



Research Update for Professionals

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Is Parental Involvement Overrated?

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Many people would agree that the role of parental involvement is very important in promoting children's academic achievement. Community leaders, school officials, and teachers have all called for increases in parent involvement to improve children's academic performance. However, in the controversial New York Time [article](#), *Parental Involvement is Overrated*, Keith Robinson and Angel Harris state that most forms of parental involvement were not associated with improvements in test scores or grades for children of all races, ethnicities, or socioeconomic status. This article received a lot of backlash and many people thought that they overstated their findings. So, what did Robinson and Harris really find? This newsletter will review the research in Robinson and Harris' book *The Broken Compass: Parental Involvement with Children's Education*.

Study Questions and Results:

- **Can greater parental involvement reduce racial achievement gaps?**
 - There seem to be only small racial differences in parental involvement and a large portion of the achievement gap seems to remain when controlling for levels of parental involvement.
 - Therefore, we cannot conclude that the racial achievement gap can be explained by less parental involvement in black or Hispanic families. It seems as though socioeconomic disparity more likely explains this gap.
- **How should parents respond to inadequate achievement?**
 - Nonpunitive parenting philosophies are associated with improvements in reading and math achievement.
 - However, punitive parenting philosophies are associated with poorer performance in reading and math.
 - Quite possibly, parents who employ nonpunitive parenting strategies create a more positive environment around schoolwork, which leads to the next conclusion.
- **An alternative conception of parental involvement: Stage setting.**
 - Conveying the importance of education to children may be important in children's academic achievement.
 - Also, creating and maintaining an environment where learning can be maximized and not compromise is important.
 - Notably, controlling the environment may be more difficult for socioeconomic disadvantaged families, which could partially explain the racial gap.

Conclusion:

Consistent with existing research, nonpunitive parental involvement seems to be beneficial for children's academic performance. Also, creating an environment that promotes the importance of education seems to influence children's academic achievement. Future research should consider the effectiveness of specific types of parental involvement and racial and socioeconomic differences in the effectiveness. Robinson and Harris' research does not seem to change the idea that parents are a very important part of children's academic lives; they just may not be the sole influence in children's success.