Parents’ educational involvement: Types of resources and forms of involvement in four countries

Thea Bertnes Strømme* and Håvard Helland
Oslo Metropolitan University, Norway

Parents’ involvement in schooling and education is highly important for children’s results. Still, both levels of involvement and their effects vary according to social class. Previous research on educational reproduction within the family has, however, largely studied differences between the middle and the working class, and generally ignored differences in the composition of cultural and economic capital. In this article, we aim to fill this gap in the literature by separating cultural and economic resources and investigate their correlation with two kinds of parental involvement in four different European countries. Results show that parents with more cultural resources are more likely to be involved by having future educational expectations, and parents with more economic resources are more likely to be involved in their children’s current schooling (e.g. help with homework) than those with more cultural resources. The association between economic resources and involvement in educational expectations is however stronger in Spain and Iceland than in Belgium and Norway, suggesting an influence from system-level features as well as general economic trends.

Keywords: cultural capital; economic capital; parental involvement; international comparison

Introduction

A strong correlation between parents’ social position and their children’s education outcomes has been convincingly established by previous research; for example, one’s social origin has been found to correlate with school grades and one’s field and level of education (e.g. Shavit & Blossfeld, 1993; Erikson & Jonsson, 1996; Strømme & Hansen 2017). Previous research has also shown that students with more cultural capital outperform their peers from the economic fractions (Hansen & Mastekaasa, 2006; Andersen & Hansen, 2011). Several mechanisms may contribute to these correlations, but prominent in the literature are (1) parents’ educational aspirations for their children (e.g. Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Breen et al., 1997) and (2) their direct involvement in their children’s schooling (Lareau, 1987; Reay et al., 2005; Lareau & Weininger, 2008). In this article, we examine how economic and cultural family resources correlate with these two dimensions of parental involvement in education and schooling in four countries.
Parents’ involvement in schooling and education has been shown to be highly important for children’s results (cf. McNeal, 1999; Seginer, 2006; Hill & Tyson, 2009) and has been identified as a way to close socioeconomic gaps in achievement (Dearing et al., 2006). Great political effort has thus been put into strengthening parents’ involvement in schools (Hill et al., 2004). However, most quantitative studies of socioeconomic differences in parental involvement focus on the effects of involvement on performance measures such as grades or test scores. Little research has focused on parents’ involvement in itself as the dependent variable, and we aim to bridge this gap.

Levels of involvement and their effects vary according to demographic factors such as social class (McNeal, 1999). Some previous research has shown that middle-class parents are more involved than working-class ones (Lareau, 1987, 2011; Lee & Bowen, 2006), and different amounts of cultural capital are often cited as part of the reason for this (Lareau, 1987, 2011; Calarco, 2014). This research has largely studied vertical differences between the middle and the working class (or between high and low income groups or between high and low socioeconomic status (SES)), and generally ignored horizontal differences within classes (e.g. between cultural and economic fractions) (see Lareau, 1987, 2011; Lareau & Weininger, 2008; Calarco, 2014). Our study focuses on such differences.

We know that children with large amounts of cultural capital tend to do well in the education system, and family practices and attitudes towards education vary between families with various levels of cultural capital (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Lareau, 1987, 2011; Aarseth, 2017). We also know that lower income is associated with less parental involvement in school (see La Placa & Corlyon, 2016 for an overview). Less is known about the relative weight of cultural and economic capital in association with parental involvement in school. This gap in previous research is striking, considering how central the composition of cultural and economic capital is in the writings of the originator of the theory of cultural capital, Pierre Bourdieu (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Bourdieu, 1984). According to him (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 34), the practices of different actors will depend on their total amount of capital as well as on the composition of their cultural and economic capital. Consequently, people with more cultural than economic capital will act differently in their involvement in their children’s schooling than people whose capital composition is the opposite. The associations between such resources and parents’ involvement are important to our understanding of social reproduction through education. Here, we examine how parents’ cultural and economic resources influence both their involvement in their children’s everyday schooling and their future educational expectations for their children.

These associations may also vary between national contexts. Cross-national differences between educational systems, such as levels of differentiation and standardisation, may affect the levels and types of parental involvement. General economic conditions and the business cycle may likewise affect the associations under study here. The expansion of the education system has been accompanied by an increased need for educational credentials, also for the economic fraction of the middle class (Bourdieu, 1984, 1996; Kahn, 2011), and this need may be strengthened for example in times of crisis and high unemployment. We examine this by comparing unique survey data from four different cities in four countries: Barcelona (Spain), Bergen...
(Norway), Ghent (Belgium) and Reykjavik (Iceland). These countries vary both in their educational systems and in their economic conditions (e.g. Spain and Iceland were much more severely stricken by the economic crisis in 2008).

**Forms of involvement and social background**

The literature defines and operationalises parental involvement in various ways (Hill & Tyson, 2009, p. 759), and Fan and Chen (2001, p. 3) conclude that it is ‘multi-faceted in nature’. In a meta-analysis of the effects of parental involvement in middle school, Hill and Tyson (2009) distinguish between home-based involvement (e.g. helping with homework, communicating with children about school, creating a learning environment at home), school-based involvement (e.g. visiting and volunteering at school, communicating with teachers) and academic socialisation (including ‘communicating parental expectations for education and its value or utility’ and ‘making preparations and plans for the future’; Hill & Tyson, 2009, p. 742). Academic socialisation means parents talking to their children about the importance of education and of doing well in a way that fosters a positive attitude to education and where pursuing higher education is taken for granted (Bæck, 2017, p. 126). Hill and Tyson (2009) document that academic socialisation is more important for achievement than the other two forms of involvement. Academic socialisation supports the development of adolescents’ autonomy and the internalised valuation of education and schooling, whereas excessive pressure may have the opposite effect (Hill & Tyson, 2009, pp. 758–759). In our analyses, we combine home-based and school-based involvement (helping with homework and parents’ meetings at school), that is involvement in their children’s current schooling, and compare this with academic socialisation (whether they expect them to go to university or find a job after completing upper-secondary school).

In general, parents’ involvement is positively related to children’s success in school (cf. Seginer, 2006; Hill & Tyson, 2009), but the effects vary along several dimensions. Different forms of involvement have different effects, and these vary according to the age of the child (Hill & Tyson, 2009). Certain kinds of school involvement can even be negatively associated with academic performance (Desimone, 1999; Hill et al., 2004). Helping with homework is, for example, negatively correlated with academic results (Hill & Tyson, 2009), partly because such involvement may be a response to students not performing well, but excessive help with homework may also be understood as interfering with the child’s autonomy (Hill & Tyson, 2009, p. 759).

The effects of different forms of involvement also vary with the student’s background (Mc Neal, 1999; Hill et al., 2004; Benner et al., 2016). It is, however, disputed whether the involvement of parents with high socioeconomic status is more effective (Desimone, 1999; Mc Neal, 1999; Lee & Bowen, 2006) or less effective (Domina, 2005). Benner et al. (2016) found that school-based involvement was particularly beneficial for children from lower SES families and those with poorer prior achievement, whereas parents’ educational expectations had a stronger academic influence on children from higher SES families and those with stronger prior achievement. Discussions between parents and students at home have proven to be a significantly better predictor of students’ results among mid-income students than among low-income
students (Desimone, 1999). It thus seems as though middle-class students benefit more from involvement comprising discussions and voicing expectations, whereas low-income students benefit more from parental involvement at school. These differences are particularly pronounced in the USA compared to countries with more standardised education systems (Park, 2008). Less is known about whether such effects vary according to capital composition.

Annette Lareau (Lareau, 1987, 2011; Lareau & Weininger, 2008) distinguishes between two child-rearing practices: ‘concerted cultivation’, which is common among middle-class parents, and the ‘accomplishment of natural growth’, which is attributed to working-class parents. Working-class parents assume that they should give their children love, safety, food and clothes so they can grow and thrive. They define education as the responsibility of the school, do not meddle in school matters and grant their children considerable autonomy over their spare time. The concerted cultivation of the middle class, in contrast, entails the view that parents’ duty is to actively stimulate development of their children’s potential talents. Middle-class parents constantly monitor their children’s education and intervene in school matters, broaching their concerns with teachers whenever deemed necessary. In their leisure time, middle-class children are often enrolled in a variety of activities that are believed to transmit important skills. The middle-class strategy thus involves considerably more parental involvement and is far more effective in promoting the schooling and education of offspring (Lareau & Weininger, 2008; see also Calarco, 2017).

Research on the association between SES and parents’ involvement is, however, inconclusive. Hartas (2011) finds that parents are equally involved, and that poverty and lack of economic resources are the main explanations for the inequality in scholarly success. The impact of family income on completed schooling (Duncan et al., 1998) and test scores (Dahl & Lochner, 2005) is largest for children in low-income families. Hence, material poverty, rather than lack of involvement, is argued to be the explanation for lower working-class achievement (La Placa & Corlyon, 2016).

Notwithstanding different findings, previous research has mainly studied the differences between the middle and the working class (or between high and low income groups or between high and low SES), and generally ignored the differences in composition of cultural and economic capital (e.g. Lareau, 1987, 2011; McNeal, 1999; Hill et al., 2004; Lareau & Weininger, 2008; Calarco, 2014, 2017; Hegna & Smette, 2017). One exception is Lee and Bowen (2006), who distinguish between economic resources (measured as whether children receive free school lunches) and cultural capital (measured as whether parents’ educational attainment is above or below the sample mean). While their main interest lies in determining the effects of parents’ involvement on students’ achievement, they also examine bivariate correlations between the two kinds of resources and parental involvement. Parents whose level of education is above the sample mean are more involved at school, in parent–child discussions about education, and have higher educational expectations than other parents. Parents whose children do not receive free or reduced-price lunches are also more involved in these three forms of involvement; in addition, they are less involved in the management of their child’s time. In terms of helping with homework, Lee and Bowen do not find any differences.

Research on middle-class child-rearing practices has emphasised how different fractions have different strategies and orientations. Whereas groups with more
cultural capital are often more liberal, caring and ‘social mix’-oriented in their educational strategies, those with more economic capital are more competitive and position-oriented (Power & Whitty, 2002; Vincent et al., 2004; Aarseth, 2017; Raveaud & Van Zanten, 2017). The literature often explains middle-class parenting practices as a response to middle-class anxiety about their children’s social reproduction, or a ‘fear of falling’ (e.g. Ehenreich, 1989; Vincent & Ball, 2007). Aarseth (2017), however, found this only in the economic fractions. In the cultural or professional fractions, she found a ‘fear of fading’, involving a fear of being dull and ordinary and not fulfilling one’s potential. Both fractions were engaged in concerted cultivation, but Aarseth still found interesting differences. The economic fraction was more instrumental and goal-oriented, with pressure and strict rules about homework and grades. This stricter regime indicates a lack of ease and confidence and a greater need to plan and work for the results desired (Aarseth, 2017). The professional fraction, in contrast, was emotionally oriented, concerned with their children’s pursuit of their own personal interests, aiming at self-fulfilment and autonomy. They were seemingly more relaxed about their children’s academic achievement, expressing a confidence that their ‘clever, but lazy’ children would eventually do well even if, at the time of the interview, they were not doing well (see also Irwin & Elley, 2011). This harmonises well with results on students’ own attitudes to education. Those with more cultural capital have been shown to be more inclined to see education as a means of self-realisation and self-accomplishment, whereas students with more economic capital tend to see it as more instrumental and as an investment in future material living conditions (Spruyt et al., 2016). Below, we discuss whether such differences in attitudes to education and in child-rearing practices between people with different capital compositions may affect parents’ involvement in their children’s current schooling, and their educational aspirations for their children (academic socialisation).

A horizontal understanding of parental resources

The definitions and operationalisation of cultural capital vary, even in Bourdieu’s own work. Dividing into ‘narrow’ and ‘broad’ understandings has been suggested as useful, even if these overlap (see Lamont & Lareau, 1988; Lareau & Weininger, 2003; Barone, 2006; Andersen & Hansen, 2011). Narrow understandings emphasise exposure to highbrow cultural activities such as museums, theatre and classical music (cf. Di Maggio, 1982; Aschaffenburg & Maas, 1997; Van de Werhorst & Hofstede, 2007), whereas broader understandings typically involve the transmission of academic skills by helping with homework and through academic features rewarded in the school system (Lareau & Weininger, 2003). Some also focus on interaction and communication (Sullivan, 2001; Barone, 2006; Tramonte & Willms, 2010). Common to these ideas is an understanding that the most important transition of cultural capital occurs in the family, actualising a focus on parents’ involvement.

Cultural reproduction theory claims that the culture of the dominant classes has status as the valuable and legitimate culture, and the education system transmits this culture (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). The education system expects and rewards cultural capital, thus reproducing social inequalities in educational achievement.
Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). Students exposed to this culture at home are better equipped for school. Bourdieusian theory assumes that parents with high cultural capital contribute to their children’s learning in subtle ways, by transmitting cultural capital from an early age, which is then embodied and naturalised in the child’s habitus (Reay et al., 2005). Part of the middle-class habitus is a sense of entitlement (Kahn, 2011) and the ‘ease’ with which middle-class students encounter the education system (Reay et al., 2009). Bourdieu compares such ease with being ‘like a fish in water’ (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 127).

According to Bourdieu then, theories focusing only on monetary investments and returns to education (like human capital theory) fail to take into account the volume and composition of people’s assets. Ability and ‘gifts’ are also products of ‘investment’ in time and cultural capital, and the relative weight of cultural to economic capital will matter for how parents ‘invest’ in scholastic work (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 276). Those relying heavily on economic capital are increasingly involved in the education system, but those with large amounts of cultural capital still have better chances of success.

In keeping with Aarseth (2017) and Irwin and Elley (2011), we expect that both economic and cultural family resources will correlate positively with the two forms of parental involvement. The strength of these positive correlations may vary, however. When it comes to parental involvement in current schooling (ensuring children do their homework and pressuring them to do well at school), Aarseth’s (2017) description of the parenting styles in the economic and cultural middle-class fractions gives reason to expect stronger impacts from economic resources than from cultural. The approach of the economic middle class to their children’s schooling is influenced by their ‘fear of falling’, and characterised by strict rules and pressure. They are seemingly not as confident about their children’s ability as the cultural fractions, and are not as concerned with their children’s autonomy and self-fulfilment. On the contrary, parents with more cultural than economic resources may be more involved in ‘academic socialisation’, and the correlation between cultural family resources and future expectations is expected to be stronger than the correlation between these expectations and economic resources.

**International comparison**

Our expectations that cultural resources correlate more strongly with academic socialisation, and that economic resources correlate more strongly with involvement in current schooling, will be examined in Belgium, Iceland, Norway and Spain. The school systems in these countries vary along several dimensions, which may affect the correlation between parental resources and involvement. System stratification (or differentiation or tracking) usually refers to whether there are different educational programmes or schools at the same point in an educational trajectory that are hierarchically ranked (Horn, 2009; Van de Werfhorst & Mijs, 2010; Jackson & Jonsson, 2013). Most studies find that stratification reinforces social inequality (Horn, 2009) and increases advantages connected to cultural capital (Barg, 2015). In contrast, standardisation (the degree to which the curriculum, teachers’ qualification, exams, school financing and so forth are set at the central state level) (Park, 2008; Horn, 2009; Van de Werfhorst & Mijs, 2010) has been found to increase equality of
opportunity. Clear national standards make it easier for parents (particularly low SES parents) to assess whether their children are learning what they are supposed to (Park, 2008).

The countries in this study vary on several dimensions pertaining to the school systems. The association between parental involvement and economic and cultural resources might be stronger in systems where aspects of one’s social background are more important for educational results, like in the more stratified system of Ghent. In more standardised systems like in Iceland and Norway, the correlations may be weaker, as all parents there can more easily follow the educational plans (Park, 2008). On the standardisation axis, Barcelona seems to be located between Belgium and the Nordic countries.

Previous research does not give clear expectations of variations across systems in what kind of resources will have the stronger effect on the two kinds of involvement. However, comparative studies of the importance of cultural capital for other educational outcomes have shown that the effects of cultural capital are remarkably similar across countries (Barone, 2006; Xu & Hampden-Thompson, 2012; Raveaud & Van Zanten, 2017), which may give reason to expect rather small cross-country differences in the effects of cultural family resources. The differences in effects of economic resources may be more substantial, and may be bigger in the clearly stratified system of Belgium, than in the standardised schools of Iceland and Norway. The general levels of involvement may, however, be higher in standardised systems, as higher levels of standardisation might allow for easier involvement for all groups of parents. If that is the case, we expect higher levels of involvement in Norway and Iceland, and perhaps a weaker relationship between involvement and resources.

An organisational feature that may affect the average level of parents’ involvement in their children’s current schooling is how many hours the students are expected to spend at school. Students in Ghent and Barcelona spend 8 hours more at school each week than students in Bergen and Reykjavik do, which gives Norwegian and Icelandic parents more time to get involved in their children’s homework.

Such possible effects of the schooling systems may, however, be both amplified and counteracted by other country characteristics, such as structural conditions at the national level. Based on the classification of welfare regimes by Esping-Andersen (1990) and Gallie and Paugam (2000), Walther (2006) distinguishes between four regimes for the transition from school to work. In the universalist transition regime of the Nordic social-democratic welfare systems (Iceland and Norway), the state provides comparatively generous social insurance schemes. Such social safety nets mitigate labour market risk and youth unemployment is normally low. This, coupled with a cultural conception of youth focused on personal autonomy and development, makes transition choices free and unconstrained. This regime may give parents less reason to worry, and consequently less reason to be heavily involved in their children’s schooling. In the sub-protective transition regime of Mediterranean countries such as Spain, in contrast, the state offers less safety or support, youth unemployment is high and young people depend more on their families. Here we expect that parental involvement will be more important.

The correlations will probably also be affected by general economic conditions. The security offered by the Nordic transition system may, for example, have been less
apparent in Iceland at the time this survey was conducted, because of the recent collapse of the entire Icelandic financial sector, and the subsequent near-bankruptcy of the Icelandic state and relatively high levels of unemployment (Matthiasson, 2008). Also Spain was especially strongly hit by the financial crisis (Scarpetta et al., 2010), which may have increased parents’ ‘fear of falling’, thus making them value higher education to a greater extent. Such circumstances may make education more important also for the economically well off, who under other conditions may do well without pursuing a higher education. If so, we would expect both forms of parental involvement and economic resources to play a greater role in involvement in these countries. The crisis may lead to a greater level of involvement overall, and particularly for the economic fractions.

Data and methods

Thanks to the project ‘International Study of City Youth’, we analyse survey data from four cities in different countries: Ghent (Belgium), Barcelona (Spain), Reykjavik (Iceland) and Bergen (Norway). Students filled in an online questionnaire in class when they were in 10th grade (aged 16) in 2014. In Reykjavik, Bergen and Ghent all the relevant schools were asked to participate, whereas in Barcelona a representative sample of the student population was drawn. In Reykjavik and Bergen all the public schools participated, whereas in Ghent only 77% of schools did. In the schools that were asked to participate, approximately 80% of students replied to the survey in both Reykjavik and Bergen, 90% in Ghent and 92% in Barcelona.

Variables

The first dependent variable is the extent of parents’ involvement in their offspring’s current schooling. We measure this by constructing a mean score from three questions: (1) ‘My parents make sure that I do my homework’; (2) ‘My parents attend parents’ meetings at school’; (3) ‘My parents put a lot of pressure on me to do well at school’. All are four-level Likert items ranging from ‘strongly disagree’ to ‘strongly agree’. The second dependent variable measures whether the parents want their children to go to university or find employment after completing upper-secondary school. The students were asked to assess two statements: (1) ‘My parents want me to get a job rather than study after I leave school’; (2) ‘My parents want me to go to university’. Since some informants agreed with both statements, we have constructed a variable representing the difference between the two statements. High positive values on this variable signify strong agreement with the statement ‘My parents want me to go to university’ and low values on the other, while negative values signify stronger agreement with the statement ‘My parents want me to get a job rather than study after I leave school’.

Independent variables

We are interested in differences in the compositions of cultural and economic capital, and have therefore made two scales functioning as proxies for cultural and economic
capital. Both scales are mean scores of a number of indicators. In order to make the two resource scales more comparable, we have transformed them into standardised $z$-scores (with mean 0 and standard deviation 1). For each city, we first standardised each item. We then constructed mean scores of the standardised items and standardised them for each city. The economic resource variable is the mean score of the answers to the following questions: ‘My parents often do not have enough money to make ends meet’ (ranging from 1 ‘strongly agree’ to 4 ‘strongly disagree’); ‘How many cars do your parents have?’ (ranging from 1 ‘none’ to 4 ‘3 or more’); ‘How many televisions do your parents have?’ (ranging from 1 ‘none’ to 4 ‘3 or more’); ‘How many bathrooms do your parents have?’ (ranging from 1 ‘none’ to 4 ‘3 or more’); ‘Does your mother work (part or full time)?’ (2 = yes, 1 = no); ‘Does your father work (part or full time)?’ (2 = yes, 1 = no).

The measure of cultural resources is the mean score of the mother’s and father’s level of education (ranging from 1 ‘lower than ISCED level 3’ to 3 ‘higher than ISCED level 3’); ‘Do you have a piano at home?’; ‘Do you have other musical instrument(s)?’ (both ranging from 1 = no to 2 = yes); ‘How many books are there in your home?’ (ranging from 1 ‘0–10 books’ to 6 ‘more than 500 books’). We thus measure cultural capital by asking about the possession of objects commonly associated with cultural activities, but also by asking about the parents’ education level. In this way, we hope to capture cultural capital in a somewhat ‘broad’ sense—cultural capital is often associated with more education, more books and showing an increased tendency to play instruments, but this may of course overlap with economic capital; we separate the latter by asking questions about the possession of expensive objects, labour market status and a subjective understanding of economic standing. In Table 2 below, we find the correlation between the two types of resources as low as 0.27. Moreover, by including both measures in the same model, we measure the correlation between one and the dependent variables ‘controlled’ for the other.

The scale reliability (Cronbach’s alpha) of the two resource scales is approximately 0.6, which is not very high, but all the items contribute positively to the scale reliability and substantively we think that they all signify access to the two kinds of resources.

As a proxy for grades, we include the question ‘What results do you expect to get in your studies this year?’ (ranging from 1 ‘I expect to get very poor results’ to 5 ‘I expect to get very good results’). We also include controls for gender and whether both parents were born in a country other than Spain, Belgium, Iceland or Norway, respectively. Descriptives of the variables are shown in Table 1 and their correlations in Table 2.

The data are based on questionnaires filled out by the students. As many of the questions include information about their parents, it is important to keep in mind that the results are mainly covering students’ experiences of their parents’ involvement, and not parents’ own experiences of their own involvement.

**Analyses**

Below we present results from ordinary least squares (OLS) regression analyses. We analyse each country separately, as shown in Figure 1. All the coefficients are estimated with robust standard errors clustered on schools, as the OLS assumption that
the errors have the same variance across observations is not confirmed in all the countries. In Ghent and Barcelona, there is between-school variance in the dependent variables and clustering the robust standard errors on schools allows for a model with heteroscedastic residuals.
Table 3 shows that both cultural and economic resources correlate significantly with parents’ wishes for their children’s future in Barcelona and Reykjavik, whereas only the correlation with cultural resources is significant in Ghent and Bergen. More resources increases parents’ tendency to favour higher education and the coefficient for cultural resources is larger than the coefficient for economic ones in all four cities. A test reveals significant differences between the coefficients measuring cultural and economic resources in Ghent and Bergen, but not Reykjavik and Barcelona. The effect of cultural resources is also significantly smaller in Reykjavik compared to Barcelona, and larger in Barcelona compared to Bergen. The coefficients for economic resources are significantly larger in Barcelona than in Bergen and Ghent, but not Reykjavik. This could indicate that economic resources become more important for parents’ educational aspirations for their children at times of economic insecurity. We find that the gender difference is significantly larger in Bergen than in Barcelona and Reykjavik. This implies that girls in Bergen more often than boys feel parents expecting them to pursue university studies, and that this gender difference is more prominent in Bergen. The coefficient for expected grade levels is significantly larger in

Table 2. Correlations (Pearson’s r) between the important variables

|                      | Home and school involvement | Future expectations (university vs. work) | Cultural resources (z-score) | Economic resources (z-score) |
|----------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Home and school involvement | 1                          | 0.202*                                   | 0.073*                      | 0.115*                      |
| Future expectations (university vs. work) | 0.202*                     | 1                                        | 0.221*                      | 0.113*                      |
| Cultural resources (z-score) | 0.073*                     | 0.221*                                   | 1                           | 0.273*                      |
| Economic resources (z-score) | 0.115*                     | 0.113*                                   | 0.273*                      | 1                           |

*Correlation significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed).

|                      | Bergen | Ghent | Barcelona | Reykjavik |
|----------------------|--------|-------|-----------|-----------|
| b                    | 0.049  | 0.008 | 0.183***  | 0.087***  |
| Robust SE            | 0.032  | 0.025 | 0.058     | 0.026     |
| Culture              | 0.213***| 0.241***| 0.269*** | 0.129***  |
| Robust SE            | 0.030  | 0.030 | 0.043     | 0.027     |
| Girls                | 0.466***| 0.194  | 0.180***  | 0.247***  |
| Robust SE            | 0.058  | 0.158 | 0.052     | 0.050     |
| Immigrant background | 0.145  | 0.039 | –0.10     | 0.068     |
| Robust SE            | 0.110  | 0.152 | 0.106     | 0.092     |
| Grades               | 0.490***| 0.094  | 0.22***   | 0.236***  |
| Robust SE            | 0.038  | 0.057 | 0.033     | 0.039     |
| Constant             | –0.395***| 0.867***| 1.427*** | 1.055***  |
| Robust SE            | 0.127  | 0.250 | 0.123     | 0.130     |
| Adj. $R^2$           | 0.145  | 0.867***| 1.427*** | 1.055***  |
| $N$                  | 1,994  | 2,211 | 1,965     | 1,872     |

*Correlation significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed).

© 2020 The Authors. *British Educational Research Journal* published by John Wiley & Sons Ltd on behalf of British Educational Research Association
Bergen than in the other cities, and significantly smaller in Ghent than in the other cities.

In Table 4, we perform the same kind of analysis as above but here the dependent variable is parents’ involvement in their children’s current schooling. Several of the coefficients in Table 4 are significant, but generally the correlations are weaker than in Table 3; in all four cities the coefficients measuring the association between involvement and economic resources are significant, whereas the coefficients measuring the association between involvement and cultural resources are not. The $R^2$ is also significantly smaller in these models, suggesting that the independent variables do not explain this form of involvement as well as that concerning future educational aspirations. The association between economic resources and this kind of involvement is somewhat larger in Reykjavik than in the other cities (significantly larger than in Ghent and Barcelona). The coefficients measuring cultural and economic resources differ significantly from each other only in Bergen and Reykjavik. In Ghent and Barcelona, boys experience somewhat more parental involvement than girls do. In Bergen and Reykjavik, there is no such difference.

Figures 1 and 2 visualise the predicted values of the two dependent variables following the $z$-score scales of the variables measuring resources, with the other independent variables set at mean for each country separately. The graphs for cultural resources are thus the predicted values following cultural resources from minimum to maximum when economic resources, immigrant background, gender and grades are set at mean, and vice versa.

In all four countries, the predicted values of both dependent variables increase with both types of resources. The graphs for economic resources are steeper in Figure 1, where the dependent variable is parents’ involvement in school, whereas the graphs for cultural resources are steeper in Figure 2, where the dependent variable is parents’ involvement in future plans or academic socialisation. The differences between the countries in the steepness of the lines are small, but in Figure 2 the line for economic

|                        | Bergen       | Ghent       | Barcelona  | Reykjavik   |
|------------------------|--------------|-------------|------------|-------------|
| **Economy**            | 0.065***     | 0.045***    | 0.041***   | 0.079***    |
| **Culture**            | 0.011        | 0.014       | 0.009      | 0.019       |
| **Girls**              | -0.034       | -0.108***   | -0.09***   | -0.014      |
| **Immigrant background** | -0.073     | 0.019       | 0.02       | 0.008       |
| **Grades**             | 0.086***     | 0.040*      | 0.05***    | 0.099***    |
| **Constant**           | 2.834***     | 2.885***    | 2.875***   | 3.060***    |
| **Adj. $R^2$**         | 0.023        | 0.022       | 0.021      | 0.058       |
| **N**                  | 2,095        | 2,255       | 2,002      | 1,918       |

* $p < 0.10$.
** $p < 0.05$.
*** $p < 0.01$.

Table 4. Linear regressions (OLS) of parents’ involvement in current schooling. Robust standard errors clustered on school.
resources is considerably steeper in Iceland and Spain than in Norway and Belgium, reflecting the coefficients for economic resources in Table 3. In Figure 1, we can also see that the level of parents’ involvement in current schooling is somewhat higher in Norway and Iceland (as also seen in Table 1), as well as the difference between cultural and economic resources, possibly because the highly standardised systems allow for more accessible information for parents (Park, 2008). Another system characteristic that may affect the average level of parents’ involvement in their children’s current schooling is how many hours the students are expected to spend at school. Students in Ghent and Barcelona spend 8 hours more at school each week than students in Bergen and Reykjavik do, which gives Norwegian and Icelandic parents more time to get involved. The steepness of the lines for cultural resources in both figures is, however, strikingly similar across countries, in accordance with previous research.

Figure 1. Predicted values from OLS for each country separately. The correlation between cultural and economic resources and involvement in current schooling with all other variables set at mean

© 2020 The Authors. *British Educational Research Journal* published by John Wiley & Sons Ltd on behalf of British Educational Research Association
Discussion and conclusion

In this article, we have examined how parental involvement in children’s current schooling and academic socialisation is associated with their cultural and economic resources in four different countries. In line with previous research and theory, we found that both types of family resources correlated positively with parental involvement, and that family resources matter more for academic socialisation than for parental involvement in current schooling. Furthermore, we found that cultural resources are more strongly related with academic socialisation than with parental involvement in current schooling, and that economic resources are more strongly related with parental involvement in current schooling. Parents thus seem to practice different types of involvement, depending on their capital composition.
One of the reasons why expectations about future higher education might not be as prevalent in families with more economic than cultural capital in two of the countries may be that this might be less important for reproducing the family's social position. The results are consistent with the theory of Bourdieu (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Bourdieu, 1984), and with the differences between fractions in family practices found by Irwin and Elley (2011) and Aarseth (2017). Distinctive ways of being involved resemble the distinction between the ‘fear of falling’ and the ‘fear of fading’. The economic fraction in Aarseth’s (2017) study was more instrumental and goal-oriented, with strict rules about and pronounced pressure on homework and grades, whereas the professional fraction was emotionally oriented, concerned with their children's pursuit of their own personal interests while aiming at self-fulfilment and autonomy. Parents with more economic capital than cultural seem to be more inclined to use strict rules and direct pressure on their children to achieve the aims of good grades and successful schooling, whereas parents with a capital composition dominated by cultural capital seem to achieve this by transmitting to their children a positive attitude to education. The pursuit of higher education is then taken for granted, and instils in their children an ‘ease’ with which they encounter the education system (Reay et al., 2009). These patterns were quite similar across countries, resembling previous research that has shown negligible cross-country differences in the correlation between cultural capital and various learning outcomes (Barone, 2006; Xu & Hampden-Thompson, 2012; Raveaud & Van Zanten, 2017). These similarities arguably strengthen the external validity of our findings.

In light of previous research showing that academic socialisation is more effective for learning outcomes than other forms of involvement (Hill & Tyson, 2009), our findings indicate that growing up with cultural resources in the family provides advantages in school. We thus question if policies aiming at more involvement per se can close socioeconomic gaps in educational aspirations and achievement, as has been criticised and discussed elsewhere (e.g. Hartas, 2011; La Placa & Corlyon, 2016). The association between parental resources and involvement is complex, and leaving parents with the task of closing socioeconomic gaps in educational attainment by simply being involved can be misleading. Moreover, as has not been touched upon here, social capital in the family can influence the ways in which social and economic returns to education play out (Horvat et al. 2003), and should be investigated in relation to cultural and economic capital.

We also found interesting differences between the countries. The association between the two kinds of resources and academic socialisation were quite similar in Spain and Iceland, while economic resources had negligible impact on this outcome in Belgium and Norway. This may be due to Iceland and Spain being more severely stricken by the economic crisis following the breakdown of the financial system in 2008. Youth unemployment rose rapidly, and economic insecurity increased. This may have created circumstances in which higher education seemed more important to everyone, also to families with relatively more economic than cultural resources. This pattern seems more difficult to explain by referring to differences in the educational systems.

When it comes to parental involvement in current schooling, in contrast, the coefficients are generally smaller, and the similarities between the two Nordic countries are more apparent. The general level of involvement is higher, and the association with
economic resources are somewhat higher in Iceland and Norway than in Belgium and Spain. The higher general level of involvement may be because Icelandic and Norwegian students spend less time in school, and because of the higher degree of standardisation of the systems. The difference in the strength of the impact of economic resources between Iceland and Belgium and Spain is harder to explain with system features. The financial crisis of 2008, in which the entire financial sector of Iceland (which at the time was unusually big) collapsed, may serve as part of the explanation of this finding. The fact that this Icelandic pattern is more similar to the pattern in Norway (which was almost entirely unaffected by the crisis) is more difficult to explain.

Because we do not have a causal design, we are not able to pinpoint exactly what aspects of the different education systems are impacting the differences we find, and exactly what other aspects outside of the education system might explain our findings. We call for further comparative research on differences between various forms of involvement, as well as research not only on differences in involvement practices between the middle and working classes, but also on differences in terms of capital composition. This difference is perhaps more visible since the expansion of the education system in the western world in recent decades, and the increased presence of the economic middle class in the education system increases the relevance of this topic.

Acknowledgements
We are grateful for constructive comments from participants in ‘The Research Group on Professional Careers and Professional Labour Markets’. We are particularly grateful for input from Andreea Alecu on data visualisation.

Declaration of conflict of interest
The authors declare no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship and/or publication of this article.

Ethical guidelines
The research and handling of data was carried out in accordance with ethical guidelines and approval from the Norwegian Centre for Research Data.

References
Aarseth, H. (2017) Fear of falling – fear of fading: The emotional dynamics of positional and personalized individualism, Sociology, 52(2), 1087–1102.
Andersen, P. & Hansen, M. N. (2011) Class and cultural capital: The case of class inequality in educational performance, European Sociological Review, 28(5), 607–621.
Aschaffenburg, K. & Maas, I. (1997) Cultural and educational careers: The dynamics of social reproduction, American Sociological Review, 62(4), 573–587.
Beck, U. K. (2017) It is the air that we breathe: Academic socialization as a key component for understanding how parents influence children’s schooling, Nordic Journal of Studies in Educational Policy, 3(2), 123–132.
Barg, K. (2015) Educational choice and cultural capital: Examining social stratification within an institutionalized dialogue between family and school, *Sociology*, 49(6), 1113–1132.

Barone, C. (2006) Cultural capital, ambition and the explanation of inequalities in learning outcomes: A comparative analysis, *Sociology*, 40(6), 1039–1058.

Benner, A. B., Boyle, A. E. & Sydney, S. (2016) Parental involvement and adolescents’ educational success: The roles of prior achievement and socioeconomic status, *Journal of Youth Adolescent*, 45, 1053–1064.

Bourdieu, P. (1984) *Distinction: A social critique of the judgment of taste* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press).

Bourdieu, P. (1993) *Sociology in question* (London, Sage).

Bourdieu, P. (1996) *The state nobility* (Cambridge, Polity Press).

Bourdieu, P. & Passeron, J. C. (1977) *Reproduction in education, society and culture* (London, Sage).

Bourdieu, P. & Wacquant, L. J. D. (1992) *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology* (Chicago, The University of Chicago Press).

Breen, R. & Goldthorpe, J. H. (1997) Explaining educational differentials: Towards a formal rational action theory, *Rationality and Society*, 9(3), 275–305.

Calarco, J. M. C. (2014) Coached for the classroom: Parents’ cultural transmission and children’s reproduction of educational inequalities, *American Sociological Review*, 79(5), 1015–1037.

Calarco, J. M. C. (2017) Negotiating opportunities. *How the middle class secures advantages in school* (New York, Oxford University Press).

Dahl, G. B. & Lochner, L. (2005) *The impact of family income on child achievement*. Working paper 11279 (Cambridge, MA, National Bureau of Economic Research).

Dearing, E., Kreider, H., Simpkins, S. & Weis, H. B. (2006) Family involvement in school and low-income children’s literacy: Longitudinal associations between and within families, *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 98(4), 653–664.

Desimone, L. (1999) Linking parent involvement with student achievement: Do race and income matter?, *Journal of Educational Research*, 93(1), 11–30.

Di Maggio, P. (1982) Cultural capital and school success: The impact of status culture participation on the grades of U.S. high school students, *American Sociological Review*, 47(2), 189–201.

Domina, T. (2005) Leveling the home advantage: Assessing the effectiveness of parental involvement in elementary school, *Sociology of Education*, 78, 233–249.

Duncan, G. J., Yeung, W. J., Brooks-Gunn, J. & Smith, J. (1998) How much does childhood poverty affect the life chances of children?, *American Sociological Review*, 63(3), 406–423.

Ehenreich, B. (1989) *Fear of falling: The inner life of the middle class* (New York, Pantheon).

Erikson, R. & Jonsson, J. O. (1996) Introduction. Explaining class inequality in education: The Swedish test case, in: R. Erikson & J. O. Jonsson (Eds) *Can education be equalized? The Swedish case in a comparative perspective* (Boulder, CO, Westview Press), 1–63.

Esping-Andersen, G. (1990) *The three worlds of welfare capitalism* (Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press).

Fan, X. & Chen, M. (2001) Parental involvement and students’ academic achievement: A meta-analysis, *Educational Psychology Review*, 13(1), 1–22.

Gallie, D. & Paugam, S. (Eds) (2000) *Welfare regimes and the experience of unemployment in Europe* (Oxford, Oxford University Press).

Hansen, M. N. & Mastekaasa, A. (2006) Social origins and academic performance at university, *European Sociological Review*, 22(3), 277–291.

Hartas, D. (2011) Families’ social backgrounds matter: Socio-economic factors, home learning and young children’s language, literacy and social outcomes, *British Educational Research Journal*, 37(6), 1469–3518.

Hegna, K. & Smette, I. (2017) Parental influence in educational decisions: Young people’s perspectives, *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 38(8), 1111–1124.

Hill, N. E. & Tyson, D. F. (2009) Parental involvement in middle school: A meta-analytic assessment of the strategies that promote achievement, *Developmental Psychology*, 45(3), 740–763.
Hill, N. E., Castellino, D. R., Lansford, J. E., Nowlin, P., Dodge, K. A., Bates, J. E. et al. (2004) Parent academic involvement as related to school behaviour, achievements and aspirations: Demographic variations across adolescence, *Child Development*, 75(5), 1499–1509.

Horn, D. (2009) Age of selection counts: A cross-country analysis of educational institutions, *Educational Research and Evaluation*, 15(4), 343–346.

Horvat, E. M., Weininger, E. B. & Lareau, A. (2003) From social ties to social capital: Class differences in the relations between schools and parent networks, *American Educational Research Journal*, 40(2), 319–351.

Irwin, S. & Elley, S. (2011) Concerted cultivation? Parenting values, education and class diversity, *Sociology*, 45(3), 480–495.

Jackson, M. & Jonsson, J. O. (2013) Why does inequality of educational opportunity vary across countries? Primary and secondary effects in comparative context, in: M. Jackson (Ed.) *Determined to succeed? Performance versus choice in educational attainment* (Stanford, CA, Stanford University Press), 306–337.

Kahn, S. R. (2011) *Privilege* (Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press).

La Placa, V. & Corlyon, J. (2016) Unpacking the relationship between parenting and poverty: Theory, evidence and policy, *Social Policy & Society*, 15(1), 11–28.

Lamont, M. & Lareau, A. (1988) Cultural capital: Allusions, gaps and glissandos in recent theoretical developments, *Sociological Theory*, 6(2), 153–168.

Lareau, A. (1987) Social class differences in family–school relationships: The importance of cultural capital, *Sociology of Education*, 60(2), 73–85.

Lareau, A. (2011) *Unequal childhoods. Class, race and family life. With an update a decade later* (2nd edn) (Berkeley, CA, University of California Press).

Lareau, A. & Weininger, E. B. (2003) Cultural capital in educational research: A critical assessment, *Theory and Society*, 32(5–6), 567–606.

Lareau, A. & Weininger, E. B. (2008) Class and the transition to adulthood, in: A. Lareau & D. Conley (Eds) *Social class: How does it work?* (New York, Russel Sage Foundation), 118–151.

Lee, J. & Bowen, N. K. (2006) Parent involvement, cultural capital, and the achievement gap among elementary school children, *American Educational Research Journal*, 43(2), 193–218.

Matthiassson, T. (2008) Spinning out of control, Iceland in crisis, *Nordic Journal of Political Economy*, 34, Art. 3.

McNeal, R. B. (1999) Parental involvement as social capital: Differential effectiveness on science achievement, truancy, and dropping out, *Social Forces*, 78(1), 117–144.

Park, H. (2008) The varied educational effects on parent–child communication: A comparative study of fourteen countries, *Comparative Education Review*, 52(2), 219–243.

Power, S. & Whitty, G. (2002) Bernstein and the middle class, *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 23(4), 595–606.

Raveaud, M. & Van Zanten, A. (2017) Choosing the local school: Middle class parents’ values and social and ethnic mix in London and Paris, *Journal of Education Policy*, 22(1), 107–124.

Reay, D., David, M. E. & Ball, S. (2005) *Degrees of choice: Social class, race and gender in higher education* (Trentham, Sterling).

Reay, D., Crozier, G. & Clayton, J. (2009) Strangers in paradise? Working-class students in elite universities, *Sociology*, 43(6), 1103–1121.

Scarpetta, S., Sonnet, A. & Manfredi, T. (2010) *Rising youth unemployment during the crisis: How to prevent negative long-term consequences on a generation?* OECD Social, Employment and Migration Working Paper No. 106.

Seginer, R. (2006) Parents’ educational involvement: A developmental ecology perspective, *Parenting: Science and Practice*, 6(1), 1–48.

Shavit, Y. & Blossfeld, H. (1993) *Persistent inequality: Changing educational attainment in thirteen countries* (Boulder, CO, Westview Press).

Spruyt, B., De Keere, K., Keppens, G., Roggemans, L. & Vam Droogenbroeck, F. (2016) What is it worth? An empirical investigation into attitudes towards education amongst youngsters following secondary education in Flanders, *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 37(4), 586–606.

© 2020 The Authors. *British Educational Research Journal* published by John Wiley & Sons Ltd on behalf of British Educational Research Association
Strømme, T. B. & Hansen, M. N. Closure in the elite professions: the field of law and medicine in an egalitarian context. *Journal of Education and Work*. 2017; 30(2), 168-185.

Sullivan, A. (2001) Cultural capital and educational attainment, *Sociology*, 35(4), 893–912.

Tramonte, L. & Willms, J. D. (2010) Cultural capital and its effects on education outcomes, *Economics of Education Review*, 29, 200–213.

Van de Werhorst, H. G. & Hofstede, S. (2007) Cultural capital or relative risk aversion? Two mechanisms for educational inequality compared, *British Journal of Sociology*, 58(3), 391–415.

Van de Werfhorst, H. G. & Mijs, J. J. B. (2010) Achievement inequality and the institutional structure of educational systems: A comparative perspective, *Annual Review of Sociology*, 36, 407–428.

Vincent, C. & Ball, S. J. (2007) ‘Making up’ the middle-class child: Families, activities and class dispositions, *Sociology*, 41(6), 1061–1077.

Vincent, C., Ball, S. J. & Kemp, S. (2004) The social geography of childcare: Making up a middle-class child, *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 25(2), 229–244.

Walther, A. (2006) Regimes of youth transitions: Choice, flexibility and security in young people’s experiences across different European contexts, *YOUNG*, 14(2), 119–139.

Xu, J. & Hampden-Thompson, G. (2012) Cultural reproduction, cultural mobility, cultural resources, or trivial effects? A comparative approach to cultural capital and educational performance, *Comparative Educational Review*, 56(1), 98–124.