



Preparing people to lead extraordinary lives

Origins of school readiness: Understanding the Role of Support in Emerging Adulthood and Early Childhood

Rachel Rolseth & Christine Li-Grining
Loyola University Chicago



INTRODUCTION

- According to past research, low-income, ethnic minority students are less likely to succeed academically, causing them to fall behind in school (Reardon, 2011; Bailey & Dynarski, 2011).
- These children often end up unprepared for kindergarten due to factors such as inaccessibility, and this carries on into future schooling (Kirk & Sampson, 2011; Bailey & Dynarski, 2011).
- Although these children experience academic barriers, they still experience resilience through factors such as positive parent and teacher support (Masten, 2014).
- The goal of this research is to identify support that students are given at the end of high school (Study 1) and in preschool (Study 2). This support that parents provided was analyzed to see how they contributed to the student's transition into college.
- Study 1 hypothesized that parents' supports were linked to their teens' post high school planning.
- Study 2 was qualitative and descriptive

METHODS

Study 1

- Data was obtained from the Chicago School Readiness Project ($N = 344$). Parents were interviewed about the teens' college preparation and other future plans (Watts, Gandhi, Ibrahim, Masucci & Raver, 2018).
- Two undergraduate research assistants reviewed parent support responses and coded them according to themes found in the responses.
- Responses were then dummy-coded to be analyzed quantitatively with college planning measures. (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007).

Measures

- Parent Supports. Parents responded to an open-ended probe about how they have helped their teen prepare for their graduation, college, and future career.
- Student College Planning. Parents reported whether their students' had completed steps towards college planning.

Study 2

- Data was obtained from teachers in Head Start ($N = 10$).
- Teachers' responses to the following questions were reviewed to identify themes across teachers.

Measures

- Teacher Views on College Readiness. Teachers were asked open-ended questions regarding their role in preparing students for kindergarten and college.

RESULTS

Study 1

- Chi-square analyses were conducted between the parent support responses and the student college preparation steps to determine whether bivariate associations were statistically significant.
- Parent college-specific support was related to their teens' asking for help in researching or applying to college, $\chi^2(1, n = 239) = 8.81, p < .01$.
- Parent college-specific support was related to their teens' deciding which schools to apply to, $\chi^2(1, n = 216) = 4.11, p < .05$.
- Parent college-specific support was related to their teens' expressing a top choice to attend, $\chi^2(1, n = 214) = 5.29, p < .05$.
- Parent college-specific support was related to an index of families' college preparation, $\chi^2(1, n = 234) = 18.70, p < .001$.
- Parent financial support was related to their teens' asking for help in researching or applying to college, $\chi^2(1, n = 239) = 4.77, p < .05$.
- Parent financial support was related to an index of families' college preparation, $\chi^2(3, n = 234) = 15.93, p < .01$.

Four Themes from Parent Supports for their Teen's Post-High School Planning (N=288)

Theme	N	Description
Financial Support	28	Parent provides financial assistance by assisting with the financial aid process, and/or providing funds to cover college costs.
Socio-Emotional Support	160	Parent discusses post-high school plans with their teen and gives encouragement and advice.
College-Specific Assistance	96	Parent assists teen in the college application process through means such as helping with college applications or visiting colleges.
Current Support of Student Needs	62	Parent assists teen in their high school academics through assistance helping them with school work or finding a tutoring program.

Kappa values for each theme ranged from 0.55 to 0.63 (Fleiss, Levin, & Paik, 2003)

Study 2

- Teachers' responses to the following questions were analyzed to pull themes that captured the content of the response.

Themes Identified From Teacher Supports for Kindergarten and College Readiness (N=10)

Question	N	Themes
What grade level do you feel that college awareness should begin?	7	Preschool $n = 6$ 4th Grade $n = 1$
What do you perceive the preschool teacher's role is in preparing students to be college ready?	10	Encourage mastery of early skill learning, provide practical life training, promote lifelong learning, facilitate social-emotional development, & provide challenging activities that promote higher-order thinking skills
What activities do preschool teachers provide to students to prepare them for their future?	10	Introduction to life skills, socio-emotional skill practice, early academic learning, & higher order thinking practice ***Practiced through Individualized instruction, small and large group activities
What would you say your goals are for students as a preschool teacher?	10	Foundational learning and kindergarten readiness, develop social-emotional skills, engage parents

Descriptives of Children in both High School and Preschool Samples

		Study 1		Study 2	
		M/%	SD	M/%	SD
Age (years)		16.58	.90	3.64	.66
Gender	Male	44.2		43.6	
Race/Ethnicity	African American	69.2		8.9	
	Latino	26.5		67.9	
	Other	4.4		23.2	

DISCUSSION

Study 1

- Even though low-income families are viewed as being at risk, the current study shows ways that low-income parents help their teens prepare for college, such as discussing college options with their teen.
- Although it may be assumed that lower-income parents cannot help their student financially while preparing for college, searching for financial aid opportunities are important ways of providing financial support without directly paying for fees.

Study 2

- The majority of teachers indicated that college awareness begins at the child's first interaction with the school system in order to inspire them early on.
- Throughout the responses, there was a heavy emphasis on the importance of socio-emotional learning impacting further learning, as is supported by the Illinois Department of Education and many others (Berhenke, Miller, Brown, Seifer, & Dickstein, 2011; Illinois State Board of Education, 2019).
- Due to the limited size of the sample collected, further analysis was limited.
- Both studies were done with low-income, ethnic minority students in one urban population, so results may vary in other populations.

Future Research

- Future research should analyze academic data of kindergarten readiness to determine if certain supports increase students' kindergarten readiness scores.
- Future research should also investigate how social and emotional development affects both preschoolers and teenagers' academic performance.

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