiveness of parental involvement the socioeconomic and cultural background of families play a role, but it is difficult to establish this association unambiguously. In some studies parental involvement is a mediating variable, while in other studies interaction effects point to differential effects for different categories. In case interaction effects have been reported, they mostly point to more favorable effects for lower than for higher socioeconomic milieus.

Wilder (2014) synthesized the results of nine meta-analyses published between 2001 and 2012 that examined the impact of various types of parental involvement on academic achievement. These types were: parental involvement – academic achievement; home supervision; parental participation; parental expectations; and homework assistance. The results showed that the relationship was positive, regardless of the type of parental involvement or the measure of achievement.⁷ This association was strongest if involvement was defined as parental expectations for academic achievement of their children; the influence was weakest if involvement was operationalized as homework assistance. The relationship between parental involvement and academic achievement was consistent across different grade levels and ethnic groups, but the strength of that relationship varied according to the way student achievement was measured. Regarding the latter, the impact may be significantly stronger if there is a more global measure of the achievement rather than a specific measure.

Castro et al. (2015) performed a quantitative synthesis of research into parental involvement and academic achievement through a meta-analysis of 37 studies in kindergarten, primary and secondary schools, carried out between 2000 and 2013. They differentiated between seven modes of involvement: general involvement;

⁶ Multiple effects per study were possible.

⁷ Wilder did not report effect size coefficients.

communication with children; homework; parental expectations; reading with children; parental attendance and participation; parental style. In addition they discerned seven measures of academic achievement: general achievement; mathematics; reading; sciences; social studies; foreign language; other. Because of small numbers they did not distinguish between ethnic or immigrant groups. Effect size estimations (d) for the various types of involvement varied from 0.01 to 0.22, that is, non-existent to small. The average effect size of 0.12 can be interpreted as less than small. The analyses revealed that the parental activities most linked to high achievement are those focusing on general supervision of the children's learning activities. The strongest (but nevertheless small) associations were found when families have high academic expectations for their children (0.22), develop and maintain communication with them about school matters (0.20), and help them to develop adequate reading habits (0.17). The effects according to outcome measure varied from -0.01 (science; n.s.) to 0.39 (other curricular subjects). With regard to educational level, the largest effect was for secondary education (0.14), followed by primary education (0.13) and kindergarten (0.05).

For his meta-analysis Danişman, Ş. (2017) collected a total of 1640 empirical research studies performed between 2005 and 2016, but only 119 could be included in the multilevel analyses. The fact that so many of the studies, nearly three quarters, did not meet the inclusion criteria (often regarding methodology) is typical of this type of studies. The results of a sophisticated random effects model analyses demonstrated that parental involvement has a low-level positive effect of $r = 0.21$ on student achievement.⁸ Danişman also examined the role of several moderator variables in the relation involvement-achievement. He found no statistically significant difference between the levels of effect of the sample groups examined, viz. preschool, elementary school, middle school, high school, and university. Neither were there statistical differences according to school subject, viz. language, mathematics, science, or other.

In a meta-analysis of 28 studies published between 1990 and 2012, Jeynes (2017) analyzed the relationship between parental involvement and the academic achievement and school behavior of pre-kindergarten to college-age children of one specific ethnic group, namely the Latinos. Effect sizes (d) were computed for parental involvement overall, and for specific categories of involvement (cf. Jeynes, 2012). Results indicated a significant relationship between parental involvement and academic achievement and overall outcomes, but not for school behavior (non was significant). For parental involvement as a whole, the effects on achievement ranged from 1.90 to -0.12 with all but one effect being positive; the average effect was 0.52. This relationship existed both for younger (grades K-5) and older (secondary school and college freshman) students. However, when

⁸ The interpretation of r differs somewhat from that of d . A correlation of 0.10 is considered small, 0.30 is medium, 0.50 is large, and 0.70 is very large (Cohen, 1992).

sophisticated controls were used, the effect size decreased dramatically (from 0.52 to 0.22). In addition, the effects were stronger for non-standardized academic outcomes (1.28) than for standardized outcomes (0.31). Jeynes also computed effect sizes for different outcome measures, namely reading, math, science, and social studies. The effect sizes appeared to be identical (all were 0.47). The analyses also indicated that among the specific types of parental involvement, parental style and strong parent-child communication were associated with higher levels of academic achievement (0.31 and 0.34, respectively).

Boonk et al. (2018) analyzed the results of 75 studies performed between 2003 and 2017 examining the relation between parental involvement and academic achievement. They made a distinction between the phases of early childhood education, elementary school, and middle school and beyond. Though they conclude that according to those studies parental involvement indeed is related to children's academic achievement, they also relativize this finding by remarking that this association is not as strong as traditionally believed. In the studies analyzed the researchers found small to medium associations between various parental involvement variables and academic achievement.⁹ The most consistent and positive relations were found for: reading at home; parents holding high expectations for their children's academic achievement and schooling; communication between parents and children regarding school; and parental encouragement and support for learning. Boonk et al. caution, however, that while there clearly are forms of parental involvement that are positively related to achievement, several studies consistently suggest the opposite. Their overviews show that only 61 percent of the effects are positive, while 15 percent are negative, and in 24 percent of the cases there is no effect. Rather than assuming that any form of involvement is a good thing, educators, parents, and researchers should therefore be aware that some forms of involvement just do not work or might actually lead to declines in achievement. To make matters even more complicated, Boonk et al. remark that not all forms of parental involvement are the same for all ethnic/racial groups.¹⁰

In another study, Barger et al. (2019) performed a statistical meta-analysis of 448 studies published between 1964 and 2016. They described their results in terms of correlation coefficients (*r*). Barger et al. reported small positive associations (0.13 to 0.23) between parental involvement in their children's schooling and the children's academic outcome measures achievement, engagement, and motivation. Parental involvement was also positively associated with social and emotional adjustment (0.12 and 0.17, respectively), but it was negatively related to the children's delinquency (-0.15). Different types of involvement, such as parents' participation in school events and discussion of school with children, were likewise positively related to the academic adjustment measures. Parental homework assis-

⁹ They did not report actual effect sizes.

¹⁰ Though there only is a limited number of studies available to prove this.

tance, though, was negatively associated with their children's achievement (-0.15), but not with their engagement and motivation (0.07 and 0.05, respectively). According to Barger et al. there is a reason to believe that multiple dimensions of children's outcomes reinforce one another over time. The analyses also revealed that little variation existed due to the moderating variables age, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status in the association between different types of involvement and the children's academic outcome measures. Reasons for this disappointing finding may be that the classifications of socioeconomic status used in the analyses were not fine-grained enough and that the number of studies specifically focusing on ethnic minorities was relatively small.

Erdem and Kaya (2020) examined the effects of parental involvement on students' academic achievement at the levels of pre-school, elementary school and secondary school. In their meta-analysis they distinguished between home-based and school-based parental involvement strategies, including control, learning assistance, communication, support, activity, academic socialization and expectation. For their analyses they selected 55 research studies published between 2010 and 2019. Their analyses revealed that the effect of parental involvement on academic achievement (expressed as the correlation coefficient r) was positive but (very) small, ranging from -0.10 to 0.29; the mean effect was 0.09. Parental expectations had the biggest effect (0.29) on academic achievement and parental control produced a negative and small effect (-0.10). School-based involvement had a (slightly) stronger effect on academic achievement than home-based involvement. The effects did not differ significantly according to the moderator variables of academic area and education level.

Kim (2020) conducted a meta-analysis of the relation parental involvement and school-age student achievement, specifically focusing on East Asian countries. These countries are characterized by high achievement levels, a relatively standardized education system, and no policies encouraging family-school relations. Instead, parents in these countries are more likely to be heavily involved in the home situation. His main research question was whether the relationship between involvement and achievement is positive overall in East Asian countries, and whether the strength of the association across different types of involvement is similar compared with that found for (mostly) U.S. samples. Kim located 15 studies published between 1990 and 2017 and conducted moderator analyses across various types of involvement. He discerned the following three categories of involvement: school involvement (attendance and participation in school activities, communication with school); home involvement (parent-child communication about school, home supervision, checking homework, homework assistance, reading with children); and academic socialization (education expectations and aspirations, parental attitudes toward education). The analyses showed an average significant positive relation of $r = 0.12$ (range - 0.01 - 0.35), which can be interpreted as weak. The relation

for each of the categories of involvement also was significant and positive. The association was strongest for academic socialization (0.31), followed by home involvement (0.08), and school involvement (0.05). Kim also found that the relation between parental involvement and achievement was stronger in the higher grades of secondary school (0.17) than in elementary school (0.05). He concluded that the effects of parental involvement in East Asian countries are very similar (though weaker) as those in other countries. Worthy of note is the finding that, just like in for instance the U.S., academic socialization (i.e., expectations and aspirations) of parents toward education is the most important mode of involvement for student achievement. This is remarkable because in East Asia aspirations are uniformly high, which might preclude much variation and thus any strong association between academic socialization and achievement.

To summarize the results of the twelve meta-analyses reported on here, we conclude that there are many similarities but also some differences. First of all, for the studies that reported effect size coefficients, the average effect (in terms of d ; r s were converted here into d s; Lenhard & Lenhard, 2016) ranged from 0.12 to 0.52, that is, from no/neglectable effect to small/moderate effect. For the studies that reported their findings in qualitative terms, the effects ranged – in similar wordings – from less than small/very small to medium/moderate. Extreme effect sizes for individual effects were reported by Jeynes (2012, 2017), which ranged from -0.21 to 1.91 . An explanation for such “outliers” may be that his data included many small samples (Cheung & Slavin, 2016). Another reason could be that in both studies Jeynes focused on specific samples, namely in the first study on students living in urban areas, and in the second study on Latinos. In addition to positive effects, also many negative and null effects were reported. In two studies the percentage positive effects was 61 and 78, the percentage negative effects 15 and 19, and the percentage null effects 4 and 24. In most studies in addition to the overall effect of parental involvement effects for specific types of involvement were also computed. The type with the strongest effect in several studies is parents having high aspirations and expectations for the child; d s were up to 0.88, which is considered as a large effect. In some studies analyses focused on possible effect differences according to age or educational level. The findings are inconclusive: in some studies no differences were found, in other studies the effects were stronger for secondary education than for primary education and kindergarten. A few studies performed specific analyses looking for differences according to ethnicity and social background. These studies could not establish differences, but one study warns that because of mediating variables and interaction effects it is difficult to establish this association unambiguously. Studies focusing on differences according to outcome measure reported no differences, while analyses focusing on differences according to subject did find differences.

CONCLUSIONS

Parental involvement is often seen as an important means of contributing to successful educational careers of children, and especially of children from disadvantaged backgrounds stemming from unfavorable ethnic, immigrant and socioeconomic backgrounds. Therefore, in educational disadvantage policies and programs all sorts of parental involvement activities receive warm attention. However, whether this is warranted is the question. While there are many empirical studies that report positive effects of parental involvement on student achievement, there are also numerous studies that find null effects, or even negative effects. This article focused on possible roles of parents in their children's schooling. It aimed at answering two questions: What typologies and classifications of parental involvement can be discerned, and what are the effects of such parental activities on their children's attainment? To find an answer a review of the literature was conducted and the results from twelve meta-analyses were synthesized.

At first sight, the literature review showed there to be considerable diversity in typologies and classifications. Notwithstanding this apparent variety, almost all can be ordered along the lines of just a few perspectives, namely locus (at home/at school), style (formal/informal), action (active/passive), and actor (parent/student/school). Thus, the diversity to a large degree boils down to much similarity and overlap. From the synthesis of the meta-analyses it can be concluded that the averaged effects of involvement on attainment range from no/neglectable to small/moderate at the most. In addition to positive effects there were substantial numbers of null and even negative effects. It is probably fair to conclude that the average effect is only small. The type of involvement producing the strongest effect in several studies appeared to be parents having high aspirations and expectations for their child. Studies specifically looking for effects according to ethnic/immigrant and social background could not establish any differences, though it was emphasized that it is difficult to determine this association unambiguously.

What does the above mean? The most important conclusion undoubtedly is that prudence is called for when it comes to pointing to parental involvement as the panacea for closing the gap between the educational performance of children from ethnic/immigrant and low socioeconomic backgrounds and that of children from more favorable ethnic/immigrant and socioeconomic backgrounds. Despite the presence of empirical evidence signifying the importance of parental involvement for the learning of children, it definitively is not the magic potion hoped for (cf. Goodall & Vorhaus, 2011; Gorard, 2013; Punter et al., 2016). What the implications are for not finding effect differences according to disadvantage status is not clear. Having high aspirations and expectations appears to be the most promising type of parental involvement. This is "just" a matter of attitude and does not presume specific skills, capacities and high levels of schooling. Studies suggest, however, that especially

immigrant parents have high aspirations for their children, often higher than that of ethnic majority parents (Driessen et al., 2008). An important relativization then could be whether their aspirations are not too optimistic and unrealistic.

Notwithstanding the seemingly unequivocal outcomes summarized here, there remain many inconsistencies and ambiguities. In addition, there are several limitations to our study. Firstly, a synthesis of meta-analyses unavoidably means that many individual studies are included in each of the meta-analyses and that there thus is considerable overlap. It is not clear, however, how this influences the total results. Secondly, the interpretation of any effect is very complicated. There are numerous definitions and operationalizations of “parental involvement”, which makes it very hard to compare results. To make things even more complicated, there also are many different indicators of “student achievement”. This undoubtedly leads to comparing apples and oranges. Thirdly, nearly all studies are correlational by design, some apply structural equation or multi-level modelling. Several perform analyses with mediating or moderating variables. We did not find any longitudinal or experimental studies. In a correlational design parents (and teachers) are asked (typically in a written questionnaire) to give an indication of their involvement and (at the same time) students are tested for academic achievement and behavior. As a consequence, it is – strictly speaking – not possible to draw conclusions with regard to causation (“effects”). At least three types of parent involvement can be discerned: (1) There are parents who are permanently involved in their children’s education, for instance by reading to them, helping them with their homework, attending a parents’ evening, or helping the teacher in the class. (2) There are also parents who are not involved at all, for instance because they are illiterate, don’t speak the language, have had no or only little education themselves, or who do not believe in the power of education or who feel that education is not something for their kind of people. (3) And then there are parents who normally are not involved in their children’s education, but only become active when they are alerted by the teacher or by low report grades and bad behavior. The latter thus is a reaction to a negative situation, mostly in terms of low achievement or bad behavior. Analytically seen, the first two types of parents are relatively straightforward. The third type, however, complicates any analysis dramatically. And there are hardly any studies where this crucial distinction is made, while this is critical for an adequate interpretation of the results. In fact, only in longitudinal experimental studies with several measurement points focusing on both parental activities and achievement/behavior it is possible to draw valid conclusions. To sum up, the reliability and validity of most studies into effects of parent involvement is questionable.

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