

Research Paper Received May. 24, 2014 Revised Aug. 18, 2014 Accepted Oct. 15, 2014

Effects of Parental Self-Efficacy on Children's Motivation

Michael Townsend and Shuk Fan Choi

University of Auckland, New Zealand

Abstract: This study examined the combined effects of parental self-efficacy and children's motivation for reading on children's reading achievement. Self-concept and reading value were assessed in 83 children in Year 4 classes (aged 8-9) in New Zealand. A measure of reading achievement was obtained from school records. Parents of the children completed a self-efficacy scale, and a subsample of parents participated in an interview. Parental self-efficacy was significantly associated with children's reading achievement, and this association was additive to the effects of children's motivation.

Introduction

Although most children learn to read, a significant number find reading to be arduous, unenjoyable and unfulfilling. New Zealand, for example, has literacy levels among the highest of OECD nations (Ministry of Education, 2003) yet, as with other western countries, has a significant proportion of low-achieving readers who appear resistant to traditional reading instruction (Nicholson, 2002). The causes of low achievement in reading continue to be of great interest to educational researchers.

Research in recent years has shown motivation to be a major factor in the acquisition of reading. For example, in the socio-cognitive 'expectancy-value' theory of motivation (Eccles, 1983), children's self-concept and the value they place on reading are critical in determining whether children seek or avoid opportunities to read, how much effort is expended, what sorts of material they choose to read, what type of engagement they employ, their level of persistence when challenged and, ultimately, their level of achievement (Wigfield, 1997). For example, children with poorer reading self concept choose easier books, are more pessimistic about success, enjoy reading less than those with average or self-concept, and have lower skills in word recognition and reading comprehension (Chapman, Tunmer & Prochnow, 2000). Alternatively, children who view reading as valuable and personally important engage in reading in a more planned and effortful manner (Ames & Archer, 1988; Dweck & Elliot, 1983; Paris & Oka, 1986). This relationship between motivation and achievement is so well accepted that teachers often view their first priority is to develop motivation in their students (O'Flahavan, Gambrell, Guthrie, Stahl & Alverman, 1992). More specifically, in New Zealand teachers perceive their objective is "to first and foremost develop in children a lasting interest in reading rather than improve comprehension, extend vocabulary, or develop critical skills" (Smith & Elley, 1997, p.46).

However, learning to read does not just occur in school settings. Parents are children's first and most enduring teachers (Kaiser & Hancock, 2003). Some researchers (e.g., Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997), argue that the most accurate predictor of student achievement is the extent to which parents are supportive and

engaged in their child's learning, and much research confirms the parent role as a critical influence in successful reading acquisition (see Pressley, 1998). Contrary to what has been traditionally assumed, parental behaviour may affect the child less through actual skill building than through its impact on children's attitudes and motivations related to school (Grolnick, Ryan & Deci, 1991). In particular, children's achievement at school is thought to be mediated by their parents' sense of self-efficacy; high parental self-efficacy promotes higher aspirations and a sense of personal competence in children which, in turn, promote higher achievement (Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara & Pastorelli, 1996).

Parent self-efficacy refers to parents' beliefs about their general ability to influence their child's developmental and educational outcomes, their specific effectiveness in influencing their child's school learning, and their own influence relative to that of peers and the child's teacher (Bandura, 1986). In literacy, parents with high self-efficacy will more likely develop goals for their children's reading and plan actions designed to meet those goals, realistically taking into account personal skills, anticipated resources and barriers. Parents with high self-efficacy regard education as a shared responsibility with their children and participate more actively in school life (Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler & Brissie, 1992). They are also more likely to treat their child as an 'origin' rather than a 'pawn', to offer more approval and acceptance, and to offer more helpful problem-solving questions and strategies (Mondell & Tyler, 1981).

Self-efficacy can vary by domain. In the literacy domain, there is increasing evidence that the beliefs held by children's parents about the purposes of reading and how children should learn to read influence children's literacy development (Sonnenschein, Baker, Serpell, Scher, Fernandez-Fein & Munsterman, 1996; Spiegel, 1994). For example, DeBaryshe (1995) found a direct causal pathway between maternal beliefs about the value of reading aloud to their preschool child and their child's interest in reading, rather than an indirect pathway through home reading practices – even though beliefs (e.g., that reading should occur daily, be motivating, child-centred, and focused on meaning rather than code skills) did influence reading practices and interactions. Similarly, Scher and Baker (1996) found that first grade children's motivation to read and enjoyment of reading could be predicted from the degree to which mothers saw reading as a personal source of pleasure, but not from the literacy experiences of the home. Finally, in a study of children aged 8-9 years, Lynch (2002) found that mothers with stronger beliefs in their ability to assist in their children's reading achievement had daughters with higher perceptions of their competence as readers (the relationship did not reach statistical significance for sons).

Although such studies indicate the importance of parental beliefs there is a need for research that specifically examines the relationships between parental self-efficacy, children's motivation, and children's reading achievement at school. The current study was designed to examine the effect of two sources of motivation on children's reading achievement – their own motivation as assessed by reading self concept and reading value, and parental self-efficacy. Given the research just reviewed, it was expected that children's reading achievement would be influenced by the proximal

variables of children's self-concept and reading value, and also by the more distal variable of parental self-efficacy. But would these child and parent factors be additive?

Methodology

Participants

The student sample consisted of 83 children (29 boys and 54 girls) from Year 4 classes (8-9 years old) at four primary schools in Auckland. Two of the schools were from high socioeconomic areas of the city (decile 8-10) and two were from low socioeconomic areas of the city (decile 1-3). Decile ratings of socioeconomic status were obtained from the Ministry of Education which uses them for funding purposes. The parent sample included a total of 120 parents (41 fathers and 79 mothers) of the 83 children. Both parents responded for 37 of the children. Responses from one parent (42 mothers and 4 fathers) were received for the remaining 46 children.

Instruments

Student Reading Motivation. All children completed the self-concept and reading value scales of the Motivation to Read Profile (MRP) (Gambrell, Palmer, Codling & Mazzoni, 1996), designed for use with students aged 7 to 12 years. Each scale has 10 items scored on a 4-point scale, providing a range of scores from 10 to 40 (midpoint 25). The self-concept items focus on students' self-perceived competence in reading (e.g. "I am a [poor, OK, good, very good] reader") and self-perceived performance relative to peers (e.g. "I read [not as well as, about the same as, a little better than, a lot better than] my friends"). The reading value items focus on the importance given to reading tasks and activities (e.g. "Knowing how to read well is [not very important, sort of important, important, very important]"), and the frequency of engagement in reading-related activities (e.g. "Reading is something I [never, not very often, sometimes, often] like to do").

The authors report satisfactory factor differentiation of the items and acceptable reliability estimates for the scales based on a sample of 330 students in 3rd and 5th grade. In the current study, separate factor analyses using a maximum likelihood procedure with an oblimin rotation confirmed the presence of a single factor underlying each of the self-concept and reading value scales (first order eigenvalues of 3.04 and 2.93 respectively). These results should be treated with caution given the sample size relative to the total number of items involved. Chronbach alpha estimates of internal consistency reliability were acceptable (self-concept $\alpha = .69$; reading value $\alpha = .72$), though slightly lower than those reported by Gambrell et al (1996). In the current study, the survey was read aloud to all students to ensure that students understood the questions.

Parent Self-Efficacy. Parents' self-efficacy beliefs for their children's reading achievement were measured using an 18-item questionnaire based on that developed by Lynch (1999) to assess self-efficacy beliefs in 92 parents (49 mothers and 43 fathers) of 66 children aged 8 to 9 years in Canada. Lynch reported four factors involving statements sharing at least 16% of the variance with each factor. In the

current sample, a factor analysis was conducted on the mothers' scores for the self-efficacy items (since mothers accounted for 79 of the 83 children in this study). Using a maximum likelihood procedure with an oblimin rotation, two factors (with eigenvalues of 3.41 and 2.67 respectively) were identified in the scree plot. These factors accounted for 19% and 15% respectively of the variance in the items. Inspection of the factor matrix revealed a 10-item factor that appeared to measure what Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler & Brissie (1992) describe as parents' belief that they have the competence to successfully teach their children (e.g., "By reading to my child, I can help my child become a better reader"), labelled 'competence' here. The second factor of 8 items, called 'attribution' in this study, appeared to assess parents' attributions for their children's success or failure (e.g., "Children are good readers because they have a natural ability"). Items were scored using a 5-point Likert scale (strongly agree to strongly disagree). Scores on the 'competence' factor could range from 10 to 50 (midpoint 30), while scores on the 'attribution' factor could range from 8 to 40 (mid-point 24). Total scores for the full self-efficacy scale could range from 18 to 90 (mid-point 54). Coefficient alpha reliability coefficients for the 'competence' ($\alpha = .72$) and 'attribution' ($\alpha = .65$) factors were acceptable (full scale $\alpha = .66$). The scale was completed at home and returned to the school. Where both parents completed the scale, parental self-efficacy was based on the mean of both parents.

Student Reading Achievement. A measure of each child's reading achievement was obtained from school records of current performance on the Progressive Achievement Test of Reading (Reid & Elley, 1991), a standardized test designed for use in New Zealand schools. The authors report various estimates of reliability (all in excess of .85) and substantial evidence supporting content, concurrent and construct validity (Reid & Elley, 1991). Scores were expressed as age stanines.

Parent Interview. Individual interviews were undertaken to explore a 10% subsample of parents' beliefs and practices about their children's reading in greater depth. Five questions inquired about the frequency of shared reading between parent and child at home, the level of parental skill in supporting his/her child's reading, types of family resources for reading, the parent's perception of his/her child's attitude towards reading, and the parent's expectations concerning the reading achievement of his/her child. As a result of a pilot interview procedure, structured responses were provided to assist parents in responding, but parents were encouraged to elaborate their choices. Responses were recorded by written notes. Parents (2 fathers and 10 mothers) were selected to represent a range of self-efficacy, children's reading achievement, and school deciles. They were invited by letter to participate in the interview, which was conducted at their child's school.

Procedure

Permission to undertake this study was obtained from the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee. Possible schools were contacted by letter and then in person until four principals, representing high and low decile areas, agreed to participate. All children were required to provide signed parental permission as well as give signed voluntary assent. The 83 children represented

approximately 30% of the Year 4 children served by the four schools.

Reading achievement records were unavailable for two children; these children and their parents were removed from any analysis involving reading achievement.

Multiple regression procedures were undertaken to explore the joint relationships among parental self-efficacy, children's reading motivation and reading achievement (using SPSS, 11.5). The interviews were analysed according to procedures for qualitative data (Lecompte and Preissle, 1993).

Results

Individual Measures

Parent Self-Efficacy. The mean total self-efficacy score ($M = 60.75$, $SD = 7.70$) was above the mid-point of the scale (54), suggesting that parents had moderately high self-efficacy with regard to their children's reading. Self-efficacy was also reasonably high on the competence self-efficacy factor ($M = 35.04$, $SD = 6.82$, mid-point = 30), suggesting that parents had confidence in their ability to help their children with reading. Self-efficacy on the attribution factor suggested some ambivalence about the source of their children's skill in reading ($M = 25.84$, $SD = 4.79$, mid-point = 24). Scores on the competence and attribution factors were divided by the number of items to produce per-item factor scores that could be more readily compared. Parents reported higher self-efficacy for competence ($M = 3.50$, $SD = 0.68$) than for attribution ($M = 3.23$, $SD = 0.60$), $t(82) = 2.53$, $p < .05$. Self-efficacy scores were not related to the gender of the children. In brief, all three measures of parental self-efficacy were above the midpoint of the scales, suggesting that parents felt moderately self-efficacious in assisting their child's reading, with greater self-efficacy for personal competence in helping their children than for the source of their child's reading achievement.

Reading Motivation. Both self-concept ($M = 31.81$, $SD = 4.19$) and reading value ($M = 34.52$, $SD = 3.86$) were above the midpoint of the scales (as were more than 98% of all individual scores). Not unexpectedly, girls had significantly higher mean scores than boys in self-concept ($M = 32.50$, $SD = 4.42$ versus $M = 30.52$, $SD = 3.45$), $t(81) = 2.10$, $p < .05$, and reading value ($M = 35.37$, $SD = 3.77$ versus $M = 32.93$, $SD = 3.58$), $t(81) = 2.86$, $p < .01$.

Reading Achievement. The mean stanine score for all students was 5.05 ($SD = 2.20$). The comprehension stanine for girls, $M = 5.26$, $SD = 2.18$, was not significantly higher than that for boys, $M = 4.64$, $SD = 2.19$ ($p > .10$).

Correlations Among Measures

Bivariate correlations for the major variables are shown in Table 1. As might be expected from the factor analysis the competence and attribution factors in parent self-efficacy were relatively independent. Parental attribution was related to children's reading achievement but not parental competence or total self-efficacy. There was also a weak relationship (though significant) between the self-concept and reading value measures in children, and only self-concept was related to achievement. Finally, the cluster of coefficients representing the relationships between parental

self-efficacy measures and children’s motivational measures was noticeably weak (accounting for four of the five correlations in the table with less than 1 percent of shared variance). Thus parental self-efficacy appears to have little direct effect on two of the motivational constructs believed to act as major antecedents of achievement.

Table 1. Bivariate Correlations: Children’s Reading Motivation, Reading Achievement and Parental Self-Efficacy

	Value of Reading	Reading Comprehension	Competence	Attribution	Total Self-Efficacy
Self-Concept	.273*	.468**	.048	.163	.148
Value		-.068	-.005	.057	.034
Reading Comprehension			-.003	.332**	.201
Competence					.791**
Attribution					.465**

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Self-Efficacy and Achievement

The relationships between parental self-efficacy and children’s achievement were explored using multiple regression procedures. The two factors of parental self-efficacy (competence and attribution) were used as predictor variables in a simultaneous multiple regression of reading comprehension age stanine scores to determine how much of the variance in comprehension was explained by the combined effects of these two measures. Since multiple regression may be sensitive to violations of the assumptions underlying the analysis, particularly where the sample is small or where the distribution is very skewed, several assumptions about the data were tested as recommended by Tabachnick

and Fidell (1996). Characteristics of the sample met the assumptions underlying the analysis regarding size, distribution, skewedness, collinearity, multicollinearity and absence of outliers.

The model had a regression coefficient of $R = .337$, indicating that competence and attribution together explained approximately 11 percent of the variance in the comprehension scores. This coefficient is typical of those involving motivational predictors of achievement. The analysis of variance accompanying the model reached significance, $F(2,78) = 4.99$, $p < .01$. The standardised beta coefficient for attribution self-efficacy of .342 ($t = 3.16$, $p < .05$) was greater than that for

competence self-efficacy of .056 ($t = 0.52, p = .61$).

In addition to the parental efficacy just reported, the study included two proximal sources of motivation from the children themselves, their self-concept for reading and their value for reading. If the first-order effects of children’s individual self-concept and value of reading were taken into account, would the distal, second-order influence of parental self-efficacy still be evident? To investigate this, the two child motivational variables (self-concept and value) were entered as a first block in a hierarchical multiple regression. The parental self-efficacy factors were entered as a second block. A summary of the results is shown in Table 2. As may be seen, this model was again significant and accounted for 33% of the variance in reading achievement. Children’s self-concept and reading value accounted for a large portion of this explained variance (approximately 26%), while the self-efficacy factors accounted for significant additional variance (some 7 percent). Thus, even when personal self-concept and reading value were taken into account, there was still a significant effect attributable to parental self-efficacy in children’s reading achievement. Given the bivariate correlations reported earlier, it was not surprising that self-concept was the strongest individual predictor of achievement with a standardised beta coefficient of .482 ($p < .001$). Significant predictions also came from reading value ($\beta = -.215, p < .05$) and parental attribution self-efficacy ($\beta = -.215, p < .05$), but not competence self-efficacy ($\beta = .019, p = .841$). In brief, there was a significant and positive relationship between parents’ reported self-efficacy for their children’s reading and the actual reading achievement of their children, especially when attribution self-efficacy was considered. This significant relationship existed over and above the more immediate effect of children’s self-concept and value for reading on their achievement.

Table 2. Summary of Regression Analysis of Achievement, Children’s Reading Motivation and Parental Self-Efficacy

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	R ² Change	F Change	df	Sig.
Reading Self-Concept and Value	.511	.261	.242	.261	13.75	2, 78	.000
Competence and attribution	.574	.330	.294	.069	3.91	2, 76	.024

Interviews

The analysis of the interviews with the parents revealed several differences between more and less self-efficacious parents. All twelve parents described how their children had access to books at home, and most (9) had enrolled their child at the local library and/or belonged to a children’s book club. Furthermore, most of the parents reported reading ‘regularly’ (8) or ‘sometimes’ (3) with their child. No parents reported ‘rarely’ reading with their child, although one parent said that she “never” read

to her child (a high self-efficacy mother of a high achieving daughter, who said, *“I used to read to her when she was very little but soon she didn’t like to be read to. She prefers to read independently.”*). Although the reported frequency of engagement was similar across high and low self-efficacy parents, the nature of the engagement differed. For parents with low self-efficacy this reading was almost exclusively the shared reading that schools asked parents to do with their children to reinforce their school reading (i.e., listening to their child read aloud the story covered in class that day). This reading was frequently passive parental engagement (listening to their child read), often done while the parent was preparing meals or doing other housework. These parents had little interactive activity associated with the children’s self-selected reading, and rarely initiated reading a story to their child. These parents explained that they did not have time (*“I enjoy doing it, but only when I’m not busy”*), or that their child was reluctant (*“I’m afraid she doesn’t want to bother”*) or that they (the parent) was not needed (*“He can read to himself straight away... I just don’t want to waste time.”*).

Only one of the low self-efficacy parents reported engaging in book-talk with their child on personal or leisure reading. This was the hallmark of the parents with high self-efficacy. They not only attended to the school-home reading but were also likely to initiate shared reading (e.g., reading a story to their child) and to be more interactive in their sharing of book experiences. Typical of the comments was the mother who said, *“Our stories are conversations, sometimes centered on the book, sometimes not. We talk about the words and the illustrations. We talk about what we would or wouldn’t do. We laugh about an event...we talk about everything in the books”*. But even some high self-efficacy parents found it difficult to maintain this interaction: *“We’ll talk [about books] only when [we] have time”*. Thus, although all parents had books in the home and valued reading as an activity, parents with lower self-efficacy were more likely to be more passive and to have ‘school-like’ engagement, whereas parents with higher self-efficacy engaged in ways that treated reading as an enjoyable and meaning-making activity.

When asked about their competence, all except two parents found it comfortable to read with their children: *“Our lives are busy ... but when we read a story we come together, and we really enjoy it”*. The two parents (both in the low self-efficacy group) who were not comfortable in helping their child were parents whose first language was not English and felt that this compromised their ability to offer help. As one parent said, *“I can’t even read it [the book]”*. But every parent interviewed noted how important it was to support their child. Parents with low self-efficacy gave less elaboration of what they meant by support, usually referring to encouragement (e.g., *“I give encouragement because it will help my child”*). Parents with high self-efficacy were likely to be more specific:

“I support her by just being around when she is reading, I think, and offering her the materials to do it. I read to her from when she was very little. ...Also, the inflection in my voice, my enthusiasm...”

“Reading with them and reinforcing how much fun, how pleasurable reading is”

“ Not pushing too hard, letting them have the stuff and know that help is there ... If they enjoy it...it [reading skill] will just come”.

Of the two parents who felt uncomfortable about reading, one had hired a private tutor to help, while the other relied on the teacher but frequently reminded her son *“You have to learn to read.”*

Parental satisfaction with their child’s reading differed across the low and high self-efficacy groups. All but one of the high efficacy parents reported high satisfaction, sometimes offered with supporting information, such as *“ [She] is two year ahead of her age”*. However, parents with low self-efficacy seemed more reserved, with most (4/6) reporting that their children’s reading was “okay”, for example, *“Her reading is not bad ... she just has to keep working on it.”*. All but one of the high self-efficacy parents described their children as “eager” to read, whereas half of the parents in the low self-efficacy group had children who would only read at home if requested to by parents. This eagerness may have been reflected in the parents’ expectations for their children’s reading. Parents in the high self-efficacy group were more likely to mention aspects related to enjoyment, such as *“[I want her to] have FUN!”* and *“I wish she could keep this love of reading her whole life”*, while those in the low self-efficacy group were more likely to emphasize technical issues in reading, such as knowing more words or being able to read harder books, (e.g. *“ Yeah, there’s still a lot [of skills] she can learn in the classroom”*). Thus, although no parent expressed disappointment or little satisfaction with their child’s reading, satisfaction was less in the low self-efficacy group, where the children were perceived as less enthusiastic about reading and where parents’ goals emphasized skills rather than enjoyment.

Discussion

The results of the study support the view that parental self-efficacy beliefs are positively related to children’s academic achievement in reading, over and above the more immediate motivational factors of self-concept and task value present in the child. That is, these effects are additive. Children whose parents believe more strongly that they can exercise some influence over their children’s reading development have children whose reading achievement is higher than those children whose parents do not hold such beliefs as strongly. This finding supports the theoretical benefits claimed for parental efficacy in children’s achievement (Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara & Pastorelli, 1996; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). However, this general conclusion is limited to only one of the two factors of self-efficacy used in this study, attribution self-efficacy.

The effect for attribution was expected since parent attributions to personal mastery and effort in their child for school performance (rather than attributions to ‘natural’ ability, quality of teaching, ‘luck’ in examinations, etc.) are associated with higher student performance at school (Hess, Holloway, Dickson & Price, 1984; Stevenson, Chen & Uttal, 1990). In his theory of self-efficacy, Bandura (1989) addressed the role of parental attributions in the context of how parents respond to

difficulties associated with children's learning. He argued that parents who approach their children's learning difficulties as challenges to be mastered, rather than threats to be avoided, tend to respond to these difficulties with increased effort because they believe that failure is due to insufficient effort rather than lack of ability. Parents who approach their children's learning with focused and sustained effort in analysing what is needed, recognising obstacles to achievement, planning to counter the obstacles, setting realistic goals, and setting benchmark criteria for success and evaluating progress toward those goals, reveal in practical ways how self-beliefs in the utility of this effort-based approach relate to achievement. Such self-efficacious parents likely model a systematic, effort-based approach to many aspects of home life, not just academic learning. In the interviews conducted in this study, all parents mentioned the need to be supportive in their children's learning, but the parents with high self-efficacy showed greater planfulness in their support. Further research needs to pursue parental support, particularly the roles of active support (e.g., "Let's see if we can figure out this problem together") and passive support (e.g., "I'm always here for you"). Such research could lead to the design of school-home activities that are efficacy-enhancing for the parent.

It was not expected that competence self-efficacy would be weakly related to children's achievement. Beliefs in competence to attain goals are central to Bandura's (1986; 1997) theory of self-efficacy and predict differences in performance not accounted for by skill level. The items here appeared to have both conceptual validity and acceptable psychometric properties. They reflected the competence efficacy that Bandura (1997) describes, were similar to those used to measure self-efficacy by Lynch (2002), had acceptable reliability as a scale, and the scale scores were normally distributed. It is possible that parents in this study, particularly those with lower achieving children, may have over-estimated their competence self-efficacy, thus reducing its capacity to discriminate among the achievement scores. Over-estimation is more likely to occur with younger children, where normative assessment of achievement is less frequent, and where there is less "high stakes" school assessment, as is the case in New Zealand. Another possibility is that some parents, again particularly those with lower achieving children, hold high self-efficacy beliefs but are less successful in translating these beliefs to their children. As noted by Bandura (1993), "unless parents also build their children's sense of efficacy, they [the children] are likely to view high standards as beyond their reach and disregard them" (p. 137). Thus, it is not just the competency beliefs of the parents that matter, but the joint effects of 'individual' processes and parental or family processes that make the difference in children's achievement. These remain issues for further research.

Children's self-concept for reading and their value for reading were jointly found, as expected, to predict reading achievement. This result supports the growing body of literature indicating the importance of both of these motivational constructs in reading (Chapman, Tunmer & Ryan, 1997; Wigfield & Eccles, 1992). However, once again, this conclusion is qualified by the finding that when self-concept and reading value were examined separately, it was only the former that acted as a significant predictor.

As noted by Stipek and Ryan (1997), most children, regardless of background,

come to school with considerable enthusiasm, self-confidence, and willingness to learn. However, over time self-concept assumes a dominant motivational role in reading achievement (Chapman, Tunmer & Ryan, 1997). Much research shows that children who have a positive self-concept are more likely to be cognitively engaged, try harder and persist longer at the task, thus achieving at higher levels (Pintrich & Schunk, 2002). Thus, the effect found here was expected.

In the light of previous research, it was not unexpected that children's value for reading was not strongly related to achievement (Feather, 1988; Meece, Wigfield & Eccles, 1990; Wigfield & Eccles, 1992). Feather (1988), for example, found across a range of academic subjects that task values predicted whether the student would seek out further learning in that subject, but not their final grade in the subject. Thus, task value is a better predictor of choice of activity rather than performance. However, in this study it was important to treat children's reading motivation as multidimensional rather than unidimensional. As noted by Baker and Wigfield (1999), the connections between motivation and achievement are not simple and direct (Baker & Wigfield, 1999). Finally, although information about reading value is important for teachers and parents, the high estimates provided by children, even by poor readers in New Zealand (Townsend, Townsend & Seo, 2001) may limit the usefulness of this measure as a research instrument.

This study highlights the interactive role that both 'individual' processes and 'family' processes exert in achievement, but much is yet to be learned. For example, the limited number of fathers in this sample did not allow a full examination of differential parental effects. In an exploratory analysis, self-efficacy scores were correlated for the 37 mothers and fathers who rated the same children. Scores were significantly correlated in a negative direction for competence ($r = -.384, p = .019$), significantly correlated in a positive direction for attribution ($r = .623, p = .001$), and not significantly correlated for the total self-efficacy scale ($r = .313, p = .059$). Further research is needed to substantiate these apparent gender differences. We also need to know how parental self-efficacy affects reading achievement at different ages, and whether efficacy is mediated by other factors such as parental experiences in education, family structure and socioeconomic status. We also need to examine how parental efficacy relates to other motivational constructs in children, including their own self-efficacy. An important educational question is whether self-efficacy effects are amenable to intervention and change. This research will likely depend on rich, qualitative accounts of what occurs during shared reading, rather than on the frequency and duration of reading activities (Snow, 1994). An understanding of the complex relationship between home environment, particularly parental motivational processes, and the motivational processes of their children is vital in ensuring that children gain the competencies and attitudinal enthusiasm that will engage them as lifelong readers.

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