

Parental Involvement within the Actiotope Model of Giftedness: What It Means for East-Asian Students

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Parental involvement

- Role of family and parents is recognized as important in the development of giftedness and gifted children (Olszewski-Kubilius, 2008).
- Chinese students perceive parental expectations displayed through their involvement and the family cohesion as vital parental functions in enhancing their excellence (Chan, 2005).
- This indicates that parental influence in children's excellence is crucial for their development, socially and educationally.
- Based on this premise, we examine how parental involvement, as informed by a review of eight separate meta-analyses, fit within the *Actiotope Model of Giftedness*.

The AMG link

- Of all components of AMG, we are interested in the link between the action repertoire and subjective action space in conjunction with the environment.
- Being able to act relevantly in response to feedback or reactions given by a peer, a teacher or a parent in learning situations, students need to determine the appropriate sets of actions to fulfill their reaction.
- How students respond to particular parental expectations that get conveyed within parental involved interactions with them can be prescribed by the volatility of the subjective action space.
- The word “subjective” denotes a personal construct where parents and students negotiate relationships that lead to the expected outcomes. We view this personal construct or even “space” as the platform where parents become involved with their children to help them excel in whatever they do.
- How much of this space do parents take to transfer their beliefs and expectations, in our opinion, are arbitrary according to individuals’ motivation to become involved. Hence, it is imperative for us to understand why parents do become involved in their children’s development and education.

AMG vs. Vygotsky

- This notion, however, is similar to the Vygotskian mediation structure that involves an interaction between the child and a *significant* other in conjunction with the environment.
- So, how is the AMG different from Vygotsky’s mediation structure? Can it be that the subjective action space does not need a *significant* other but simply another who wants to support the action loop of the AMG?
- The concept of intention can very well be the distinguishing factor between the two theories.
- The AMG may hold the key to a clearer iteration of intentions (Ziegler, et al., 2010), where the action repertoire is seen as a malleable construct alongside the subjective action space due to aspects of intentions.

Answers to Why?

- Intentions can be seen as in why parents get involved with their children's education and development.
- Hence, it is imperative for us to understand why parents do become involved in their children's development and education.
- The answers to the "why" question provides us with a conceptual framework to unravel the subjectiveness of the action space and its iterative processes with action repertoire; in other words, the functions of parental involvement in their children's action.

Dimensions of Parental Involvement

Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2005) believed that parents become involved with their children's education for three reasons:

- parents' belief systems (including their ideas of child development and parenting and their sense of efficacy for helping their children succeed in school);
- invitations and demands for involvement from child and school;
- parents' life contexts (including their social values).

Parental belief systems

- Wu and Qi (2006) conclude that parental beliefs in their children's ability predict their children's academic achievement in mathematics, reading, and science, both concurrently and prospectively.
- In particular, Chinese parents who believe their children are highly able tend to have higher expectations of the outcome of their ability (Chan, 2005).
- Yamamoto and Holloway (2010) submit that Asian American parents have higher expectations and in particular expectations of effort by their children appear to have significant impact upon students' achievement.
- If communicated, these expectations can result in students working harder to achieve the desired academic performance (Tsui, 2005).

Invitation and Demands

- When assisting students with their homework, it is found that parents need to communicate positive attitudes and dispositions towards their children's attempts at their homework (Pomerantz, Wang, & Ng, 2005).
- Younger school children, in general, seek their parents' involvement at the school level more than adolescent would (Collins & Madsen, 2003).
- How involved parents are at the school level, however, is found to be dependent upon the extent to which the school is "welcoming" (Feiler, Greenhough, Winter, Salway, & Scanlan, 2006).
- Parents can perceive schools to be open or hostile to their involvement, and schools' or teachers' invitation to be involved could eliminate some doubts as to the schools' intentions.

Parents' Life Contexts

- Tsui (2005) demonstrates that Chinese parents of low and high income do not differ in their expectations of their children's academic achievement, whereas American parents of lower income had lower expectations than the American parents of higher income.
- Martin et al. (2007) finds that the lower expectations connected with lower income in American families result from a paucity of educational resources at home, leading in turn, to fewer opportunities for success.
- Having a higher income that facilitates greater access to educational resources such as tuition is also cited as a reason for Hong Kong Chinese students' academic success (Chow, 2000).
- Parents with higher educational level and occupational attainment can bring about better psychological support when their children are pursuing study (Hung, 2007).

Research Questions

The elements of intentions of parental involvement especially in light of their ethnic and social background is looked into closely by answering the following research questions:

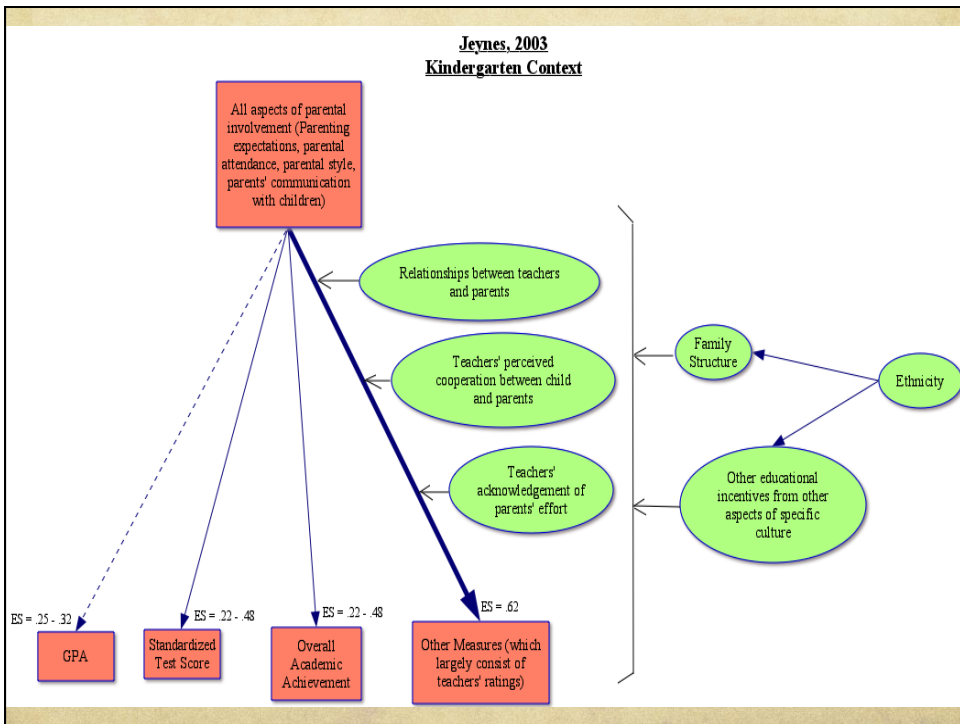
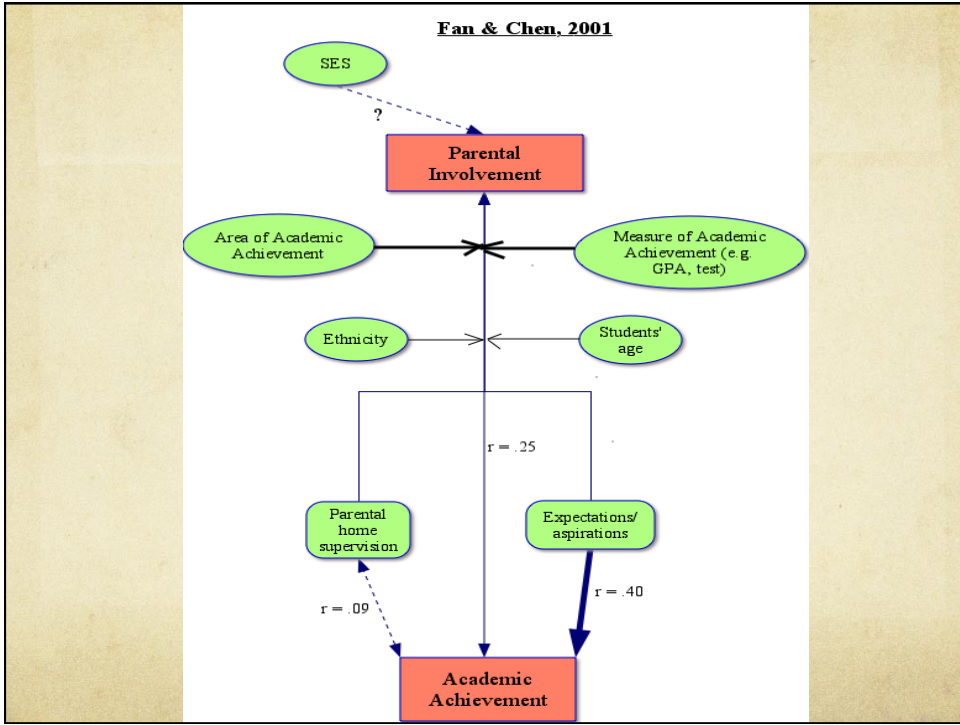
1. Which types of parental involvement from the three dimensions contribute to children's academic achievement?
2. How do these types of parental involvement contribute to children's academic achievement?
3. How do these parental involvement fit within the interplay of action repertoire and subjective action space with the environment in the AMG in the development of giftedness and its potential?

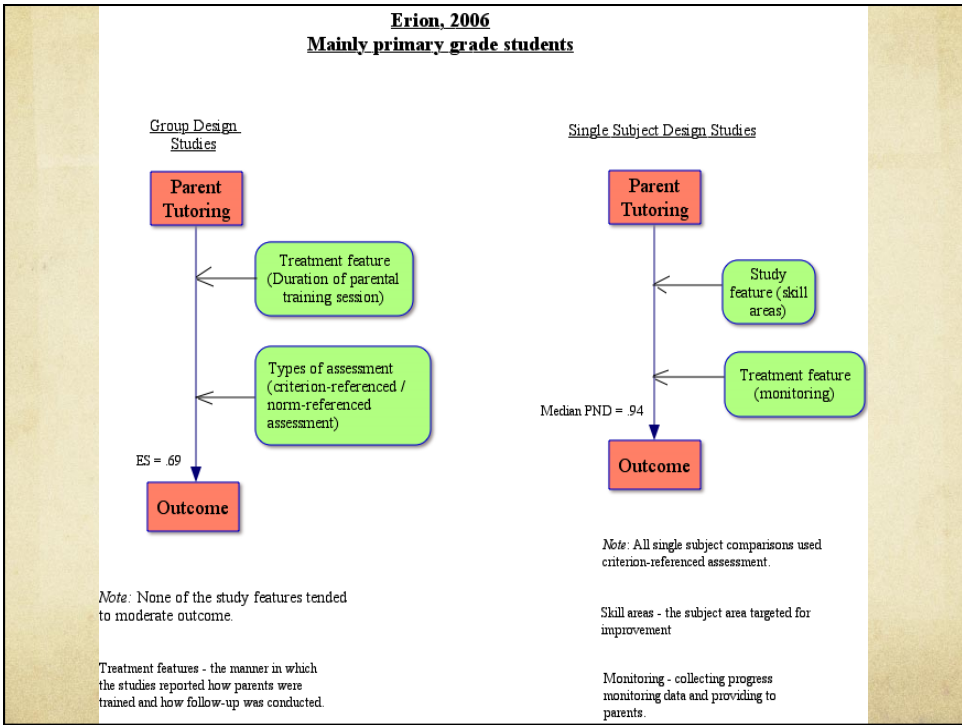
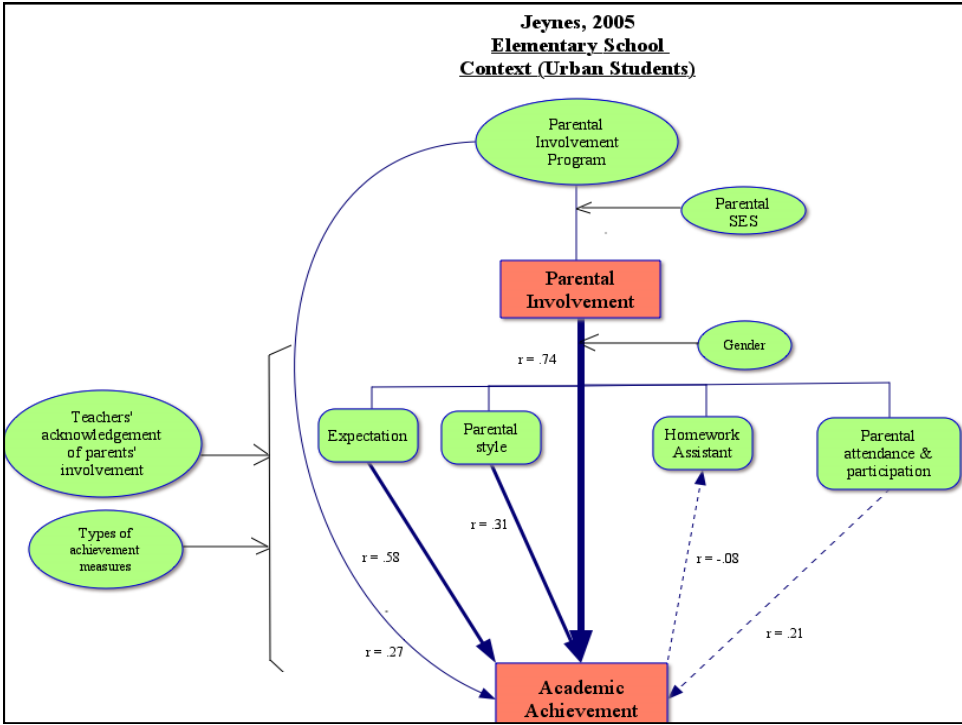
Method

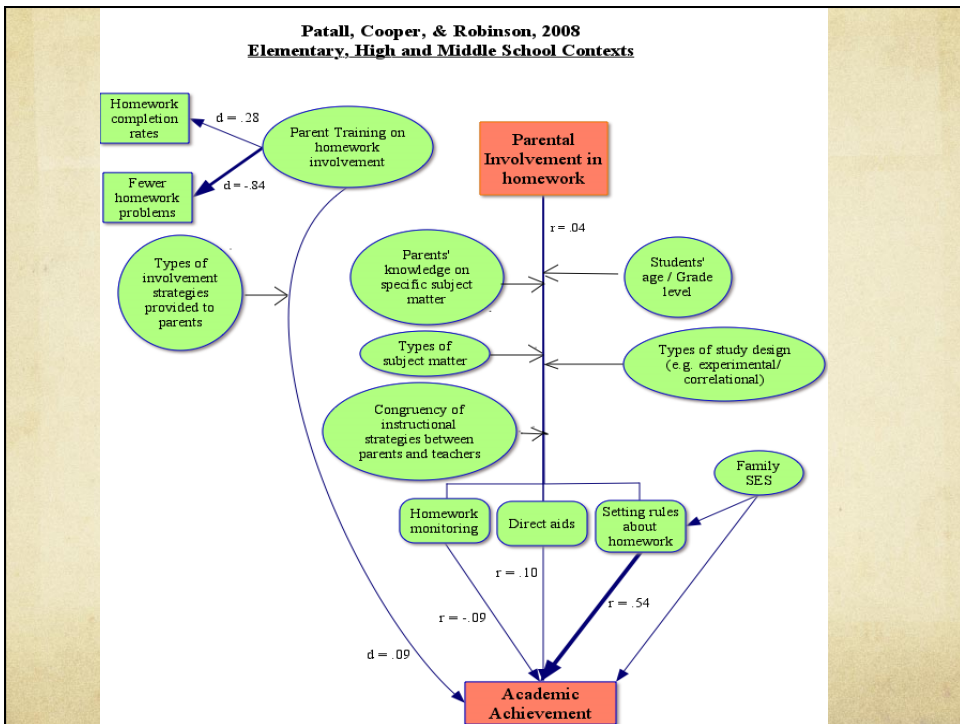
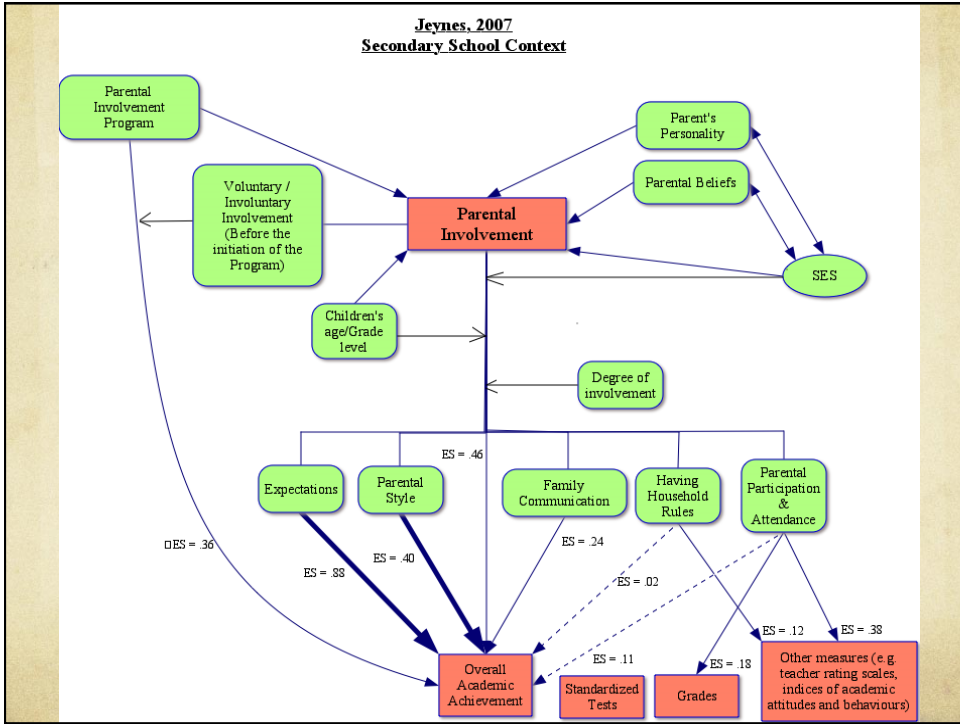
- We searched and reviewed for meta-analyses that have summarized and analyzed studies on parental involvement and students' academic outcome, including those that covered East Asian research.
- To obtain the meta-analyses, a number of computerized databases were searched, using a combination of varying keywords: parental involvement, achievement, academic achievement, performance, children outcome, and parents.
- Studies were included in our analysis if they met the following criteria:
 - (a) meta-analyses examining the relationship between parental involvement and children's overall or certain type of achievement
 - (b) meta-analyses published between 1990 and 2011.
 - (c) No specific age group was restricted in this review paper. A total of eight meta-analyses fulfilled this criteria and were used for analysis.

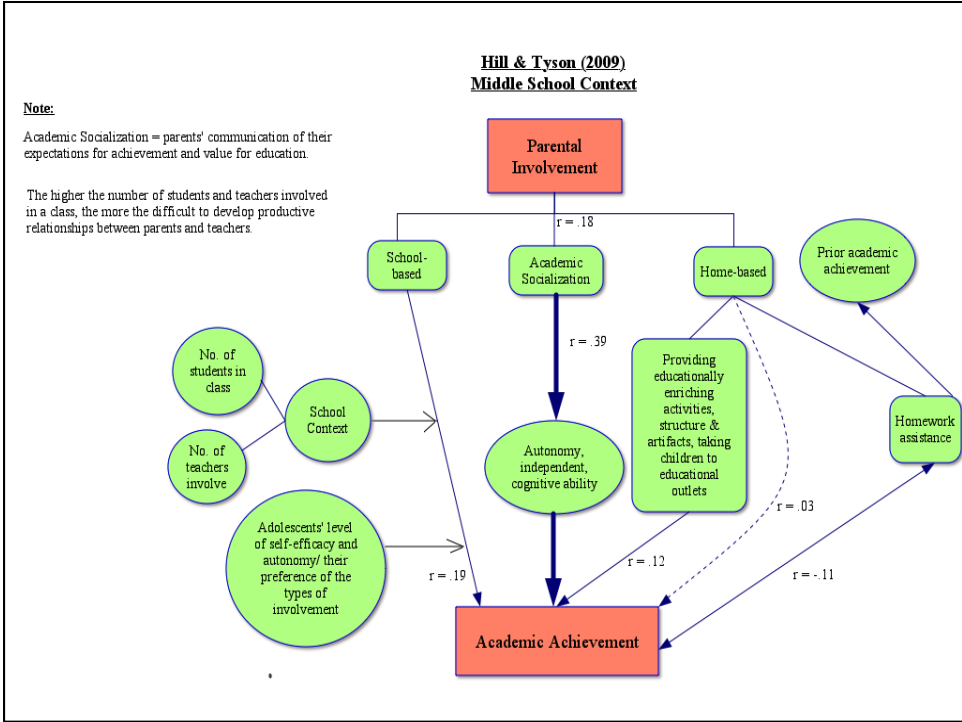
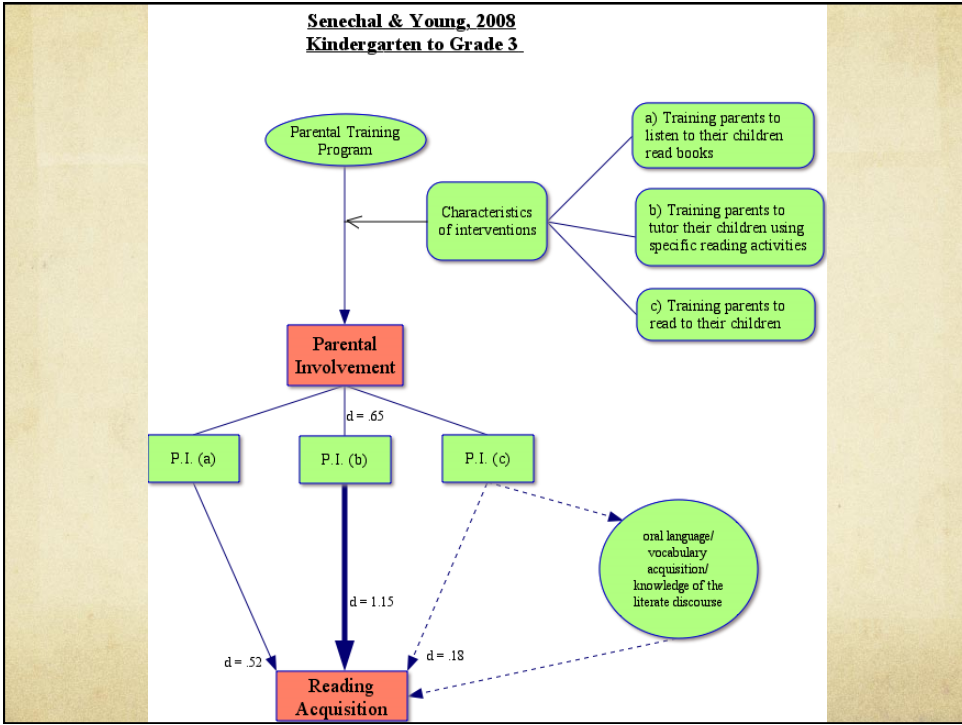
Meta Meta-analyses

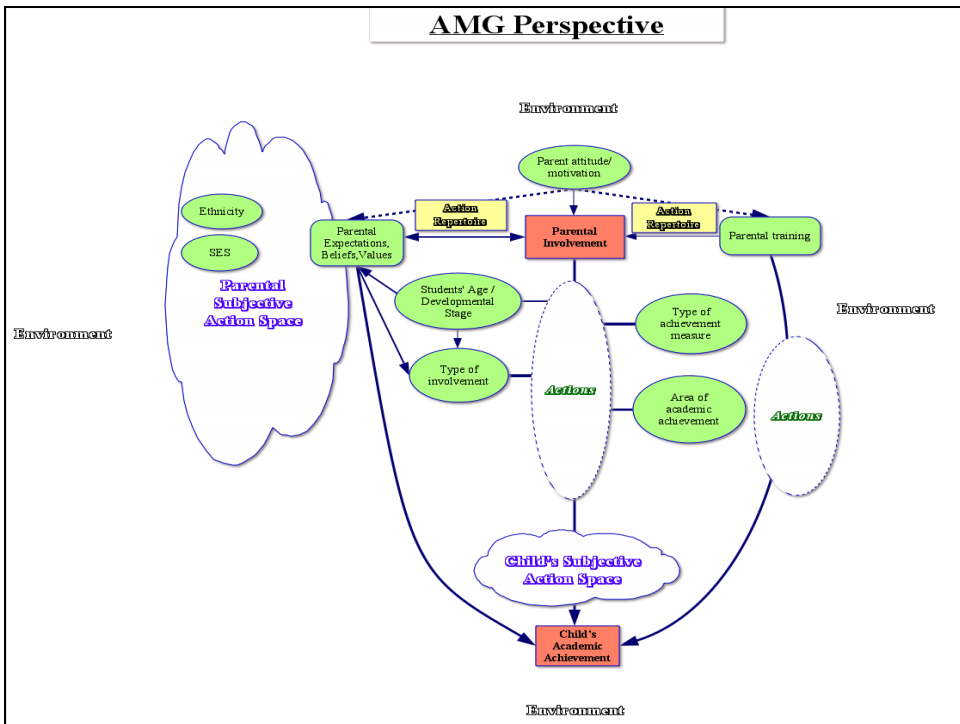
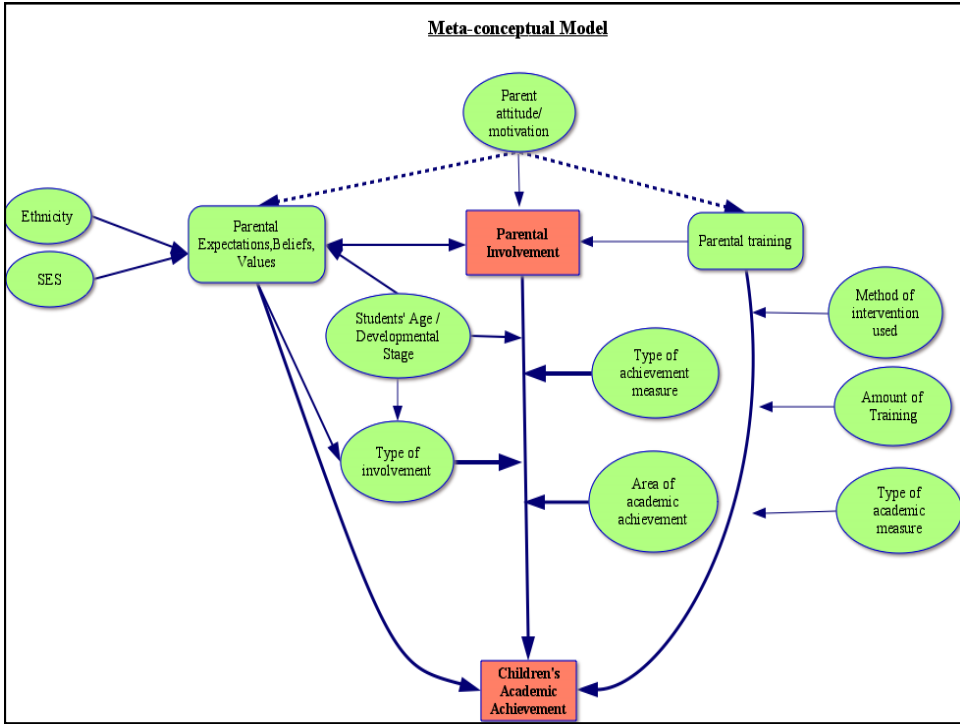
- First, we evaluated and summarized the aims, methods and findings of each meta-analysis.
- This is followed by a creation of a conceptual model for each of the meta-analysis to provide an overview of our synthesis.
- Eight individual models are produced from the eight meta-analyses that involve a total of **277** studies on parental involvement (Erion, 2006; Fan & Chen, 2001; Hill & Tyson, 2009; Jeynes, 2003, 2005, 2007; Patall, Cooper, & Robinson, 2008; Senechal & Young, 2008).
- Each model elaborates types of parental involvement and other moderating variables that influenced children's academic achievement.
- Each model consists of similar independent variables (general or certain types of parental involvement) and dependent variables (academic achievement/ outcome), whilst the moderating variables vary across studies.
- Finally, one meta-conceptual model is produced from the common factors of the different findings represented in each meta-analysis.











Parental Subjective Action Space and Action Repertoire

- Specifically, parental expectations, beliefs and values contribute to the personal construct of parental subjective action space that induces their initial motivations, mannerisms of involvement and extent of involvement.
- Parental involvement works as a platform that bridges the transfer of their beliefs and expectations to their children, which arises out of parents' own interaction with their children and their social contexts.
- Such transfer of the expectations and belief system is enabled by parental action repertoire to control and modify acts of parental involvement.
- Therefore, clear and well-communicated expectations are paramount to ensure that subjective action spaces of children are malleable to react accordingly.
- Similarly, parental training through their action repertoire modifies and affects the way and the extent parents interact with their children. All these in turn act upon children's own subjective action space of belief of their ability and feedback to their stability in achieving excellence.

Ensuing Action Steps

- Explicit and implicit links with schools are action steps that parents take in various measures to ensure success in their children.
- However, these action steps are not apparent and are not a major finding from the eight meta-analyses.
- In fact, such action steps are seen to be arbitrary according to the class sizes and the number of teachers, parents have to deal with.
- This is why parental involvement are more dominant at the primary and late secondary schools rather than the middle schools.
- Action steps are also influenced by parents' attitude and motivation, i.e. their intentions, the kinds of "persuasion" or training they receive in helping parents decide the best means of help for their children.

Action Steps

- Parental social and economic status generate chances for their involvement where a conduit, between their own belief systems and various active steps and their children's belief system and learning orientation, is built to facilitate the loop of action space within the context of schooling and home environment.
- The chances can be in the form tutorial classes, a computer to do school work or books to read. These chances of course, are more available for children of parents from higher SES.
- Ethnicity has an overall moderate effect on parents' action steps where their values and beliefs influence their intentions of involvement and parental style.
- Whilst the effect is consistent across races, parental involvement of East-Asian origin in a number of the meta-analyses is largely shown through their "intentions" of having their expectations of high achievement communicated forcefully to their children.

What this means for East Asian students?

- Parental expectations, beliefs and values are fundamental parental personal construct or subjective action space that determines high achievement.
- Parents who highly value education and base their intentions of involvement on this premise have better success at parenting their expectations to their children.
- Intentions of wanting their children to succeed and synchronizing this intention with those of their children are the ultimate challenge of gifted education.

Forceful Expectations??



Clear Expectations

- Communicating their firm beliefs and expectations in forceful ways have been the practice that many East Asian parents are known to have in their subjective action space.
- East Asian students' subjective action space has the challenge of embracing those beliefs in a constructive way – as a way forward for their own desire to perform rather than to please their parents
- This is especially difficult for gifted East Asian students who underachieve and do not conform to the boundaries of classroom demands and exam oriented pressures.

Recognition and acceptance

- What will help and works as the action repertoire to link parents' and children's action spaces, is the recognition and understanding of children's developmental stage and the demands of contextual variables such as home and school environment, peers, and teachers.
- Without this recognition, parents have a danger of pressuring their children unnecessarily as found by studies in Hong Kong (Chan, 2006; Watkins, 2009).

Social Parents



Socialization

- Parents need to action their expectations through a number of action steps that are stimulated accordingly by their effective involvement.
- Effective parental involvement comes in the form of conducive types of involvement, such as academic socialization where active interaction and communication takes place whilst participating educationally enriching activities like visiting a library or an exhibition.

Focusing Parents



Focus

- Focusing on a subject matter that their children prefer is also a way to help gifted East Asian students to achieve.
- Parents through active conversation can achieve this focus with their children.
- Setting homework rules have been found to be one effective way to help children manage their own efficacy and product.
- An action repertoire established with parent training in helping children at home is a useful way forward for East Asian students.

Home-school cooperation

- Parent training program in establishing home-school cooperation is imperative to ensure that East Asian students get the optimum learning opportunities both from the school and home.
- Parents' awareness in what their children need most to succeed at school can be brought about by their knowledge of achievement measures, extant of curriculum covered at school and acceptance on novel ways of success.
- This can happen through active enactments of home-school cooperation programs that have succeeded widely in the west for predominantly minority groups including Asian Americans as reported in the meta-analyses in this study.

