

Are First Graders' Careful Work Habits a Predictor of Job Commitment in Adulthood? A 22-Year Longitudinal Study

Georg Stoeckli, University of Zurich, sto@ife.uzh.ch, Poster presented at the SRCD 2015 Biennial Meeting, March 18–20, Philadelphia, PA.

Abstract

This study investigated long-term relations between parents' aspirations for their child and parents' perceptions of the child's careful work habits at the end of first grade and the adult child's job commitment 22 years later. Aspirations and the perception of the child's careful work habits were correlated only in mothers. Work habits in Grade 1 predicted work-related ambition in adult daughters (mothers and fathers), striving for perfection in daughters (fathers), a weaker tendency to resignation in sons (mothers), and willingness to work until exhaustion in sons and daughters (mothers).

1 Introduction

It is well documented that parents' beliefs about their children are considerably related to children's characteristics and academic outcomes (Froiland, Peterson, & Davison, 2012; Gut, Reimann, & Grob, 2013; Parsons, Adler, & Kaczala, 1982; Phillipson & Phillipson, 2007). However, even longitudinal investigations of such relations often cover only short periods of time or a few years (Yamamoto & Holloway, 2010). We therefore know little about the long-term predictive value of parents' perceptions of the child.



Research questions: Are there long-term relations between the child's careful work habits at the end of Grade 1 and the adult child's job commitment?

Are parents' perceptions of the child's work habits linked with or independent of parents' aspirations for their child?

2 Method

Participants: 134 mother-child and 114 father-child dyads in the German-speaking part of Switzerland.

Measures at Time 1: Parents' perceptions of their child's careful work habits (HAVEL, Wagner, 1981), parents' aspirations for their child (importance of school success, professional success, high income).

Measures at Time 2: The adult child's self-reported job commitment: work-related ambition, willingness to work until exhausted, striving for perfection, tendency to resignation in the face of failure, inner calm and balance (AVEM subscales, Kieschke & Schaarschmidt, 2008; Schaarschmidt & Fischer, 2006).

3 Results

All irrelevant paths and latent constructs were removed from the initial models.

Mothers: Aspirations and perceptions of child's work habits were interrelated. Careful work habits predicted (a) willingness to work until exhaustion (.26, $p = .025$), (b) work-related ambition in daughters (.40, $p = .002$) but not in sons (-.23, $p = .119$; CR = 3.31, $p = .000$), and (c) lower resignation in sons (-.35, $p = .013$) but not in daughters (.21, $p = .26$; CR = 2.16, $p = .031$).

Fathers: Careful work habits predicted (a) work-related ambition in daughters (.31, $p = .026$) but not in sons (-.09, $p = .574$; CR = 1.94, $p = .052$), (b) striving for perfection in daughters (.42, $p = .007$) but not in sons (-.01, $p = .964$; CR = 2.02, $p = .045$), and (c) narrowly significant inner calm and balance (.22, $p = .056$).

4 Conclusions

The child's careful work habits in first grade and parents' aspirations for their child have a different significance and different prognostic values in mothers and fathers.

Aspirations and work habits emerged as intertwined entities in mothers. Mothers' aspirations might be both a cause and an effect of their children's outcomes (Seginer, 1983).

Careful work habits do not predict motivational tendencies like work-related ambition or striving for perfection in sons. The stronger emphasis on motivational aspects in the performance of girls ("hard working") is consistent with earlier findings on achievement-related parental reports (Parsons, Adler, & Kaczala, 1982).

However, it is noteworthy that the relations between careful work habits and work-related ambition and perfection in daughters extended over a period of two decades. Possibly, this finding points to the stability of the Big Five factor *conscientiousness* from elementary school age to adulthood (Kohnstamm, Zhang, Slotboom, & Elphick, 1998; Specht, Egloff, & Schmucke, 2011).

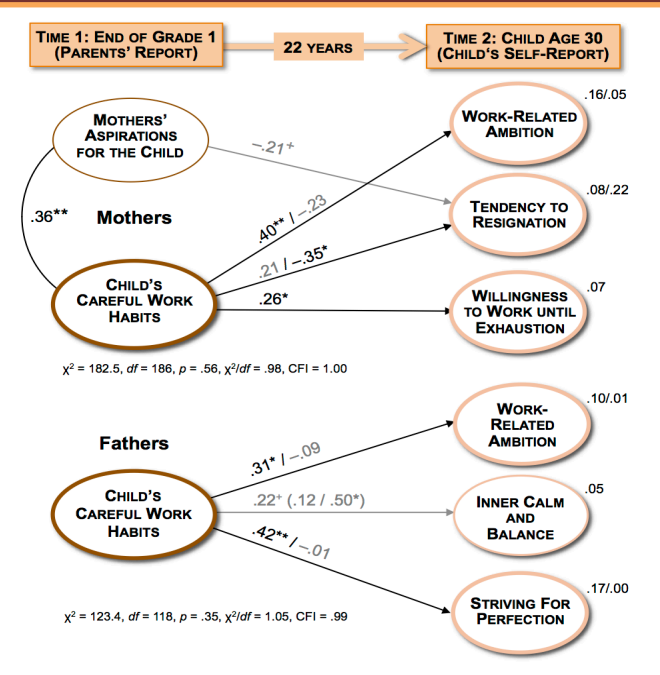


Figure 1. Final models for mothers and fathers. Path coefficients are standardized regression weights (daughters/sons). + $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$