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Eccles' expectancy-value theory (Eccles, 1993; Eccles et al., 1983) is ... [a] contemporary theoretical perspective on parental socialization influence on children's motivation in achievement settings. Widely used in academic contexts, this theory has also served to guide research in the sport and physical activity domain (see Fredericks & Eccles, 2004). The theory can be used to explain how parents shape children's self-perceptions about their abilities in sport, parental beliefs about the relative value of various achievement domains, parental gender-related stereotypes about the adequacy and importance of various achievement domains for their sons and daughters, and children's subsequent levels of motivation to pursue achievement in various domains. Therefore, Eccles' theory links parental socialization practices with children's motivational characteristics.

At its core, Eccles' theory proposes that parents play a fundamental role in providing achievement experiences for their children as well as in interpreting for them the outcomes of those experiences. Parents perform these tasks in relation to their own belief systems, and these belief systems are reflected by their expectancies, values, and gender-related beliefs. In turn, children's belief systems are shaped through the combination of the experiences provided for them and through the feedback that they receive from their parents. A discussion of the three fundamental components of the model—expectancies, values, and gender stereotypes—will aid in developing a more complete understanding of the theory. The best way to begin the discussion is to focus on the value component.

Parental value refers to the perceived relative importance to parents of various achievement domains. Achievement domains can include academics, sport, music, and performing arts. The question is, What value does the parent place on sport as an achievement domain for his or her child? More specifically within a given domain, the question could be, How important for the parent is the child's gymnastics participation relative to the child's participation in soccer? In Eccles' model, achievement' domains are of unequal value to parents because of parents' personal experiences and beliefs. According to Eccles' (1993) theory, however, the greater the value that is ascribed to a particular achievement domain, the more frequent will be the opportunities provided by the parent to their children within that achievement domain. The concept of value includes different dimensions. Utility value refers to how well a task relates to the child's current or future goals, including career goals. Intrinsic value refers to the amount of enjoyment or satisfaction that the person receives from doing the activity and

her or his intrinsic interest in the activity. Attainment value is the value associated with the activity because it is perceived to highlight salient aspects of the self. Finally, cost refers to the negative consequences associated with pursuing the task, including time and financial demands, missed opportunities to pursue other interests, and unfavorable psychological consequences such as anxiety and fear of failure that may occur as a consequence of participation.

Parental expectancies refer to parents' beliefs about the likelihood that a particular child will experience success in a given domain. A parent may expect that a child will have greater success in gymnastics than in basketball, for example. This expectation may be grounded in observations of the ease with which the child learns gymnastics skills, his or her intrinsic interest in gymnastics, the child's temperament, and perhaps the child's physical characteristics. Because children cannot have high levels of success in all achievement domains, parents interpret achievement-related information for them and offer more encouragement in those domains or activities in which they perceive that their children are likely to have the greatest success. Consequently, parents provide unequal levels of opportunity and encouragement across domains. Thus, the child in this example is much more likely to receive opportunities in gymnastics than in basketball, more encouragement and positive feedback about gymnastics progress, and more specialized camps and experiences. Note that although parents may highly value a given achievement area (e.g., basketball), not all children within a family will receive the same level of encouragement in this domain because parents will have different expectancies about their children's natural aptitudes and abilities. Thus, Eccles' theory helps to understand individual differences within the same family in the socialization process.

As a consequence of her or his parents' beliefs, specifically the parents' expectancies and values, a child will receive a differential pattern of encouragement and opportunity across varying achievement domains. Eccles (1993) argued that in accordance with this socialization history the child will typically adopt both parents' expectancies about his or her ability or competence, as well as the parents' values about the relative importance of differing achievement domains. The most important socialization component of the model is precisely that children are likely to adopt their parents' beliefs and thus that their motivation in various domains will reflect a belief system that originated with their parents. If children believe that they are highly competent in a given area, they are more likely to be motivated in that area of achievement. Eccles' theory is consistent with current motivational theories that emphasize self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977, 1986) and perceived competence (Harter, 1978, 1981) in that greater perceived ability is believed to predict greater motivation. But the value component of the model involves the question, Do I want to do this? Many other contemporary motivational theories do not address this question, but it seems fundamental in understanding the achievement motivation of children and adolescents.

Eccles' (1993) theory also contains a third related element that pertains to the influence of possible gender-related parental beliefs. The theory was initially used to help explain possible gender differences in academic achievement relative to stereotyping. In particular, this perspective was used

to examine how gender-related stereotypes about math ability might differentially affect the motivation and achievement of boys and girls in math. A seminal early study (Parsons, Adler, & Kaczala, 1982) indicated that girls tend to adopt their parents' beliefs about their abilities in math even when more objective criteria of math ability (e.g., grades, achievement test scores) contradict those beliefs. This research indicated that children's beliefs about their abilities affect dimensions of motivation (self-perceptions) as well as subsequent interest and achievement levels.

Extensive research in both academic and sport and physical activity contexts provides good support for many of the major contentions of Eccles' theory. Probably the most well supported component of the model is the link between parents' expectancies, or perceptions of their child's competence and the child's own success expectancies or perceptions of competence. In the academic realm, research indicates that parents' beliefs about their child's competence predict the child's own perceptions of academic competence, independent of the child's previous academic performance (Frome & Eccles, 1998; Parsons et al., 1982; Phillips, 1984, 1987). In sport and physical activity contexts, researchers have also found significant relationships between parents' perceptions of their child's competence and the child's own perceived physical competence (Babkes & Weiss, 1999; Eccles, 1993; Fredricks & Eccles, 2002; McCullagh, Matzkanin, Shaw, & Maldonado, 1993), even in cases in which actual levels of physical ability have been statistically controlled (Bois, Sarrazin, Brustad, Trouilloud, & Cury, 2002; Felson & Reed, 1986; Jacobs & Eccles, 1992).

In their three-year longitudinal study, Eccles and Harold (1991) found that parents' perceptions of their child's sport competence contributed to explaining differences in children's own perceived sport competence and their subsequent motivation to participate in sport and physical activity contexts. Babkes and Weiss (1999) found that players who perceived that their parents had more positive beliefs about their competency and who received more frequent and positive contingent responses to their athletic performance had higher perceptions of soccer competence, as well as higher levels of intrinsic motivation to participate in soccer, than did their peers who reported less favorable perceptions of parental influence. In a longitudinal study conducted in France, Bois et al. (2002) found that mothers' perceptions of their child's physical competence predicted their child's own perceived physical competence one year later, independently of the child's initial level of perceived competence and actual competence (as assessed by physical skill tests).

Additional research supports the notion that parents who have favorable perceptions of their child's ability in physical activity and sport provide more opportunities and encouragement for their children in this domain than do parents with lower perceptions of their children's ability in sport and physical activity (Brustad, 1993). This study found that parental self-reported expectancies of their child's physical activity and sport competence explained the level of encouragement that the parent provided for the child's sport and physical activity involvement, which, in turn, explained the child's own self-reported perceived physical competence and level of attraction (value) to sport and physical activity. A subsequent study (Brustad, 1996) also found that children's attraction to sport and physical activity was

predicted by children's perceptions of level of encouragement that they received from their parents to participate in this domain.

Whereas the link between parent and child success expectancies seems well established, there is much less knowledge about the strength of the relationship between parental value and child value with regard to achievement domains. To date, the value component of the theory has only infrequently been included in research. In a recent study of second- to fifth-grade children and their parents, Fredricks and Eccles (2005) found significant but moderate relationships ($r = .27$ and $.29$) between parents' perceptions of the value of sport and their child's perception of sport value at two different time points. The researchers examined mothers' and fathers' value perceptions separately and found that mothers' level of value was significantly related to their perception of their child's ability. In addition, mothers' perceptions of the value of the sport domain were significantly and positively related to their sport equipment purchases and their level of encouragement of the child's sport involvement. Fathers' value was significantly related to the perception of the child's ability but not to other socialization variables.

Eccles and Harold (1991) found a link between children's perceptions of the value placed on sport by their parents and the child's perceived competence. The link between parental value and child value, however, was not supported. In a study addressing children's engagement in moderate to vigorous physical activity, Kimiecik and Horn (1998) did not find a significant association between parents' perception of the utility value and cost of moderate to vigorous physical activity involvement and children's own moderate to vigorous physical activity behavior.

Further research is highly encouraged because many parents in the United States place high value on sport. Because sport constitutes a free-choice activity in contrast to a required academic subject, both parental and child value should be relatively easy to assess. Academic research supports the notion that children distinguish competence from subjective task value as early as the elementary school years (Eccles et al., 1993; Eccles & Wigfield, 1995; Wigfield et al., 1998). In this regard, children of this age are able to make the distinction between what they perceive they are good at and what they value.

The third component of Eccles' (1993) theory involving the influence of parental gender stereotypes has recently received a fair amount of attention. Research conducted to date reveals that parental gender stereotypes remain in the sport and physical activity domain and that these stereotypes influence children's physical activity opportunities in relation to the child's gender. Research indicates that parents are more likely to engage in physical activity and sport with their sons than with their daughters and are more likely to take their sons to sporting events. (Eccles, 1993). Parents are also more likely to report that their sons have high ability in sport and that sport involvement is of greater value to their sons than to their daughters (Eccles, 1993; Eccles, Jacobs, & Harold, 1990; Fredricks & Eccles 2005; Jacobs & Eccles, 1992). In turn, boys generally rate themselves as more competent than girls on sport and physical activities (Eccles, Jacobs, & Harold, 1990; Fredricks & Eccles, 2005; Jacobs & Eccles, 1992). This line of research

indicates that, in general, parents retain gender stereotypes that influence their interactions with their sons and daughters in the physical domain. But more individual difference research is needed to address how variations in the strength of parental stereotypes affect the socialization process. Clearly, not all parents hold stereotypes relative to gender in sport and physical activity. Individual difference research could shed light on the relationship between stereotypes and socialization patterns relative to the child's gender.

Overall, Eccles' (1993) model has proved to be highly useful for the examination of parental influence on children's sport and physical activity engagement. Research has provided strong support for the importance of parental expectancy beliefs, but the influence of parental value beliefs has not yet received sufficient consideration. Although gender stereotypes are an important contributor to physical activity outcomes for boys and girls, we need to know more at the level of the individual family how these stereotypic beliefs shape opportunities for children.

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