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Problem of Interest

- Only 69% of undergraduates obtain their bachelor's degree in 6 years or less (NCES, 2017).
- In particular, first-generation college students (FGCS), those whose parents have not earned a college degree, are at a high risk for dropping out (Chen, 2005; Ishitani, 2006; Pascarella et al., 2003).
- It is critical that we determine what factors are related to the academic success of first-generation college students.

Review of Literature

- Research has primarily focused on risk, access, and retention (Demetriou et al., 2017; e.g., Engle & Tinto, 2008).
- Far less research has addressed home factors, particularly the role of parents, and students' own beliefs about the importance of education.

Expectancy-Value Model of Achievement (e.g., Eccles et al., 1983; Eccles & Wigfield, 2002; Wigfield et al., 2006)

- Posits that individuals' expectations and values for a task determine their engagement.
- **Utility values**, or how well a given task aligns with an individual's goals, are one such value (Eccles et al., 1983).
 - Several studies show that **educational utility values** positively predict academic outcomes in college students (Foley et al., 2014; Malka & Covington, 2005; Walsh & Robinson-Kurpius, 2016).
- Task-values are shaped by external socializing forces, such as **parents**, who exert a substantial influence on their children's education (e.g., Jacobs & Eccles, 2002).
 - Suizzo and Soon (2006) identified four dimensions of parental academic socialization: **emotional autonomy support, active involvement, demanding hard work, and competitiveness.**

Aims of Current Study

- 1) To explore whether parents' academic socialization and students' education utility values predict GPA in a sample of first-generation college students.
- 2) To examine whether educational utility values mediate the association between Suizzo's dimensions of parental academic socialization and these students' GPA.

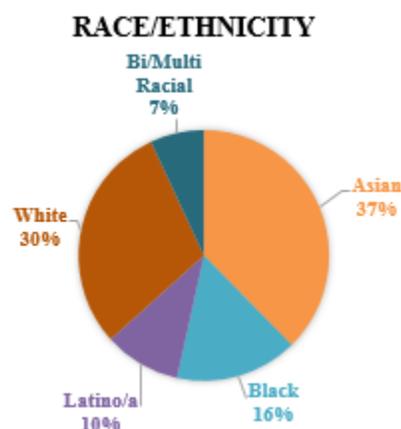
Method

Participants ($N = 135$)

- Majority female (78% FGCS)

Measures

- **Self-Reported Demographics** (e.g., gender, race, income, class year)
 - Used as covariates in analyses
- **Parental Academic Socialization Questionnaire** (Suizzo & Soon, 2006) ($\alpha = .95$)
 - 4 domains (49 items rated on a Likert scale)
 - Emotional autonomy support and responsiveness
 - Active involvement
 - Demanding hard work
 - Competitiveness



- **The Economic Value of Education subscale** (Murdock, 1999) ($\alpha = .86$)
 - 2 domains (15 items rated on a Likert scale)
 - Benefits of education
 - Limitations of education (reverse-coded)

Results

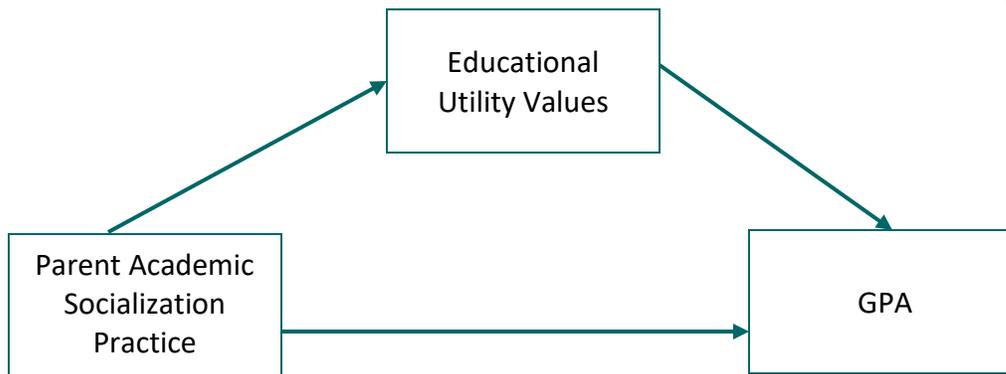
Aim 1

OLS Regression of Factors Predicting First-Generation College Students' GPA^a

Predictor variable	β
Emotional autonomy support and responsiveness (EASR)	.33*
Active involvement	-.16
Demanding hard work	-.31*
Competitiveness	.11
Educational utility values	.24*
Final Model $F(10, 133) = 2.91, p < .05, R^2 = .19$	

^aControlling for race/ethnicity, income, nativity status, and gender.

Aim 2



- Utility values **fully mediated** associations between **emotional autonomy support and responsiveness**, **demanding hard** and GPA (in separate mediation analyses).
- Mediation was not observed for active involvement or competitiveness.

Discussion

- Our findings suggest that educational utility values may be an **important source of influence** for first-generation college students.
 - It may be that students who grew up with parents who did not receive college degrees are keenly aware of the advantages of obtaining a higher education and this understanding relates to their performance.
 - One limitation of our current sample is that all participants were currently enrolled in college. It would be valuable to know if utility values were an important influence in who decided to pursue college and those who did not.
- Preliminary coding of semi-structured interviews with participants revealed that students recall parents being supportive, in addition to giving advice about the importance of education and the value of hard work.
 - "...but they always made sure that it was, uh, school—**schooling first**. Because grades are important and that will help you later in life...Um, I think one of the most important things was like that even if I didn't do as well as they wanted, is like the most important thing was like **always like try your best** and that I could've **always done better**."

