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Study Summary Form Fields

I. Citation Info

Author(s)
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Year of publication
2010

Title of Study
Incentivizing education: Seeing schoolwork as an investment, not a chore

Source of Study
*Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*

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Issue
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Keywords
Motivation; academic achievement; socioeconomic status; future identity; possible selves; race; social cognition

Abstract
Most American children expect to attend college but because they do not necessarily spend much time on schoolwork, they may fail to reach their imagined “college-bound” future self. The proposed identity-based motivation model helps explain why this gap occurs: Imagined “college-bound” identities cue school-focused behavior if they are
salient and feel relevant to current choice options, not otherwise. Two studies with predominantly low-income and African American middle school students support this prediction. Almost all of the students expect to attend college, but only half describe education-dependent (e.g., law, medicine) adult identities. Having education-dependent rather than education-independent adult identities (e.g., sports, entertainment) predicts better grades over time, controlling for prior grade point average (Study 1). To demonstrate causality, salience of education-dependent vs. education-independent adult identities was experimentally manipulated. Children who considered education-dependent adult identities (vs. education-independent ones) were eight times more likely to complete a take-home extra-credit assignment (Study 2).

II. Study Description

*Intervention Description*

- **Name of the program/study condition:**
  - Education dependence adult possible identities
- **Main purpose or general description:**
  - Individuals’ perception of their future in college will alter how they make current school-focused behavioral choices
- **Theoretical background:**
- **Components:**
  - **Study 1**
    - “Operationalized salience as education-dependent (vs. education-independent) descriptions of adult possible identities, testing our hypothesis on two outcome variables” (p. 847)
  - **Study 2**
    - “Focused on a central component of identity in adolescence, future wage-earning careers. We experimentally manipulated whether these features would feel education-dependent or education-independent” (p. 848)
    - Teacher introduced researcher as a visitor handing out job-related information. Teachers left room during surveys and was blind to conditions/hypotheses
    - Content of info sheet about adult earnings in graphs – education-dependent showed stepwise increase with education level, while education-independent showed median state earnings and extremely high wages of top actors, athletes, and musicians
- **Previous studies / evaluations:**

*Implementation Elements*
Content elements:
Pedagogical strategies:

Research Question(s) / Hypotheses
Study 1
“We hypothesized that children would invest more effort in school and attain better grades over time if education-dependent rather than education-independent adult identities were salient.” (p. 847)

Study 2
“We hypothesized that children would invest more effort in school if education-dependent, not education-independent, adult identities were salient.” (p. 848)

Research Methods
Sample Description:
Study 1
• Total N final sample: 266
• Composition:
  o Gender: --
  o Location: Detroit
  o Grade: 8th
  o Ethnicity: 72% African American, 17% Latino, 11% White
  o SES: low (54.1% below poverty line; 2/3 free or reduced lunch)

Study 2
• Total N final sample: 295
  o Closed-path classroom: 22
  o Open-path classroom: 26
• Composition:
  o Gender: 25 female, 23 male
  o Location: Detroit
  o Grade: 7th
  o Ethnicity: 57% African American, 29% White, 12% Biracial/Other/no response, 2% Latino
  o SES: low (61% free or reduced lunch)

Measures:
• Prompt about future job followed by judgment of education-dependent vs. education-independent content
• Weekly homework time – self-report
  o 8 point scale (0=0h a week, 7=more than 10h a week)
• How far they expected to go in school – self-report
• 8 point scale (1=attend high school, 8=attend graduate or professional school)
  • What grade do you usually get? – self-report
    o 9 point scale (0=mostly F’s, 8=mostly A’s)
• Planned effort – homework and study time
• Actual effort – whether they handed in assignments

Procedures:
• Design:
  o Study 1 – correlational
  o Study 2 – Experimental
• Times of assessment:
  o Pre-test, post-test
• Assignment method:
  o Level of assignment: classrooms
  o “Children were randomly assigned to condition by class period across both classrooms.” (p. 848)

Research results
Study 1 (baseline)
• Most expected to attend at least a two-year college
• Half expected an education-dependent adult identity
  o Invested more time on homework and got better grades

Study 2
• More planned and actual effort invested by those in education-dependent condition

Summary of results
“Study 1 demonstrated that almost all children expected to attend college but only about half had adult wage-earning identities that were education dependent...in Study 2, we manipulated which identity was salient. In the education-dependent condition wage-earning increased with education, in the education-independent condition wage-earning was not explicitly education-linked.” (p. 848)

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</table>

*Study limitations*
- Did not assess how students learn information
- Did not explicitly quantify the effect of the manipulation on student identities

*Outcome Variables Taxonomy*
- Planned effort
- Actual effort
- Grades

*Program Association*
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