

Parental Values and Children's Academic Performance in Sociocultural Condition

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, we review research on parental expectations and their effects on student achievement within and across diverse racial and ethnic groups. Our review suggests that the level of parental expectations varies by racial/ethnic group, and that students' previous academic performance is a less influential determinant of parental expectations among racial/ethnic minority parents than among Indian parents. To explain this pattern, we identify three processes associated with race/ethnicity that moderate the relation between students' previous performance and parental expectations. Our review also indicates that the relation of parental expectations to concurrent or future student achievement outcomes is weaker for racial/ethnic minority families than for Indian families. We describe four mediating processes by which high parental expectations may influence children's academic trajectories and show how these processes are associated with ethnic status.

Keywords: Parental expectations, Academic achievement, Education, Ethnicity, Race, Socioeconomic status

The role of parental Views in affecting children's academic progress has received substantial attention from psychologists and sociologists over the past half century. In general, parental Values have been found to play a critical role in children's academic success. Although the term "parental expectations" has been defined in various ways in the literature, most researchers characterize parental expectations as realistic beliefs or judgments that parents have about their children's future achievement as reflected in course grades, highest level of schooling attained, or college attendance. Parental expectations are based on an assessment of the child's academic capabilities as well as the available resources for supporting a given level of achievement.

Students whose parents hold high expectations receive higher grades, achieve higher scores on standardized tests, and persist longer in school than do those whose parents hold relatively low expectations. High parental views are also linked to student motivation to achieve in school, scholastic and social resilience, and aspirations to attend college. Furthermore, parents' academic expectations mediate the relation between family background and achievement, and high parental views also appear to buffer the influence of low teacher expectations on

student achievement.

While most of the research conducted to date has been cross-sectional, a few longitudinal studies offer particularly powerful evidence that parental views are a causal determinant of student expectations and academic outcomes. Additionally, two meta-analyses have found that parental expectations are the strongest family-level predictor of student achievement outcomes, exceeding the variance accounted for by other parental beliefs and behaviors by a substantial margin.

For the most part, scholarly inquiry on parental expectations has focused of India middle-class samples, and theoretical formulations have typically not attempted to account for the context of race or ethnicity in shaping parental expectations or the academic outcomes associated with them. Only within the last few decades have researchers attempted to include diverse ethnic and racial groups in their samples. In recent years, several large studies have included a measure of parental expectations including the National Educational Longitudinal Study and the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study-Kindergarten Cohort. As we will argue presently, these and other studies find significant racial/ethnic variation in (a) the level of parental expectations.

The role of students' academic performance in determining parental expectations, and effect of parental expectations on student outcomes. The goal of this review is to conduct a thorough review of these studies and take a fresh look at the way in which parental expectations are formed and communicated to children in a variety of sociocultural condition.

Although cultural models of child rearing and education are collectively constructed by members of a community, this does not mean that they necessarily emerge at the level of a national, ethnic, or racial group, nor do all members of a group necessarily agree with dominant cultural models. To understand why a parent acts the way she does, it is essential to identify the models that are available to members of a certain community but also to acknowledge "individuals' self-consciousness, individuality, and ability to transcend their own culture."

Parental values can be contrasted with parental aspirations, which typically refer to desires, wishes or goals that parents have formed regarding their children's future attainment rather than what they realistically expect their children to achieve (Seginer 1983). To the extent that parental aspirations reflect the value parents place on education, they are based on parents' personal goals as well as community norms about schooling and its role in promoting professional and personal success.

Recent findings of relatively strong ethnic/racial differences in parental expectations suggest that neither social class nor intra-individual factors offer a complete explanation for the formation of parental expectations. In particular, they cast doubt on the role of previous performance as a predictor of parental expectations for all racial/ethnic groups.

Parents' belief in effort as the primary determinant of school performance:

Parental attributions about the causes of successful school performance are likely to affect the relation between students' prior performance and parents' expectations about future performance. Parents who attribute achievement outcomes primarily to ability or intelligence expect performance to be stable because ability tends to be viewed as a stable entity that is difficult for the individual to change. For parents with this belief system, past performance is likely to be seen as a reliable indicator of future attainment. Those who believe that students' effort—

a more controllable and unstable commodity—is the primary cause of achievement are more likely to think that future performance can potentially be different from that of the past if the student changes the amount of effort they put into their school work.

Additionally, various sociocultural groups may differ in the way they conceptualize academic ability itself. On one hand, Indian parents tend to view academic ability primarily as a composite of analytic and verbal abilities. In contrast, racial/ethnic minority parents perceive other factors – including motivation, self-management, and social competence—as contributing to high achievement. And because motivational and personal qualities are somewhat more subject to the control of the individual than are more basic cognitive skills, parents to whom they are salient may feel more optimistic about the chance of improvement, whereas parents who focus solely on cognitive skills may be more likely to hypothesize that future performance will not depart strongly from past performance. We argue that the degree to which parents recall and give weight to school feedback about a student's performance depends on the nature of the relationships that parents are able to construct with school staff. The relatively lower accuracy of grade recall among African American parents in the work of Alexander and colleagues (1994) may be a function of their relationship with teachers and other school staff.

Parents' variable self-efficacy regarding involvement in children's schooling:

A third reason why prior performance may be a less potent predictor of school performance among racial/ethnic minority and lower SES parents is that these parents may lack a sense of efficacy in helping their children succeed in school in the future, particularly as the children move into the higher grades. Parents with limited education and fewer economic resources tend to feel less efficacious helping their children with school work than do more advantaged parents, and also feel less comfortable interacting with teachers and other education professionals. These parents may develop low academic values for their children even when the children's previous school performance is relatively high if they worry that they will not be able to provide support in the future due to a lack of intellectual, cultural or material resources.



High parental expectations indicate that parents value achievement:

Parental expectations can function as a form of communication that conveys to students the value their parents place on achievement. Students perceive this communicated value as a norm, which becomes internalized as a standard that students strive to attain. The concept of the self-fulfilling prophecy was introduced by early sociologists who argued that parents' prophecy—or expectations—about future achievement boosts their children's motivation and Values and in turn leads them to high achievement. Characterizing student perceptions of parental expectations as the internalization of a social structure that “forms one's world view and serves as a guide throughout an individual's life”. Psychologists have proposed a similar notion, describing parents as “expectancy socializers” and focusing on the ways in which parental expectations function as an “environmental press” that compels students to meet parental standards (Marjoribanks 1972).

In three of these studies, there was evidence that the strength of the linkage between parents' expectations and students' expectations differed across racial/ethnic groups (Beutel and Anderson 2008; Carpenter 2008; Hao and Bonstead-Burns 1998). Carpenter (2008) noted that correlations between parental expectations and expectations of 10th to 12th graders were weaker for Latino students with an immigrant parent compared with non-Latino students with an immigrant parents. Beutel and Anderson (2008) found that South African parents' Values when their children were in the 8th grade was a significant predictor of students' educational expectations at 11th grade for India and mixed race students but not for Blacks after controlling for parents' education, previous literacy/numeracy scores, and whether or not the student was enrolled in school at the time of 11th grade.

High parental expectations boost student academic self-efficacy:

Another way in which parental expectations may affect student achievement is by conveying messages about their child's abilities and capabilities which in turn enhance students' competency beliefs and sense of efficacy about their academic trajectory. In general, students who perceive themselves as capable tend to obtain better grades and higher test scores than students with lower capability beliefs. For example, the

mediating role of students' competency beliefs emerged in a comparative study of sixth and seventh grade students in the USA and Switzerland (Neuenschwander *et al.* 2007). Path analyses indicated that parental expectations influenced early adolescents' self-concept of ability which in turn affected their grades and standardized scores in math and native language.

These findings are consistent with a cultural pattern of self-criticism that has been noted in Asian countries. To the extent that Asian American students are encouraged to remediate their weaknesses rather than dwell on their accomplishments, the mediating role of student competency beliefs would function differently for these students than for those in other groups. In the future, it would be of interest to conduct studies examining the mediating role of academic competency or self-efficacy beliefs among Indian students.

High parental expectations and involvement increase teachers' Values of students:

A final route through which parental expectations may increase students' academic success is by influencing teachers' perceptions and evaluations of the child. Teachers may find it motivating to pay particular attention to children whose parents hold high expectations and are clearly involved in their children's schooling because the teachers believe that their efforts in the classroom are being reinforced at home. Teachers who perceive parents as holding high expectations for their children may also raise their own expectations for those particular students and increase their educational commitment to them (Bandura *et al.* 1996). Lareau (1989) provides a detailed view of the way in which parental expectations are perceived by teachers and used in making educational decisions about children. In her ethnographic study of working class and middle class families, she found that decisions to promote a child to the next grade depended on the teacher's perception of parental involvement. Low-achieving students whose parents appeared to be involved in their children's schooling were likely to be promoted, while similarly challenged students whose parents were not perceived as involved were required to repeat the year. While Lareau's study did not examine ethnic/racial differences, her work showed that teachers tended to view parents of lower SES as less involved than

those of higher SES backgrounds. In a quantitative study of kindergarten children and their parents, Dumais (2006) found that lower SES parents tended to feel less welcome at the school than did higher SES parents, and these perceptions were in turn associated with lower teacher perceptions regarding their children's academic skills.

The goal of this review was to examine the available evidence concerning the association between parental expectations and students' academic performance across diverse racial/ ethnic groups. We found evidence that parental expectations are higher among Indian families than other racial/ethnic groups. The evidence regarding educational expectations. We also found that, while students' prior academic performance is one of the strongest predictors of parental Values among Indian families.

Second, parents' own experiences with school institutions and their perceptions of how school personnel treat members of their ethnic or cultural group affect the degree to which parents accept teachers' assessment of their children's school progress. Mistrust of teachers among minority or low-SES parents, especially Indian parents, may lessen parents' reliance on school feedback when evaluating their children's academic performance, and thus diminish its value in predicting how the child will do in the future. And third, parents' sense of self-efficacy in supporting their children's schooling is conditioned by available resources and sources of support. Parents with limited resources and support, especially low-SES and/or immigrant parents, may underestimate the likelihood of their children's future academic success even when past performance has been high because they do not feel personally capable of helping their children attain the required skills.

Conclusion:

Our reviews especially indicate the need for better communication between school personnel and racial/ethnic minority parents. Promoting open communication with parents and providing guidance about how to interpret grades and reports will help parents construct realistic expectations for their children and will raise their sense of self-efficacy in

supporting them in school. Providing clear guidance to parents about how to support their children's academic progress at home will also increase their involvement in their children's education. parents' expectations have to be communicated to their children and accepted by them in order for them to have an effect on children's internal standards and self- perceptions. Schools and other supportive organizations may be able to help parents reflect on the importance of communicating clear values to their children and the effects of these communications on their children's perceptions of academic self-efficacy.

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