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ABSTRACT. This study investigated the relationship between parental involvement and their children being picked on or bullied and being discriminated against based on their race during their elementary and secondary school years. The influence of parental involvement on academic achievement during that period was also examined. Specific aspects of parental involvement and an overall parental involvement variable were examined. Two different samples were examined. The first sample was made up of 139 college students, and the second sample consisted of 102 seventh to 12th grade students. Analysis of variance and logistic regression analysis were used. The results indicated that higher levels of parental involvement were associated with higher academic achievement among their children. However, the remainder of the analyses showed mixed results with the effects of parental involvement emerging as more robust with the college sample than for the 7th to 12th grade sample. Overall, it does appear that parental involvement is somewhat related to a lower incidence of children being picked on and discriminated against. The significance of these results is discussed.

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INTRODUCTION

Over the last two decades, researchers have sought to quantify the influence of parental involvement on a variety of outcomes (Spera, 2005; Wallace & Walberg, 1993). Most of this research has focused on the influence of parental involvement on the academic outcomes of school children (Griffith, 1996, 1997; Hampton, Mumford, & Bond, 1998; Jeynes, 2003, 2005, 2007; Marcon, 1999; Peressini, 1998). Moreover, educators have increasingly identified parental involvement as the primary vehicle by which to elevate academic achievement from current levels (Hara, 1998). The body of research has developed to a point in which increasingly social scientists not only realize that parental support aids in student school outcomes, but they have a much better idea about which components of parental involvement help the most (Jeynes, 2003, 2005). Although a considerable degree of knowledge exists about parental involvement's impact on academic variables, little is known about its influence on other youth experiences such as bullying, discrimination, and being mugged.

The current interest expressed by sociologists and educators on the influence of parental involvement is not surprising, particularly because the body of research indicates that family factors are considerably more influential than school factors on grades and scores (Coleman, Hoffer, & Kilgore, 1982; Hoffer, Greeley, & Coleman, 1987). In reality, such factors as the parental family structure, family education level, and family communication and engagement are better predictors of student achievement than are a conglomeration of school factors (Coleman et al., 1982; Hoffer et al., 1987; Jeynes, 2002). When one contemplates the amount of time children spend at home versus school, this finding really is not surprising.

Increasingly, parental involvement has become one of the hottest topics in the social sciences. It is not that the idea of parental involvement in school is new. It has been an emphasis in American schooling since the early 1600s (Chamberlin, 1961; Gangel & Benson, 1983). Nevertheless, within the last 20 years social scientists have resurrected the concept, and moreover they contend that it may concurrently

represent the most underutilized and vitally important component of education (Epstein, 2001; Hoover-Dempsey, Walker, & Jones, 2002).

In recent years, three developments in parental involvement research have energized those interested in studying parental roles and functions. First, social scientists have propounded more sophisticated theories and models regarding the interaction of parents, schools, and communities and attempted to apply those models to foster positive academic outcomes (Epstein & Sanders, 2006; Sanders & Epstein, 2000). Second, recent meta-analyses have given the research community insight in the particular facets of parental involvement that are the most salient and the extent to which the effects of parental engagement hold across race and gender (Jeynes, 2003, 2005, 2007). These meta-analyses indicate that even if one examines only parental involvement programs, in which schools invite parents to become engaged in their children's education who in some cases otherwise would not, the effects of parental involvement are noteworthy (Jeynes, 2003, 2005, 2007). Third, social scientists have gained a greater understanding of the actions that teachers can take to foster parental support and the community agencies, such as churches and other houses of worship, that are available to expedite the formation of stronger ties between parents and schools (Green & Hoover-Dempsey, 2007; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997).

At a symposium sponsored by the Harvard Family Research Project in 2005, four prominent researchers on parental involvement called for a broadening of the parental involvement research agenda to include the full gamut of social science disciplines (Redding, 2005). One of the objectives in this broadening was to examine parental involvement as it affects children's lives across a wider range of educational, psychological, and sociological dimensions (Redding, 2005). With this exhortation in mind, it is important for family scientists to realize that it is conceivable that parental involvement may affect other aspects of children's school and neighborhood experiences as well. Although it is no doubt important that parents help children succeed academically, if parental support can reduce the incidence of other deleterious experiences such as bullying and discrimination, this is important to note as well. Discrimination and bullying are frequent topics of academic articles (Gibbons, Gerrard, Cleveland, Wills, & Brody, 2004; Schafer, Carter, & Katz-Bannister, 2004). Nevertheless, there is very little research examining whether parental

involvement is associated with a reduction in these experiences in the lives of children.

The question, therefore, emerges: Can parental involvement really improve the quality of life for children in terms of the experience of discrimination and bullying? This study surveys the elementary and secondary school experiences of students at a major university in California and a school in a major metropolitan area in California to address the following questions. First, to what degree is parental involvement associated with lower levels of discrimination experienced by these students in their K–12 experiences? Second, to what degree is parental involvement associated with lower levels of bullying experienced by these students in their K–12 experiences? Third, to what degree is parental involvement associated with higher levels of academic achievement? This study is particularly important because, in accordance with the Harvard Family Research Project recommendation, it expands the research base and academic discussion of parental involvement into relatively new and salient territory.

Consistent with the results of three recent meta-analyses on parental involvement, this study examines parental involvement generally and addresses the effects of specific components of parental involvement, such as parental expectations and parent-child communications, that studies have shown to be some of the most salient aspects of parental involvement (Afifi & Olson, 2005; Englund, Luckner, Whaley, & Egeland, 2004; Jeynes, 2003, 2005, 2007; Zhan, 2006). By parental expectations this does not mean standards established in an authoritarian way (Zellman & Waterman, 1998). In fact, if parental standards are too rigidly applied, this may backfire and cause resistance in the child (Zellman & Waterman, 1998). Rather, high parental expectations as defined in these meta-analyses refers more to an unspoken acknowledgment that the parents anticipate that the child will achieve at a certain level and that the child will go to college (Jeynes, 2005, 2007). Parent-child communication refers primarily to communication about school but can refer to other manifestations of communication as well.

METHODS AND DATA SOURCES

In this project surveys were administered to two groups of individuals: a group made up of college students from California and

a group of 7th to 12th grade students attending a school in a major metropolitan area in California. A survey was developed that addressed various school experiences, including parental involvement, discrimination, bullying, academic achievement, and other experiences. The college survey included 25 questions made up of 23 multiple-choice questions and 2 open-ended questions. We randomly selected 139 (69.5%) college students from a sample of 200 students from a major California university. The 7th to 12th grade survey consisted of the same questions, with the exception of the questions on discrimination. This was because a set of pilot study interviews indicated that many of the students were not sufficiently able to recognize, understand, and describe the experience of discrimination. Permission was obtained from the school principal and teachers to conduct the study in the school. In the case of the secondary school student sample, we randomly selected 102 (69.4%) students from a sample of 147 students. We then analyzed the results using analysis of variance and logistic regression analysis.

Both the college and secondary school students were asked to respond to these questions, based on their experiences as elementary and secondary school students. On the questionnaires, students identified themselves by race, gender, and income level for the period being examined. They also indicated the degree to which their parents were involved in their education along various dimensions of parental involvement: (1) parents' involvement in helping their child in school, (2) parent-child communication about school, and (3) parental expectations. Multiple-choice questions on discrimination and bullying asked the students whether they had experienced a given type of discrimination or bullying "never," "very rarely," "sometimes," "frequently," or "very frequently." Questions on discrimination were specific in terms of the source; on various individual questions, the students were asked the extent to which they had been discriminated against by teachers, neighbors, and so forth. Each type of response was assigned a number (0-4, where 0 = "never"). To determine the overall level of discrimination, the responses for the individual discrimination questions were added together. For questions regarding bullying, the students were asked not only the frequency of the bullying, but also the primary reason(s) why they were bullied (e.g., whether they were overweight, nerds, gay, and so forth). Students were also asked to report their school grade point average. Open-ended questions were also coded to give further insight into the quantitative results.

RESULTS

Table 1 lists the results for the effects of the three components of parental involvement combined (parental involvement in helping their child in school [i.e., the specific component of parental involvement], parent-child communication about school, and parental expectations) and separately the specific component of parental involvement as they relate to academic achievement, being picked on or bullied and experiencing discrimination. The results indicate that among the college students the overall parental involvement measure yielded statistically significant results for all three of the dependent variables. Statistically significant results emerged for the combined measure of parental involvement for academic achievement ($F(1, 138) = 7.87, p < .01$), being picked on or bullied ($F(1, 138) = 7.94, p < .01$), and experiencing discrimination ($F(1, 137) = 7.29, p < .01$). Analyses were then conducted controlling for race, gender, and family income and yielded the following statistically significant

TABLE 1. Effects of Parental Involvement (Combined and Specific Parental Involvement Variable)

	Combined Parental Involvement Measure for College Sample (N = 138)	Combined Parental Involvement Measure for School Sample (N = 102)	Parental Involvement Measure for College Sample (N = 138)	Parental Involvement Measure for School Sample (N = 102)
Never been picked on	11.55**	10.12	3.81**	3.44
Remainder of sample	9.32**	9.89	2.99**	3.42
GPA of 3.5 or higher	11.52**	11.47***	3.77**	3.43**
GPA of 3.5 or lower	9.47**	8.17***	3.03**	2.74**
Low incidence of being discriminated against	11.50**	NA	3.94**	NA
High incidence of being discriminated against	9.32**	NA	2.99**	NA

** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$; NA = not available.

results for academic achievement ($F(1, 138) = 7.68, p < .01$), being picked on or bullied ($F(1, 138) = 7.84, p < .01$), and experiencing discrimination ($F(1, 137) = 7.45, p < .01$).

The results for the specific component of parental involvement indicated that the college group demonstrated statistically significant effects for all three variables, although the extent of the effects sometimes did not reach a level of statistical significance as for the combined measure of parental involvement for academic achievement. Effects were found for the specific component of parental involvement ($F(1, 138) = 7.77, p < .01$), for being picked on or bullied ($F(1, 138) = 7.50, p < .01$), and for experiencing discrimination ($F(1, 138) = 8.07, p < .01$). When race, gender, and family income were controlled for the following results materialized for academic achievement ($F(1, 138) = 7.64, p < .01$), being picked on or bullied ($F(1, 138) = 7.54, p < .01$), and experiencing discrimination ($F(1, 137) = 8.00, p < .01$).

The findings for the examination of 7th to 12th grade students indicated similar results to the college group for scholastic outcomes but a different pattern for being picked on or bullied. For the combined measure of parental involvement statistically significant results emerged for academic achievement ($F(1, 101) = 8.49, p < .01$) both for when race, gender, and family income were controlled for and when they were not. But this variable did not yield statistically significant results for being picked on or bullied. Similarly, for the specific parental involvement variable a statistically significant result emerged for academic achievement ($F(1, 101) = 7.85, p < .01$) both for when race, gender, and family income were controlled for and when they were not. However, a statistically significant result but did not arise for being picked on or bullied.

Table 2 shows the results for the other two components of parental involvement, parent expectations and parent-child communications, with similar patterns to the results listed in Table 1. For the college sample the parental expectations variable yielded statistically significant results for academic achievement ($F(1, 138) = 7.61, p < .01$), being picked on ($F(1, 137) = 7.48, p < .01$), and being discriminated against ($F(1, 138) = 7.83, p < .01$). When race, gender, and family income were controlled for, the results were different for academic achievement ($F(1, 138) = 7.45, p < .01$), for being picked on or bullied ($F(1, 138) = 7.58, p < .01$), and for being discriminated against ($F(1, 137) = 7.55, p < .01$). Parent-child communication was not

TABLE 2. Effects of Two Components of Parental Involvement: Parental Expectations and Parent-child Communication (Combined and Specific Parental Involvement Variable)

	Parental Expectations Measure for College Sample (N = 138)	Parental Expectations Measure for School Sample (N = 102)	Parent-Child Communication Measure for College Sample (N = 138)	Parent-Child Communication Measure for School Sample (N = 102)
Never been picked on	4.05**	3.52	3.72*	3.42
Remainder of sample	3.16**	3.38	3.29*	3.52
GPA of 3.5 or higher	3.84**	3.15	3.51	3.38**
GPA of 3.5 or lower	3.15**	3.32	3.35	2.78**
Low incidence of being discriminated against	4.00**	NA	3.71*	NA
High incidence of being discriminated against	3.27**	NA	3.34*	NA

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$; NA = not available.

quite as strongly associated with the dependent variables as were the other independent variables. Nevertheless, statistically significant results arose for being picked on or bullied ($F(1, 137) = 5.09, p < .05$) and for being discriminated against ($F(1, 137) = 4.82, p < .05$). When race, gender, and family income were controlled for the results were different for being picked on or bullied ($F(1, 137) = 4.90, p < .05$) and for being discriminated against, being picked on or bullied ($F(1, 137) = 4.87, p < .01$).

The results for the 7th to 12th grade parental expectations did not yield statistically significant results for academic achievement or for being picked on or bullied. As in the case of the college sample, the levels of statistical significance were somewhat less dynamic for parent-child communication. Effects were found for when race, gender, and family income were controlled for ($F(1, 136) = 5.88, p < .05$) and when they were not ($F(1, 136) = 5.93, p < .05$). The results were statistically insignificant for being picked on or bullied. Further analyses also indicated no statistically significant differences between

TABLE 3. Results of Secondary Analyses by Family Structure and Race: Differences in College Sample According to Family Structure, Race, and Using Logistic Regression Analysis (N = 138)

	Average Grade Point Average	Extent Picked on or Bullied as a Child	Total Reported Discrimination From All Sources Combined	Intense Discrimination (i.e., being physically attacked by a person from another race)
By family structure				
Child from intact family	3.51**	1.35*	11.42*	1.15
Child from nonintact family	2.88**	1.87*	12.86*	1.20
By race				
White	3.63** ^a	1.51 ^a	11.77** ^a	1.42** ^a
Asian-American	3.57** ^a	1.57 ^a	12.20 ^a	1.46** ^a
African-American	2.87** ^a	1.92 ^a	16.09** ^a	0.50 ^a
Latino	3.05** ^a	1.98** ^a	12.87 ^a	0.72 ^a

^aStatistical significance determined on this basis of mean number for this race when compared with all other races combined.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

children with parents who were highly involved or had high expectations versus those who did not in terms of the likelihood that they were mugged.

Secondary analyses of the college sample also indicated that students from intact families obtained higher grades and were less likely to be bullied or discriminated against than those youth who lived in nonintact families (Table 3). In addition, African-Americans were the most likely to report that they had been discriminated against on all measures combined. However, Whites and Asian-Americans were the most likely to report the most intense discrimination measured, being physically beaten by a person of another race.

Additional secondary analysis indicated that students of all races were more likely to identify discrimination as coming from strangers than from people who were neighbors or who were otherwise familiar with the student. The most and least likely reasons for which students were bullied included (1) being perceived as too nice to fight back,

(2) being overweight, (3) being unpopular with the availability of few friends to help, (4) racial issues, and (5) being a nerd. The least likely reason for being bullied was being gay.

DISCUSSION

The results affirm the relationship between parental involvement and academic achievement, but more importantly for the purpose of this study they suggest that parental involvement is related to the two other student experiences, namely being picked on or bullied and being discriminated against. In this study the association between parental involvement and school outcomes was more ostensible than that between parental involvement and the two more sociologically based outcomes just mentioned. For the college sample the relationship between the combined measure of parental involvement and being picked on or bullied and being discriminated against was patent and consistent. In the case of 7th to 12th grade students their experience of discrimination was not examined for reasons previously addressed in the Methods section. However, the experience of being picked on or bullied was addressed. Unlike the findings that emerged for the college sample, no statistically significant result emerged for the combined parental involvement variable and being picked on or bullied.

The pattern of the results raises the possibility that parental involvement may have more of an influence on scholastic outcomes than it does on the experience of being picked on or bullied or being discriminated against. However, beyond this the question emerges as to why strong statistically significant effects emerged for the college sample for this variable but did not materialize for the secondary school sample. One possibility is that the secondary school sample is more reliable because the memory of those new to college has faded, and they either no longer remember the degree to which their parents were involved in their schooling or they do not recall to the degree to which other children bullied them. On the other hand, one can argue that the college sample is more reliable. After all, one can posit that college students on average have a more mature and accurate perspective than do secondary school students. For example, adolescents can become blind to the multifarious ways that their parents sacrifice for them and become involved in their lives.

What makes this issue difficult to resolve is that both perspectives appear somewhat intuitive. It may well be that the college sample is somewhat more reliable because they likely possess a more mature perspective. Moreover, given that this sample consists overwhelmingly of young adults, it is unlikely that the college sample's memory of youthful experiences faded to a considerable degree.

Although it seems reasonable to conclude that the responses of the college sample are more reliable than those of the secondary school sample, one cannot definitively reach this conclusion. Therefore social scientists need to conduct further research to determine the extent to which concurrent ratings of parental involvement and school experiences by secondary school students or ratings of recent parental involvement by young adults (i.e., college students) are more accurate. Nevertheless, whatever findings emerge from this recommended research, it is likely that the association between parental involvement and academic outcomes is more powerful.

This study supports the notion that parental involvement and parental expectations are associated with positive outcomes, beyond the realm of academic achievement. Specially, college students who reported that their parents were highly involved in their education indicated that, on average, they were less likely to be discriminated against and they were less likely to be picked on when they were children. In addition, these college students also reported that when their parents had high expectations of them, on average, they were less likely to be discriminated against and they were less likely to be picked on when they were children. This trend held not only for the overall measure of discrimination, but for the different components of discrimination as well.

The findings of this study are very important because they support the notion that parental involvement likely has an impact on more than just educational components of children's experiences. If family scientists, sociologists, educators, and psychologists are aware of these facts, they can instruct parents accordingly. Equally important is the fact that this study reinforces the validity of the call for broader parental involvement research by the researchers of the American Educational Research Association symposium sponsored by the Harvard Family Research Project in 2005. The results of this study suggest that simply examining the influence of parental involvement on academic achievement is too narrow an approach. It could well be that, consistent with the beliefs of Americans dating back to the

Puritans, parental support influences virtually every dimension of a child's life and that the present research agenda in the social sciences should reflect this fact.

Future research should build on the findings of this study and seek to examine the full gamut of potential effects that increased parental involvement might have. If the researchers who presented at the Harvard University symposium are correct, social scientists have thus far only scratched the surface in their cognizance of the wide-ranging impact of parental engagement. Therefore there is a patent need for academics and practitioners to place themselves in a position in which they can divulge more about the influence parental involvement. Additional studies should also be undertaken to investigate the pattern of results regarding parental involvement differing for secondary and postsecondary students. Studies such as those described will both enhance and broaden the body of knowledge regarding parental engagement in the lives of youth.

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