

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 326 557

TM 015 834

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 TITLE Factors Influencing the Social, Emotional, and Academic Development of High School College-Prep Students.  
 PUB DATE Nov 90  
 NOTE 15p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Mid-South Educational Research Association (19th, New Orleans, LA, November 14-16, 1990).  
 PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150)  
 EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.  
 DESCRIPTORS \*Academic Achievement; Analysis of Variance; Attitude Measures; College Bound Students; \*College Preparation; \*Emotional Development; Grade 10; High Schools; \*High School Students; \*Predictor Variables; Social Development; \*Student Development; Student Motivation

ABSTRACT

The effects of several variables on social, emotional, and academic development of high school students were evaluated. Variables were: (1) educational level of parents; (2) marital status of parents; (3) number of children in the family; and (4) family stability. Subjects were 52 10th-grade college-preparatory students from a southern public high school. Data were collected using: the Measures of Psychosocial Development, a self-report inventory based on Eriksonian constructs; the School Environment Preference Survey; and the Study Attitudes and Methods Survey, a measure of dimensions of attitude, motivation, and study habits that contribute to success in school. Multivariate analysis of variance was computed for student scores on each scale of the three measures. Results indicate significant differences in autonomy, initiative, ego integrity, guilt, isolation, academic interest, study methods, manipulation, and alienation toward authority. The implications of the findings for programs to enhance the social, emotional, and academic development of adolescents are discussed. Two tables present data from the study. (SLD)

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Factors Influencing the Social, Emotional, and Academic  
Development of High School College-Prep Students

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Poster session presented at the annual meeting of the Mid-South  
Educational Research Association, November 14, 1990, New  
Orleans, Louisiana.

### Abstract

Researchers investigated the effects of educational level and marital status of parents, number of children in the family, and family stability on social, emotional, and academic development. Subjects were 52 tenth-grade college-preparatory students from a southern public high school. Data were collected using the Measures of Psychosocial Development (MPD), the School Environment Preference Survey (SEPS), and the Study Attitudes and Methods Survey (SAMS). Results of a Multivariate Analysis of Variance indicated significant differences in Autonomy, Initiative, Ego Integrity, Guilt, Isolation, Academic Interest, Study Methods, Manipulation, and Alienation Toward Authority. Implications for school personnel were noted.

## Factors Influencing the Social, Emotional, and Academic Development of High School College-Prep Students

Because the college freshman year is generally recognized as being the most stressful, students are at a greater risk of dropping out (Brower, 1990; Brown & Christiansen, 1990; Murphy, 1989). Forty-one percent of students entering both two- and four-year colleges never graduate (Tinto, 1987), with 21% dropping out during the first year (Brower, 1990).

One possible cause of this is poor coping mechanisms for dealing with the intellectual, social, academic, and personal transitions necessary in moving from high school to college (Brown & Christiansen, 1990; Spann, 1990). The manner in which one confronts and resolves issues in adolescence influences the way issues of early adulthood or college-life will be handled (Brower, 1990). In addition, how an individual copes with the transition to college influences the way he or she will cope with stressors in later life (Coelho, Hamburg, & Murphy, 1968; Cutrona, 1982; Harter, 1984). It is apparent that one stage builds on another; therefore, it is imperative that high schools provide quality, comprehensive programs for their college bound students. In order to better prepare these students for their future college experience and adult-life, their specific needs in the areas of social, emotional, and academic development must be determined (Cannici, 1990; Green, 1989). Tenth grade appears to be the crucial age for identity

formation which is the basis for later life decisions (Street, 1981); therefore, efforts at promoting positive, healthy development is of paramount importance at this level. The purpose of this study was to identify the tasks, conflicts, and concerns of tenth grade college preparatory students as well as factors associated with their social, emotional, and academic development.

### Method

#### Subjects

Fifty-two students enrolled in 10th-grade college preparatory English classes at a southern public high school were randomly selected to participate in the study. At this particular high-school, college preparatory classes are the most advanced and typically include students who are academically above average and have a desire to attend college. The group consisted of 16 male and 36 female students with a mean age of 15 years, 5 months. Cumulative grade point averages ranged from 2.0 to 4.0 with a mean of 3.07. The group was predominantly white with only 8 blacks.

#### Instruments

Students were assessed using three instruments--Measures of Psychosocial Development (MPD), the School Environment Preference Survey (SEPS), and the Study Attitudes and Methods Survey (SAMS). In addition, demographic data consisting of age, race, gender, GPA, parents' educational level, parents' marital status, and family mobility were collected.

The MPD, a self-report inventory based on Eriksonian constructs, provides an overall psychosocial health index, a measure of eight positive and negative stage attitudes comprising the personality according to Erikson, and estimates of the degree of resolution for conflicts within each stage. The instrument consists of nine Positive Scales, nine Negative Scales, and nine Resolution Scales which include Erikson's eight stages of psycho-social development.

The SEPS measures attitudes, values and behaviors typically fostered and rewarded in traditional school environments. The SEPS includes an overall score, Structured Role Orientation (So), in addition to four subscales: Self-subordination (S), Traditionalism (T), Rule Conformity (R), and Uncriticalness (U). Development of the SEPS was based on the premise that traditional education involves socialization to work roles. It seems then that an assessment of students' school environment preference might provide useful information for helping students in their transition from school to college and the work-force.

The SAMS measures dimensions of attitude, motivation, and study habits that contribute to success in school. A review of the six factor scales gives educators information useful in determining whether a student should enroll in college preparatory classes or should pursue a college degree. The six factor scales include: Academic Interest-Love of Learning (AI-LL), Academic Drive-Conformity (AD-C), Study Methods (SM), Study Anxiety (SA),

Manipulation (Conning) (M), and Alienation Toward Authority (ATA).

### Procedure

The MPD, SEPS, and SAMS were administered to selected students in three different English classes. All tests were administered during a single session per class. Order of administration of the three instruments was alternated.

### Results

A Multivariate Analysis of Variance was computed for student scores on each scale of the three measures. Factors analyzed included parents' educational level, parents' marital status, number of children in the family and family mobility. A significant main effect of Parents' Marital Status for Academic Interest, Alienation Toward Authority, and Study Methods was found. A significant main effect of Parents' Educational Level was found for Manipulation, Isolation, Guilt, and Resolution of Intimacy vs. Isolation. A significant main effect of Family Mobility was found for Autonomy, Initiative, and Resolution of Initiative vs. Guilt. A main effect for Total Children was found for Guilt, Isolation, and Resolution of Initiative vs. Guilt. F values for main effects are shown in Table 1. While there were significant differences in scores for independent variables, it should be noted that all scores were within the normal range for adolescents.

There was a significant interaction effect of Parents' Educational Level by Parents' Marital Status for Academic Interest, Alienation, and Shame and Doubt. A significant interaction effect of Total Children by Parents' Marital Status for Trust, Autonomy, Ego Integrity, and Inferiority was also found. F values for interaction effects are shown in Table 2. There were no significant effects of the the four factors for the SEPS scores.

### Discussion

These findings suggest children of college educated parents experience more guilt than children of less educated parents. These teens may feel guilty over aggressive action and be afraid of making mistakes or being inadequate. They may have a tendency to be overconscientious and acquiescent (Hawley, 1988). Children of college educated parents appeared to have more successfully resolved the intimacy versus isolation conflict.

Children of less educated parents demonstrated a tendency to be more isolated than those from college educated parents. They may fear commitments and responsibilities due to the restrictiveness of personal freedom (Hawley, 1988). Scores on the Manipulation scale of the SAMS indicated children from less educated parents appeared to prefer to get ahead on their own abilities, while those from college educated parents seemed to be more likely to play up to teachers, principals, or other students to get help or special privileges (Michael, Michael, & Zimmerman, 1988).



Children of divorce received significantly higher scores on ego integrity, academic interest, and alienation toward authority than children from intact families. Results suggest that these teens may be more satisfied with their lives, have practical wisdom, enjoy school work, and tend to be generally satisfied with and accepting of school rules and requirements. On the other hand, children from intact families appeared to have better study habits than children of divorce. These findings are not surprising since children of divorce may be required to assume responsibility at an earlier age while those from intact families enjoy greater guidance and more freedom to study.

Among those students who have changed schools at least one time, there appeared to be higher levels of autonomy, more initiative, and higher resolution of initiative versus guilt than students who have not moved. These teens may feel a sense of pride in being able to be themselves and make their own decisions. In addition, they tend to be hard-working and highly motivated (Hawley, 1988).

Students from families with two or fewer children appeared to experience more guilt and less difficulty in establishing intimate relationships than those from families having three or more children. It could be that teens from smaller families may feel more pressure to do well and be more desirous of commitment than those from larger families. Likewise, those from smaller families also appeared

to have been more successful at resolving the initiative versus guilt stage of psycho-social development. Although this may seem, at first, to be contradictory, when one considers that teens in small families are likely to be under closer parental scrutiny than those from larger ones, it appears to make sense.

### Conclusion

Caution should be used when generalizing the results of this study to other populations due to small sample size and the lack of a control group. Experimental studies would be necessary to establish causal relationships between familial factors and social, emotional, and academic development of high school college-prep students. However, some information describing these students has been determined.

These results also provide implications for program development in that they shed light on the effect of familial factors on the social, emotional, and academic development of these college preparatory students. Based on these findings, it appears that programs might focus on children from small, well-educated, intact families that seem to have established stable roots within the community. If these teens lean toward perfectionism and need special assistance to achieve self-acceptance as the study suggests (Michael et al., 1988), such students may benefit from counseling groups using a cognitive-behavioral approach. In addition, guidance in establishing boundaries with peers as well as adult authority figures appears to be warranted. On the

other hand, students from larger families would appear to benefit from skills training that would facilitate healthy relationship development with peers.

Contrary to what is typically assumed, the results of this study indicate that children of divorce may be better adjusted in many areas than children from intact families. Still, they seem to be more likely to be in need of time management and study skills training than those from intact families. Although not significantly different, children of divorce scored higher on isolation and lower on intimacy than children from intact families indicating there may be problems with relationships. Implications for future research in the area of teen-age development include the ability of children of divorce to establish and maintain relationships.

Specific approaches which might enhance the social, emotional, and academic development of teens include preventive and developmental guidance. In order to better prepare college-preparatory students for the first year of college, school administrators must recognize the need to encourage and provide opportunities for small group guidance, classroom guidance, and mini-courses which focus on life-skills training, communication skills, self-esteem, study skills, and social support networks.

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**Table 1**  
**Comparison of Groups on Dependent Measures**

		Univariate F			
		Parents'	Parents'	Family	Total
		Education	Marital Status	Mobility	Children
P1	Trust	2.13	1.76	1.52	.51
P2	Autonomy	.67	2.58	6.82*	4.12
P3	Initiative	.67	.01	3.98*	.89
P8	Ego Integrity	.68	5.92*	.003	2.04
N2	Shame/Doubt	4.12	.25	.41	.13
N3	Guilt	4.17*	1.26	1.43	7.29*
N4	Inferiority	1.03	.16	1.18	1.93
N6	Isolation	4.96*	.98	.30	4.34*
R3		.95	.29	6.44*	4.33*
R6		5.55*	1.01	.08	2.72
A	(AI-LL)	1.95	4.27*	.76	.10
C	(SM)	2.00	4.56*	.23	.32
E	(M)	7.28*	.03	.42	.50
F	(ATA)	.70	6.18*	.04	.48

DF = 1, 41

\*p < .05

Table 2

Interaction Effects for Parents' Education, Parents' Marital Status, and Total Children on Dependent Measures

		Univariate F	
		Parents' Education X Parents' Marital Status	Parents' Marital Status X Total Children
P1	Trust	.28	5.38*
P2	Autonomy	.13	9.31*
P8	Ego Integrity	.55	5.58*
N2	Shame & Doubt	6.80*	.88
N4	Inferiority	.15	5.15*

DF = 1, 41  
\*p < .05

END

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Date Filmed

March 29, 1991