

Parenting Practices, Parenting Style, and Children's School Achievement

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Abstract This study, drawing on data from the 2002 Survey of Approaches to Educational Planning (SAEP), examined the predictive effects of parenting practices and parenting style on children's school achievement, and the predictive effects of parental expectations and parental beliefs on parenting style for 6,626 respondents with children aged 5–18 years in Canada. Hierarchical multiple regression analyses, after controlling for family socio-economic status (SES), revealed the substantial positive predictive effects of family SES, parental encouragement, parental expectations, and parental beliefs on children's school achievement. In contrast, parental monitoring had a substantial negative predictive effect on children's school achievement in the context of other variables. Although parental expectations were not related to parenting style, parental beliefs were positively associated with both parental encouragement and parental monitoring—the two dimensions of authoritative parenting style.

Keywords Parenting practices · Parenting style · School achievement · Parental encouragement · Parental monitoring · Parental expectations · Parental beliefs

The study of parental influences on student motivation, learning, and school achievement has markedly increased recently as researchers attempt to understand contextual influences on learning (e.g., Driscoll et al. 2008; Gonzalez-DeHass et al. 2005; Heaven and Ciarrochi 2008; Jeynes 2003, 2005a, b, 2007, 2010a; Pomerantz et al. 2007; Silva et al. 2008; Spera 2005). Parental involvement is defined as “parental participation in the educational processes and

experiences of their children” (Jeynes 2010a, p. 42). Hence parental involvement encompasses several subtle and important components, including parenting practices and parenting style (see Spera 2005, for a review).

Lee et al. (2006) posit that distinguishing between parenting practices and parenting style has methodological implications relative to measuring parental influence. Parenting practices are defined as “the mechanisms through which parents directly help their child attain their socialization goals” (Darling and Steinberg 1993, p. 493). In contrast, parenting style refers to “a constellation of attitudes toward the child that are communicated to the child and that, taken together, create an emotional climate in which the parent's behaviours are expressed” (Darling and Steinberg 1993, p. 488). Indubitably, all parents want their children to succeed at school, but not all parents are successful in facilitating success (Mandell and Sweet 2004; Sclafani 2004). Therefore, it is critical to examine the effects of parenting practices and parenting style on children's school achievement.

Parenting Practices and School Achievement

Parenting practices consist of several important parenting constructs, such as parental expectations and parental beliefs (see Jeynes 2010a, b). Parents' expectations for their children's educational future and parental beliefs about the importance of good grades and schooling beyond the high school level are important antecedents of children's school performance (see Aunola et al. 2003; Bronstein et al. 2005; Davis-Kean 2005; Spera et al. 2009; Scott-Jones 1995). The extant literature pertaining to the impact of specific aspects of parental involvement on school achievement document the strong positive relationship of parental expectations and parental beliefs with children's scholastic outcomes (e.g., Bronstein et al. 2005; Spera et al. 2009).

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Children who are doing better in school are more likely to have parents who view education as a vehicle for upward mobility (Spera et al. 2009).

Recent meta-analytic research, examining the impact of parental expectations on children's school achievement, suggests that parental expectations may be the most crucial component of parental involvement (e.g., Jeynes 2005b, c, 2007, 2010a). In one of the most recent meta-analyses (see Jeynes 2010a), investigating the effects of different facets of parental involvement on elementary school achievement, parental expectations yielded the largest effect size (.58 standard deviation units). Similarly, parental expectations yielded the largest effect size (.88 standard deviation units) for secondary school achievement as well (see Jeynes 2010a). Another subtle and crucial component of parental involvement, which is strongly associated with children's school achievement, is parenting style (Jeynes 2010b).

Parenting Style and School Achievement

Baumrind (1967, 1978, 1991) delineates three parenting typologies: authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive. These three parenting typologies are based on two parenting dimensions—responsiveness and demandingness (Baumrind 1967, 1978, 1991). Baumrind (2005) defines responsiveness as “the extent to which parents foster individuality and self-assertion by being attuned, supportive, and acquiescent to children's requests; it includes warmth, autonomy support, and reasoned communication” (p. 61). On the other hand, demandingness refers to “the claims parents make on children to become integrated into society by behaviour regulation, direct confrontation, and maturity demands (behavioural control) and supervision of children's activities (monitoring)” (Baumrind 2005, p. 62). Whereas authoritative parenting style is characterized by high demandingness and high responsiveness, permissive parenting style is characterized by low demandingness and high responsiveness. Authoritarian parenting style is characterized by high demandingness and low responsiveness (see Maccoby and Martin 1983).

Thus authoritative parenting style incorporates both encouragement and monitoring because it is the “simultaneous ability to be loving and supportive and yet maintain an adequate level of discipline in the household” (Jeynes 2010a, p. 64). While permissive and authoritarian parenting styles are typically associated with poorer psychological and behavioural outcomes (e.g., Driscoll et al. 2008), authoritative parenting style is associated with positive school outcomes (e.g., Jeynes 2005b, 2007, 2010a; Lee et al. 2006; Simpkins et al. 2006; Steinberg et al. 1992). The most recent meta-analyses indicated that the effects for parental style were statistically significant: .35 standard deviation units for elementary school achievement and .40

standard deviation units for secondary school achievement (see Jeynes 2010a). Parental style yielded the second largest effect size, following parental expectations. Indeed, parental style “can produce a home atmosphere that promotes an educational orientation” (Jeynes 2010b, p. 753).

However, one of the dimensions of authoritative parenting style—monitoring—has been found to be both positively and negatively associated with student achievement (see Clark 1993; Muller 1993, 1995; Niggli et al. 2007; Pomerantz and Eaton 2001; Rogers et al. 2009). Meta-analyses indicated that the effect size for parental monitoring dimensions, such as checking homework, was not statistically significant for elementary school achievement (see Jeynes 2005b). In the absence of sophisticated controls, the effect size for checking homework was found to be statistically significant for secondary school achievement. However, when sophisticated controls were used, it was not statistically significant (see Jeynes 2007).

In sum, the voluminous literature on parental involvement and academic success indicate that both parental practices and parenting style influence children's school achievement. Hence it is important to examine the effects of parenting practices and parenting style on school achievement. Furthermore, given that parental expectations and parental beliefs are the crucial and subtle components of parental involvement, it is imperative to examine the effects of these parenting constructs on parenting style. To date, there has been a dearth of research on the impact of parental expectations and parental beliefs on parenting style. Numerous studies have demonstrated that family socioeconomic status (SES) indicators, such as family income and parental education, are associated with school achievement (see Bradley and Corwyn 2002; Sirin 2005; Marks et al. 2006; Vista and Grantham 2010) and parental involvement (e.g., Chao and Willms 2000; DeGarmo et al. 1999; Grolnick et al. 1997; Jeynes 2010a). Therefore, family SES was included in the study as a control variable. The present study addressed the following research questions:

1. To what extent do parenting practices and parenting style predict children's school achievement, after controlling for family socioeconomic status?
2. To what extent do parental expectations and parental beliefs predict parenting style, after controlling for family socioeconomic status?

Method

Sample

The data used in the present study were drawn from the 2002 Survey of Approaches to Educational Planning

(SAEP), which was undertaken by Statistics Canada in partnership with Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC). The 2002 SAEP examined how Canadians are preparing their children for postsecondary education. A total of 10,788 households, with children aged 0–18 years (one child per family) living in the 10 provinces in Canada, participated in the survey. For the purposes of the present study, only Canadian-born households with children aged 5–18 years were included in the analyses. Hence, the final sample comprised of 6,626 participants (3,365 males; 3,261 females). The sample weights provided by Statistics Canada were used in the analyses.

Measures

School Achievement

Children's school achievement was one of the outcome measures. Parents reported their children's grades in school based on their knowledge of children's schoolwork and report cards (1 = Below 50% to 6 = 90–100%).

Parenting Style

Parenting style comprised of two indices of authoritative parenting style—parental encouragement and parental monitoring. To address the research questions, parental encouragement and parental monitoring were used as both dependent and independent variables. Items were recoded, wherever necessary.

Parental Encouragement It consisted of two items: the frequency with which parents praised their children for how well they performed in school and the frequency with which parents praised their children's efforts to do well in school. Items were rated on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*never*) to 4 (*very often*). The internal reliability (Cronbach's α coefficient) of the scale was .69.

Parental Monitoring It comprised of three items: the frequency with which parents checked their children's homework or provided help with homework, ensured that nothing interfered with children's homework, and regulated the amount of time the children watched television, played computer games or spoke on the phone on school days. Items were rated on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*never*) to 4 (*very often*). The internal reliability of the scale was .62.

Parenting Practices

Parenting practices included two indices—parental expectations and parental beliefs.

Parental Expectations It included two items on parental hopes and expectations that they have for their children's educational future. Items were rated on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*less than high school*) to 4 (*university*). The internal consistency of the scale was .82.

Parental Beliefs It consisted of two items on parental beliefs about the importance of good grades and schooling beyond the high school level. Items were rated on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*not important at all*) to 4 (*very important*). The internal reliability of the scale was .60.

Family Socioeconomic Status (SES)

The family SES measure comprised of three items: *family income* (1 = less than \$30,000 to 5 = \$80,000 or more), *mother's highest level of education* (1 = less than high school to 5 = university degree), and *father's highest level of education* (1 = less than high school to 5 = university degree). The internal reliability of the scale was .61.

Results

IBM SPSS Statistics 19 (formerly SPSS) was used to conduct statistical analyses. An exploratory factor analysis (EFA) using principal axis factoring (PAF) with oblique rotation was performed to identify the measures. All items had a factor loading of 0.40 or more (Tabachnick and Fidell 2007). The latent root criterion (eigenvalue >1.00) and an examination of the scree plot were used to extract meaningful factors that accounted for the maximum amount of common variance (Thompson 2004). Overall, the results supported five extracted factors that accounted for 67% of the total common variance in participants' responses. The first factor (parental expectations) accounted for approximately 20% of the variance in participants' responses. The second factor (family SES) accounted for approximately 17% of the variance in responses. The third factor (parental encouragement) accounted for approximately 11% of the total variance. The fourth factor (parental monitoring) accounted for approximately 10% of the variance in participants' responses. The fifth factor (parental beliefs) accounted for 9% of the total variance. Descriptive statistics and correlations among the study variables are presented in Table 1.

Predicting School Achievement and Parenting Style

To address the first research question, hierarchical multiple regression analysis was conducted. School achievement was the dependent variable. Parenting practices and parenting style measures were the independent variables.

Table 1 Descriptive statistics and correlations for the study variables

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Correlation						
			1	2	3	4	5	6	
1. School achievement	4.40	1.09	–						
2. Family socioeconomic status	3.10	1.06	.21**	–					
3. Parental encouragement	3.47	.65	.12**	–.01	–				
4. Parental monitoring	2.67	.90	–.01	–.01	.29**	–			
5. Parental expectations	3.66	.70	.23**	.25**	.05**	–.02	–		
6. Parental beliefs	3.60	.53	.21**	.11**	.07**	.06**	.24**	–	

** $p < .01$.

The results of the hierarchical regression analysis for variables predicting school achievement are shown in Table 2. To control for socioeconomic status, family SES was entered into the regression equation in Step 1. In Step 2, parental encouragement, parental monitoring, parental expectations, and parental beliefs were added to the regression equation.

The family SES entered into the equation in Step 1 accounted for a statistically significant proportion of the variance in school achievement, with $R^2 = .05$, $F(1, 5788) = 300.70$, $p < .001$, $f^2 = .05$. In this step, family SES was a positive predictor of school achievement. After Step 2, with parental encouragement, parental monitoring, parental expectations, and parental beliefs also included in the equation, $R^2 = .11$, $F_{\text{change}}(4, 5784) = 97.92$, $p < .001$, $f^2 = .12$. Thus, the addition of these variables resulted in a statistically significant 6% increment in explained variance. In the second step, not only family SES but also parental encouragement, parental monitoring, parental expectations, and parental beliefs uniquely predicted school achievement. Whereas family SES, parental encouragement, parental expectations and beliefs were positive predictors of school achievement, parental monitoring was a negative predictor of school achievement. The higher the level of parental monitoring, the lower the level of children's school achievement.

To answer the second research question, hierarchical multiple regression was performed. The two dimensions of authoritative parenting style—parental encouragement and

parental monitoring—were the dependent variables. Family SES, parental expectations, and parental beliefs were the independent variables. The results of the hierarchical regression analysis for variables predicting parenting style are provided in Table 2. In Step 1, family SES was entered into the regression equation. In Step 2, parental expectations and parental beliefs were added to the regression equation. The family SES entered into the regression equation in Step 1 did not account for a statistically significant proportion of the variance in parental encouragement and parental monitoring. However, the addition of variables in Step 2 resulted in a statistically significant increment in R^2 for both parental encouragement, $R^2 = .01$, $F_{\text{change}}(2, 5791) = 8.72$, $p < .001$, $f^2 = .01$, and parental monitoring, $R^2 = .01$, $F_{\text{change}}(2, 5796) = 7.10$, $p < .01$, $f^2 = .01$. In Step 2, with all the predictors included in the equation, parental beliefs was the only unique positive predictor of both parental encouragement and parental monitoring.

Discussion

The purpose of the present study was twofold: first, to examine the effects of parenting practices and parenting style on children's school achievement; and second, to investigate the influence of parental expectations and parental beliefs on the two dimensions of authoritative parenting style—parental encouragement and monitoring.

Table 2 Hierarchical regression analyses for variables predicting school achievement and parenting style

	Achievement		Encouragement		Monitoring	
	<i>B</i> (<i>SE</i>)	β	<i>B</i> (<i>SE</i>)	β	<i>B</i> (<i>SE</i>)	β
Step 1						
Family socioeconomic status	.22 (.01)	.22***	.01 (.01)	.01	.00 (.01)	.00
Step 2						
Family socioeconomic status	.17 (.01)	.17***	.00 (.01)	.00	.00 (.01)	.00
Parental encouragement	.18 (.02)	.11***	–	–	–	–
Parental monitoring	–.09 (.02)	–.07***	–	–	–	–
Parental expectations	.21 (.02)	.14***	.02 (.01)	.02	–.02 (.02)	–.02
Parental beliefs	.28 (.03)	.14***	.06 (.02)	.05***	.08 (.02)	.05***

*** $p < .001$.

Consistent with previous research (e.g., Vista and Grantham 2010), findings of the present study indicate that higher family SES is associated with higher levels of school achievement for children. Indeed, higher income and highly educated parents can enhance their children's school achievement by providing their children an array of services and goods. On the other hand, children from low SES families may be lacking access to those same services and goods, thus putting them at risk for developmental problems and limiting their academic development and chances of success (Brooks-Gunn and Duncan 1997; Campbell and Ramey 1994).

In congruence with previous research (e.g., Jeynes 2005b, 2007; Lee et al. 2006; Simpkins et al. 2006), the two dimensions of authoritative parenting style—encouragement and monitoring—were associated with children's school achievement. Parental encouragement was positively associated with school achievement, indicating that rewarding learning-related behaviours with encouragement and praise is associated with higher school achievement in children. Hence, “when parents use a supportive and encouraging style of involvement, they provide their children with a sense of initiative and confidence in relation to learning” (Rogers et al. 2009, p. 35).

In contrast, parental monitoring was negatively associated with children's school achievement. A large body of research has documented that parental monitoring is related to lower academic performance (e.g., Muller 1995, Niggli et al. 2007; Pomerantz and Eaton 2001; Rogers et al. 2009). For instance, prior research has suggested that monitoring of homework, monitoring children's time, setting of rules, and academic pressure are associated with lower academic achievement (see Niggli et al. 2007; Rogers et al. 2009). Rogers et al. (2009) posit that parents who place pressure on their children to excel at school and who interfere in their children's homework processes may have children with lower academic competence and, hence, lower achievement. Furthermore, parental monitoring in the form of parental pressure and control can decrease children's intrinsic motivation, and may undermine the learning process and children's sense of personal value and responsibility (see Grolnick 2003).

The findings from this study, consistent with prior research (e.g., Aunola et al. 2003; Davis-Kean 2005; Spera et al. 2009; Jeynes 2010a), suggest that parental expectations and parental beliefs are also positively associated with children's school achievement. Children who are doing better in school are more likely to have parents who hold high expectations for their children's educational attainment. Parents who believe in the importance of doing well in school may attempt to instil such an attitude in their children (Jeynes 2010a). Moreover, parents with high education-related beliefs and values may believe that the

best way for their children to succeed in the labour market is to receive good grades, complete high school, and attend college (Spera 2005).

Finally, the findings of the study provide empirical support for the positive association between parental beliefs and authoritative parenting style. Parental beliefs were positively associated with both parental encouragement and parental monitoring, suggesting that parents who hold high education-related beliefs and values are more likely to have an authoritative parenting style. In other words, the degree of parental responsiveness (warmth) and demandingness (strictness) depends on the importance parents place on their children's educational attainment. Encouragement and an environment highly supportive of achievement are found in families where parents believe that education is the most significant way for children to improve their status in life (Neuenschwander et al. 2007).

In conclusion, the results of the present study indicate that parenting practices and parenting style—two important facets of parental involvement—have an impact on children's school achievement. Therefore, attracting parents to become active participants in their children's education through effective parental involvement programs may help to raise the educational outcomes of struggling school children (Jeynes 2010b). The findings of the recent meta-analyses (e.g., Jeynes 2010a), examining the effectiveness of school-based parental involvement programs in raising student achievement, are particularly encouraging in this regard. However, further research in the form of meta-analyses and longitudinal studies is warranted to explore the best means of attracting parents to become active participants in their children's educational development and to determine which facets of parental involvement are the most important (Jeynes 2010a, 2010b). Furthermore, future research is needed to examine the nuanced interplay of parental expectations and parental beliefs in predicting parenting style. Finally, given the modest positive correlation between parental encouragement and parental monitoring, future research is required to explore the influence of interaction between parental encouragement and parental monitoring on children's school achievement.

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