The role of parental involvement in academic achievement trajectories of elementary school children with Southeast Asian and Taiwanese mothers

Fang-Hua Jhang⁎, Yeau-Tarn Lee

⁎ Corresponding author at: Center for General Education, Ming Chuan University, Taiwan.
E-mail address: doubleeclctic@yahoo.com.tw (F.-H. Jhang).

1. Introduction

Academic achievement gaps between immigrant and native children have been an issue of concern among educational researchers and policymakers (Levin & Shohamy, 2008; Kao, 1995; Kao & Rutherford, 2007; Kieffer, 2011). Most studies conducted within Western countries have indicated that both family backgrounds and parental involvement can partly explain academic gaps in reading or in math scores among children from immigrant and non-immigrant families (Kao & Rutherford, 2007; Yan & Lin, 2005), but that the effect of parental involvement on the growth rate of reading and math among immigrants is insignificant (Jeong & Acock, 2014). The growing independence of respondents in middle and late adolescence from their parents may explain the non-significant result. Given that children are more influenced by their parents at the elementary school stage, the association of parental involvement with initial performance and academic growth rate may be manifested in elementary school. Parental involvement is treated as a form of social capital by which parents can affect their children’s educational outcomes (Dufur et al., 2013; Jeong & Acock, 2014; Lee & Bowen, 2006), but little is known about how parental involvement factors influence the trajectories of achievement differences between immigrant and native children during early adolescence.

A local study finds that native students outperform new immigrant students (atypical second-generation students with mothers...
Capital reduces the possibility that parents transmit their human capital and skills to their children. Home-based and school-based involvement, because parental involvement signifies purposeful investment in children. After reviewing the literature relating to social capital, it is clear that home-based involvement usually includes parent-child discussion (Jeong & Acock, 2014; Kao, 1995; Lee & Bowen, 2006; Yan & Lin, 2005), parental expectation (Jeong & Acock, 2014; Lee & Bowen, 2006; Yan & Lin, 2005) and family rules (Kao, 1995; Yan & Lin, 2005). Two common components are presented when researchers conceptualize school-based involvement, i.e., intergenerational closure and participation in school-based activities (Kao & Rutherford, 2007; Yan & Lin, 2005). As compared with home-based involvement, school-based involvement focuses on parents’ relations with school as well as with the parents of their children’s friends. Intergenerational closure, originating from Coleman’s concepts, refers to a type of social network where parents have contact with the parents of their children’s friends. Parents can gather information and set expectations and norms for their children through the parents of their children’s friends, even when their children are not willing to disclose academic scores to their parents. Once this network of closure is established, it provides information and norms which are available to each parent in educating their children. Simply put, parents in this social network will monitor academic performance not only for their own children but also for the children of others (Coleman, 1988). Participation in school-based activities includes attending open house or school events, which increases interactions between parents and teachers (Kao & Rutherford, 2007; Turney & Kao, 2009). The five dimensions of parental involvement can transmit necessary information, expectations and norms to children, which may facilitate educational outcomes, but they are rarely explored simultaneously in the extant literature.

1.2. Immigrant differences in parental involvement

The extent of parental involvement varies across different immigrant groups. In the Netherlands, immigrant parents are as much involved in parent-child discussion as the average Dutch family (Cabus & Ariès, 2017). Mexican immigrant parents have lower...
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