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The Relation Between Parents' Academic Socialization and Academic Self-Efficacy for First-Generation College Students

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Introduction

- First-generation college students, or students whose parents did not earn a college degree, are more likely than other students to feel less prepared for college, have lower GPAs, and not graduate within 6 years (Engle, 2007; Ishitani, 2006; Terenzini et al., 1996).
- Academic self-efficacy, students' perceptions of their competence in performing academically-related tasks, is positively associated with college adjustment, GPA, and retention (Lopez et al., 1997; Ramos-Sanchez & Nichols, 2007; Zajacova et al., 2005).
- Given that academic self-efficacy can be affected by environmental factors, we need to identify what variables could promote the academic self-efficacy of first-generation college students (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002; Korgan et al., 2014).
- Parents' academic socialization, which includes parents' educationally-related practices, beliefs, and values, is one possible predictor of students' academic self-efficacy (Schunk & Pajares, 2002; Taylor et al., 2004).

Present Study

- Examined whether four dimensions of parents' academic socialization predicted first-generation college students' reports of academic self-efficacy.

Method

Participants

- $N = 135$ first-generation college students attending a mid-sized public university in the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States
 - Gender: 78% female
 - Transfer status: 44% transfer students
 - Race/Ethnicity: 38% Asian, 29% White, 16% Black, 10% Latino, and 7% Bi- or Multiracial

Procedure

- Students completed an online questionnaire, which consisted of open- and closed-ended questions, as part of a larger study.

Measures

- GPA (self-reported): $M = 3.14$, $SD = 0.49$, Range: 1.89 – 4.00
- "What is the first thing that comes to mind when you think about how your parent(s) influenced your education?"
- Academic Self-Efficacy (Midgley et al., 2000)
 - Sub-scale of the Patterns of Adaptive Learning Scales (PALS; Midgley et al., 2000)
 - 5-point Likert scale (1 = *Not at all true*, 5 = *Very true*)

Table 1. Academic Self-Efficacy Scale Information

Subscale	# of Items	Example Items	M (SD)	Reliability
Academic Self-Efficacy	5	"I can do almost all of the work in my courses if I do not give up."	4.18 (0.66)	$\alpha = .90$

Method Continued

Measures

- Parental Academic Socialization Questionnaire (Suizzo & Soon, 2006)
 - 5-point Likert scale (1 = *Strongly disagree*, 5 = *Strongly agree*)

Table 2. Parental Academic Socialization Scale Information

Subscale	Number of Items	Example Items	M (SD)	Reliability
Full Scale	49	-	3.71 (0.65)	$\alpha = .95$
Emotional Autonomy Support and Responsiveness	15	"My parents were proud when I succeeded in something I had undertaken." "If I had a difficult task in front of me, I felt support from my parents."	3.80 (0.69)	$\alpha = .91$
Active Involvement	11	"My parents asked me questions about what I was learning in school on a regular basis" "My parents spent time working with me on difficult assignments."	3.48 (0.98)	$\alpha = .92$
Competitiveness	9	"My parents told me that I should always try to be the best."	3.47 (0.90)	$\alpha = .88$
Demanding Hard Work	14	"My parents put high demands on me when it came to school grades." "My parents taught me that the best way to get ahead in life is through hard work."	3.93 (0.76)	$\alpha = .92$

Results

Table 3. Parents' Academic Socialization Subscales Predicting Academic Self-Efficacy

Predictor	B	SE	β	t
GPA	0.15	0.06	.13	2.62**
Transfer status	0.19	0.07	.13	2.67**
Race/ethnicity	-0.14	0.07	-.09	-1.95
Year in school	0.12	0.07	.08	1.61
Emotional Autonomy Support and Responsiveness	0.54	0.09	.47	5.79**
Active Involvement	-0.20	0.07	-.24	-2.99**
Demanding Hard Work	-0.02	0.07	-.02	-0.31
Competitiveness	0.04	0.05	.05	0.72

- $R^2 = .16$, $F(8, 126) = 3.06$, $p < .01$
- ** $p < .01$

Results Continued

- "What is the first thing that comes to mind when you think about how your parent(s) influenced your education?"

"My parents are one of the main factors that shaped my mindset. ...I am motivated, **but they continuously help me throughout my rough times**. They support me through my struggles. ...my grades are compensation for their hard work."

"They always **encouraged me** to work hard and follow my dreams."

"They **encouraged me to learn** as much as I could and to do as well as I could in school in order to make life easier for me in the future."

"I think about how they **encouraged me to try my best**, and become the best I can be."

"Even though they were deprived of education because of financial issues they knew more about the importance of education than me. **They have always supported me** since my childhood to live my dreams and follow the path of education to achieve my goals."

Discussion

Emotional Autonomy Support and Responsiveness

- When parents support their children's educational endeavors or are responsive to them, it may bolster students' academic self-efficacy.
- This finding is important when considering the academic self-efficacy of first-generation college students, as providing support and being responsive to students' educational endeavors may transcend parents' educational attainment.
- In preliminary coding of students' responses to the open-ended question about 21% of participants mentioned either the word "support" or "encourage," indicating that this aspect of parents' academic socialization may be more salient to students.
- Encouraging parents to be emotionally supportive and responsive may be one avenue to promote first-generation college students' academic self-efficacy.

Active Involvement

- It is possible that parents could reduce the extent of their active involvement if they perceived, or were informed, that their children were academically efficacious.
- Conversely, parents' active involvement may encroach on the development of students' academic self-efficacy.

Limitations

- Students were not directly asked what they thought was influential to their academic self-efficacy and the data are correlational.
- Future research should consider pairing quantitative and qualitative data to examine students' academic self-efficacy.