Linking Home-School Dissonance to School-Based Outcomes for African American High School Students

SAGE

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Abstract

The current study examined associations between home-school dissonance and several academic and psychological variables among 239 African American high school students. Regression analyses revealed that home-school dissonance significantly predicted multiple academic and psychological variables, including academic cheating, disruptive classroom behavior, performance avoidant and performance approach goal orientations, and poor self-reported English and math grades. Implications of this research include a more systematic incorporation of African American high school students' out-of-school experiences into their classroom learning experiences.

Keywords

home-school dissonance, African American high school students, academic cheating, classroom disruptive behavior

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It is well known that, in academic arenas, African American students have fared poorly (Davis, 2003; Harper & Tuckman, 2006; Nasir, McLaughlin, & Jones, 2009; Roderick, 2003). Sixty-one percent of African American students perform below basic levels on eighth grade math achievement scores (Schmader, Major, & Gramzow, 2001). Also, 52% of African American male students who leave high school prematurely have prison records by their 30s (Hoytt, Schiraldi, Smith, & Ziedenberg, 2002). Additionally, Artiles, Harry, Reschly, and Chinn (2002) reported that African American students are disproportionately referred to special education services and have fewer support systems (e.g., benign neglect), higher in-school suspension and expulsion rates, and more dramatic declines in quality of schooling experiences, compared with their Caucasian counterparts (Roderick, 2003).

Also, African American students (1) are held to low academic and behavioral expectations (Ferguson, 2003; Noguera, 2003; Roderick, 2003); (2) report lower average hours of homework per week than any other ethnic or gender group; (3) are punished by classroom teachers more harshly than girls (Webb-Johnson, 2002); (4) have the lowest occupational goals (e.g., postal employee, cafeteria worker; Terrell, Terrell, & Miller, 1993); (5) are more likely to be characterized as violent, disrespectful, lazy, unintelligent, and threatening (Franklin, 1999); (6) believe that their teachers do not care about them (Noguera, 2003); (7) have more clinical depression symptoms than other students (Kistner, David, & White, 2003); and (8) do not see the connection between school and later gainful employment (Miller-Cribbs, Cronen, Davis, & Johnson, 2002). Given these findings, it is hardly surprising to find that African American students face significant challenges while in school.

Many psychologists and education researchers have begun to more closely examine the source of these academic and psychological dilemmas faced by many African American youth. The educational research literature, in particular, has begun to more closely examine environmental (i.e., school and community effects), interpersonal (i.e., teacher expectations), and societal factors (i.e., racism) that may influence the development and manifestation of these behavioral and academic outcomes (Garcia-Coll et al., 1996; Spencer, Dupree, & Hartmann, 1997). One such factor is home-school dissonance.

Home-school dissonance has been conceptualized as the difference between the values and operations existing in students' home or out-of-school environment and those salient throughout their formal schooling experiences (Arunkumar, Midgley, & Urdan, 1999; Kumar, 2006). Home-school dissonance has been considered a significant source of the academic difficulties and psychological challenges faced by many low-income elementary and high school African American students. To date, several educational

researchers have offered anecdotal evidence to support the existence and effects of home-school dissonance—particularly as it pertains to issues of cultural value socialization—for African American students on school performance (Gay, 2000; Webb-Johnson, 2002). For example, Gay (2000) has argued that the cultural value differences between the home and school experiences of African American youth often affect how well this population performs at school. Yet only one empirical study has examined statistical associations between reports of home-school dissonance and students' academic and psychological reports (Arunkumar et al., 1999).

The current study seeks to examine the associations between reports of home-school dissonance and several academic and psychological factors for African American high school students. Though previous work has sampled African American students to investigate such relationships (Arunkumar et al., 1999), the population sampled was middle-grade students, thereby limiting generalizability of findings to this population. It is our thesis that, for African American high school students, such academic and psychological challenges are associated with perceptions of dissonance between their home and school experiences. The major research question for the current study is, "Does home-school dissonance significantly predict several academic and psychological factors for African American high school students?"

To answer this question, 239 African American male and female high school students completed several measures, including the home-school dissonance, academic cheating, disruptive behavior, academic efficacy, and mastery goal orientation, performance approach goal orientation, and performance avoidance goal orientation subscales of the Patterns of Adaptive Learning Scales (PALS). Participants also provided information about how well they are doing in their English, math, and science classes. Discussion of these factors and their link to home-school dissonance is provided below.

Home-School Dissonance

Perhaps the best example of home-school dissonance is provided by Gay (2000). Specifically, Gay (2000) wrote that

> most teachers . . . expect all students to behave according to the school's cultural standards of normality. When students of color fail to comply, the teachers find them unlovable, problematic, and difficult to honor or embrace without equivocation. Rather than build on what the students have in order to make their learning easier and better, the teachers want to correct and compensate for their "cultural deprivations." (p. 46)

For Gay and other education researchers, this often means providing sanctions to students—ethnically diverse students in particular—to conform to middle-class, Eurocentric cultural norms.

This claim has found support in the education research literature. For example, according to Kumar (2006), all students experience some degree of dissonance when the cultural values, beliefs, and practices of their home or out-of-school environment are discontinued in their school. However, Arunkumar et al. (1999) note that "students from cultures outside the mainstream may experience a sense of dissonance when they encounter a devaluing of their beliefs and behaviors at schools that reflect the dominant White, middle-class ideology" (p. 442). To date, Arunkumar et al. (1999) have shown that exposure to home-school dissonance is maladaptive for many students.

In particular, Arunkumar et al. (1999) showed that both African American and European American students who report similar levels of home-school dissonance also reported lower levels of future hopefulness, academic efficacy and self-esteem, and grade point average (GPA). These students also reported higher levels of anger and self-deprecation (Arunkumar et al., 1999). Such findings inform the expectations in the current study. Given that African American students are said to experience a significant amount of home-school dissonance throughout their schooling experiences (Gay, 2000), we expect that home-school dissonance reports will be predictive of various psychological and academically relevant classroom behaviors for this population.

Academic Cheating

Athanasou and Olasehinde (2002) describe academic cheating as students' conscious involvement or participation in deception (i.e., lying and plagiarism), typically to perform well or give the perception of performing well on an academic task. Murdock and Anderman (2006) proposed a conceptual model that underscores the motivational processes as well as the individual and contextual factors that precede the decision to engage in academic cheating. Specifically, Murdock and Anderman (2006) suggest that the immediate social and academic settings of the learner (e.g., home and school) may directly or indirectly influence his or her decision to engage in academic cheating. For Murdock and Anderman (2006), academic cheating is not typical behavior for students with high intrinsic motivation and/or mastery goal orientation (i.e., learners with a heightened orientation toward understanding and deep cognitive processing). Rather, academic cheating is considered more reflective of students with high extrinsic motivation and performance goal orientations (i.e., learners more interested in positive external indicators

of accomplishment; Murdock & Anderman, 2006). The conceptual model proposed by Murdock and Anderman (2006) also suggests that academic cheating is associated with low academic efficacy or the belief that one is able to successfully engage in and complete academic tasks.

Murdock and Anderman (2006) offer a conceptual model that depicts the multifaceted process of academic cheating. However, their model does not fully exhaust all possible individual and contextual factors that may be associated with academic cheating. Given that students' perceptions of their classroom learning environments have been linked to academic cheating reports (Anderman & Midgley, 2004; Murdock & Anderman, 2006), and given that home-school dissonance is typically experienced at school and is thus a school and/or classroom-based factor, it is likely that perceptions of home-school dissonance may account for some academic cheating. Also, because academic cheating is conceptually and empirically associated with performance avoidant and performance approach goal orientations and academic efficacy (Anderman & Midgley, 2004), it is expected that home-school dissonance will be significantly associated with these reports. Greater discussion of various goal orientations in school is provided below.

Performance Goal Orientations

Several researchers have claimed that perceptions of students' goal orientations are conceptually and statistically associated with various maladaptive schooling outcomes (Anderman & Midgley, 2004; Midgley et al., 2000). For these researchers, there are two types of performance goal orientations. Performance avoidance orientation is reflected in classroom behaviors where students seek to carry out academic tasks that keep them from appearing that they do not know what they are doing. Performance approach orientation is reflected in classroom behaviors where students seek to carry out academic tasks that allow them to have a favorable and positive appearance in front of their peers and classroom instructor. Both of these performance goal orientations have been linked to maladaptive classroom behaviors and overall negative attitudes and dispositions toward schooling (Anderman & Midgley, 2004; Midgley et al., 2000; Murdock & Anderman, 2006).

Similarly, academic efficacy is a student's belief that he or she can successfully carry out academic tasks. It is associated with performance goal orientations in that students' ability to execute either performance approach or performance avoidant classroom behaviors is often preceded by their academic efficacy. In the current study, each of these factors is believed to be

associated with home-school dissonance for African American high school students. Given the literature (Murdock & Anderman, 2006), we expect home-school dissonance to be inversely related to both performance avoidant and performance approach goal orientation reports. We also expect an inverse or zero-order association between home-school dissonance and mastery goal orientation, which is typically associated with behaviors that reflect deep cognitive processing and meaningful learning.

Classroom Disruptive Behaviors

Classroom disruptive behaviors have been classified as (1) externalizing behaviors, where students engage in classroom activities in ways that are hostile and aggressive, and (2) internalizing behaviors, where students withdraw and avoid classroom confrontations with other students and particularly with teachers (Burgess, Wojslawowisz, Rubin, Rose-Krasnor, & Booth-LaForce, 2006). Sources of classroom disruptive behaviors have included school and class size, socioeconomic status, single-parent household status, and even seating arrangements inside students' actual classrooms (Wannarka & Ruhl, 2008). A major source of classroom disruptive behavior found within the classroom is the student-teacher relationship (Myers & Pianta, 2008). Specifically, students who form close relationships with teachers have been reported to (1) enjoy schooling more, (2) have better social relationships with their peers, and (3) perform better in schools than those students who do not report such relationships (Howe, Matheson, & Hamilton, 1994). Among a nationally representative sample of high school students, Resnick et al. (1997) showed that greater connectedness to classroom teachers was significantly associated with low emotional and psychological distress, violent behavior, and risky sexual behavior.

Along with student-teacher relationships, which is considered a classroom-based variable associated with classroom disruptive behavior, home-school dissonance may also be a contextual factor significantly associated with classroom disruptive behaviors. For instance, if African American high school students believe that their out-of-school values and behaviors are not duly acknowledged or respected by classroom teachers, they may hold negative attitudes toward and perceptions of their teachers and, consequently, engage in classroom disruptive behaviors to exhibit their discontent with such perceptions (Webb-Johnson, 2002). In the current study, the expected association between home-school dissonance and classroom disruptive behavior will be examined with this population.

Method

Sample

This study is part of a larger investigation seeking to examine the personal and contextual predictors of school performance and its psychological antecedents among urban students attending high school in low-income, metropolitan areas. Three hundred and forty-four high school students from two randomly selected high schools in the southeastern region of the country participated in the current study. The majority of the students at both high schools were African American (75% and 84%, respectively). Seventy-four percent of the total sample were on free and/or reduced lunch. Sixty-three percent of the sample were female, and 64% of the sample were juniors. Forty-four percent of the total sample were 17 years of age. The average GPA of all students was 2.98.

For the current study, 239 African American junior and seniors from both schools were included in analyses. Thirty-four percent of the sample were male students, 61% were juniors, and the percentage of students represented from each school was nearly the same (47% and 53%). Additional descriptive information for the current study sample was identical to that of the total sample (81% free/reduced lunch; average age = 16.9 years; average GPA = 2.96).

Instruments

Patterns of Adaptive Learning Scales. The PALS (Midgley et al., 2000) was developed to examine the relationship between student motivation, affect and behavior, and the learning environment. The scale is composed of items that assess (1) personal achievement goal orientation; (2) perceptions of teacher's goals; (3) academic-related perceptions, beliefs, attitudes, and strategies; and (4) perceptions of parents and home life and other subscales. Items on the PALS are scored on a 5-point Likert-type scale from 1 (*not at all true*) to 5 (*very true*). Factor validation for the PALS was obtained with an ethnically diverse sample of low- and middle-class elementary, middle, and high school students (Midgley et al., 2000).

A sample item from the cheating behavior subscale (3 items; $\alpha = .86$) was "I sometimes copy answers from other students during tests." A sample item from the dissonance between home and school subscale (5 items; $\alpha = .88$) was "I feel troubled because my home life and my school life are like two different worlds." A sample item from the classroom disruptive behavior subscale (3 items; $\alpha = .86$) was "I sometimes annoy my teacher during class." The mastery goal orientation subscale (5 items; $\alpha = .83$) was "One of my goals in class is to learn as much as I can." A sample item from the performance approach orientation subscale (5 items; $\alpha = .81$) was "It's important to

me that I look smart compared to others in my class." A sample item from the performance avoidance orientation subscale (4 items; α = .83) was "One of my main goals is to keep others from thinking I'm not smart in class." Finally, a sample item for the academic efficacy subscale (4 items; α = .84) was "Even if the work is hard, I can learn it." Alpha reliability coefficients are data reported from the current study.

In addition to these variables, participants were asked to report the most frequent grades received in their English, math, and science classes. Possible score responses ranged from 1 = *mostly Fs* to 5 = *mostly As*. An average overall GPA was also reported by participants (with the scale at both schools ranging from 0 = *F* to 4 = *A*).

Procedures

Institutional review board approval was obtained from the university hosting the current research. Approval for research was also granted by the Associate Superintendent for Research for the public school system serving study participants attending the two high schools. A meeting with the high school administrative personnel (i.e., principal and assistant principals) was held to introduce the study and to coordinate data collection. Written informed consent was obtained from participants aged 18 years and older. For students below age 18, both written informed consent from the student's parent or legal guardian in addition to written assent were obtained prior to survey completion. The survey packet was administered to participants during a single classroom session. Students were provided 45 minutes to complete and submit the packet.

Data Analysis Plan

Multicollinearity examinations using both tolerance and variance inflation factors indicated that numerical responses for each variable were not highly correlated and, thus, did not measure similar constructs. Following this examination, a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was computed to determine whether variation in study variables (i.e., home-school dissonance, academic cheating, classroom disruptive behavior, mastery goal orientation, performance approach orientation, performance avoidance orientation, academic efficacy, and overall English, math, and science grade self-reports) were a function of demographic factors such as gender, grade, and school. Afterward, a series of regression models was computed to determine whether home-school dissonance was predictive of (1) goal orientation (mastery, performance approach, and performance avoidance), (2) academic efficacy, (3) academic cheating, (4) classroom disruptive behaviors, and

(5) English, math, and science grade reports. Demographic variables statistically associated with outcome variables—as determined by MANOVA procedures—were entered in the first step of the each regression analysis, and home-school dissonance was entered in the second step.

Results

Table 1 provides descriptive data for the study variables, including means, standard deviations, and alpha reliability coefficients. MANOVA statistical computations revealed a significant F statistic for gender ($F(11, 185) = 3.60$; $p = .001$; $d = .18$). Separate univariate analyses revealed main effects for gender on reported classroom disruptive behaviors ($F(1, 195) = 8.38$; $p = .004$; $d = .04$), GPA ($F(1, 195) = 7.72$; $p = .006$; $d = .04$), and self-reported English grades ($F(1, 195) = 8.61$; $p = .004$; $d = .04$). Gender did not interact significantly with either grade or school. Also, additional significant main effects or interaction effects for grade and school did not emerge. Overall, African American male high school students scored significantly higher than their female counterparts on reports of classroom disruptive behavior (male = 2.90; female = 2.37) and significantly lower than their female counterparts on reports of self-reported GPA (male = 2.77; female = 3.06), and self-reported English grades (male = 3.77; female = 4.23). The literature supports these findings (Howe et al., 1994).

Following these analyses, a series of hierarchical regression analyses were computed to determine the predictive ability of home-school dissonance on academic cheating, classroom disruptive behavior, mastery goal orientation, performance approach orientation, performance avoidant orientation, academic efficacy, GPA, and self-reported English, math, and science grades. Though the effects of gender were statistically controlled, we must mention that the variable was dummy coded in the first step of each regression analysis. To explore interaction effects between gender and home-school dissonance, we also created an interaction term between these two variables and included them in the third step of each regression analysis.

Results revealed that home-school dissonance reports were significantly predictive of academic cheating ($\beta = .21$; $t = 3.16$; $p = .002$), classroom disruptive behavior ($\beta = .28$; $t = 4.34$; $p = .001$), performance approach orientation ($\beta = .18$; $t = 2.70$; $p = .008$), performance avoidant orientation ($\beta = .14$; $t = 2.13$; $p = .03$), self-reported math grades ($\beta = -.12$; $t = -1.80$; $p = .07$), and self-reported English grades ($\beta = -.16$; $t = -2.40$; $p = .02$). Findings reveal that home-school dissonance reports for African American high school students were significantly associated with increases in (1) performance approach and performance avoidance goal orientations scores, (2) academic

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for Study Variables

	HSD	AC	CDB	MG	PAG	PAVG	AE	GPA	E	M	S
Mean	2.25	2.64	2.54	3.99	3.09	3.01	4.26	2.96	4.07	3.74	3.71
SD	0.93	1.16	1.15	0.57	1.04	0.95	0.67	0.51	0.95	1.02	0.79
α	.88	.86	.86	.83	.83	.81	.84	—	—	—	—
AAM	2.50	2.72	2.90	3.86	3.24	3.22	4.18	2.77	3.77	3.71	3.61
AAF	2.12	2.60	2.37	4.06	3.01	2.90	4.29	3.06	4.22	3.76	3.77

Note: N = 239. HSD = home-school dissonance; AE = academic efficacy; AC = academic cheating; GPA = grade point average; CDB = classroom disruptive behavior; E = English; MG = mastery goal orientation; M = math; PAG = performance approach goal orientation; S = science; PAVG = performance avoidance goal orientation; AAM = African American male students; AAF = African American female students.

cheating scores, and (3) classroom disruptive behavior scores. Also, reports of home-school dissonance were associated with decreases in self-reported math and English scores, although the beta coefficient for the home-school dissonance and self-reported math scores was marginally significant. Home-school dissonance was not significantly predictive of mastery goal orientation, academic efficacy, self-reported science grades, or GPA. Home-school dissonance and gender interaction terms were also not significantly predictive of any outcome variables. Statistical findings for regression analyses examining home-school dissonance and psychological correlates of academic performance and home-school dissonance and academic performance variables are provided in Tables 2 and 3, respectively.

Discussion and Study Limitations

This study examined the associations between reports of home-school dissonance and various academic and psychological factors for a sample of African American high school students. Educational literature has long suspected that a perceived misalignment between the out-of-school experiences of ethnic minority students and those experiences within the school is associated with maladaptive psychological and academic outcomes for this population (Spencer, Dupree, & Hartmann, 1997; Webb-Johnson, 2002). The current study sought to explore such claims by examining the associations between reports of home-school dissonance and multiple academically related psychological and academic outcomes.

For the entire African American high school student sample, home-school dissonance was found to be statistically associated with several factors shown to be incongruent with adaptive psychological and academic functioning. In

Table 2. Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Psychological Correlates of Academic Performance

Variable	MG	PAG	PAVG	AE
Step 1				
Gender	−.17*	.06	.12	−.05
Step 2				
Home-school dissonance (HSD)	.00	.18*	.14*	−.09
Step 3				
Gender × HSD	−.08	.13	.20	−.25

Note: N = 239. MG = mastery goal orientation; PA = performance approach goal orientation; PAVG = performance avoidant goal orientation; AE = academic efficacy. Because of space limitations, this table presents standardized beta coefficients (β) for multiple hierarchical regressions that examined the predictive ability of home-school dissonance on MG, PA, PAVG, and AE. Analyses for each criterion variable were separate. Also, the gender variable was dummy coded such that male data are presented as 1 and female data are recoded as 0.
*p =.05. **p =.01.

Table 3. Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Classroom Behaviors and Academic Performance

Variable	GPA	AC	CDB	E	M	S
Step 1						
Gender	−.25	.01	.17**	−.19**	.00	−.08
Step 2						
Home-school dissonance (HSD)	−.03	.21**	.28**	−.16**	−.12	−.08
Step 3						
Gender × HSD	−.10	.26	−.18	−.19	.00	.15

Note: N = 239. GPA = grade point average; AC = academic cheating; CDB = classroom disruptive behaviors; E = English; M = math; S = science grades. Because of space limitations, this table presents standardized beta coefficients (β) for multiple hierarchical regressions that examined the predictive ability of home-school dissonance on GPA, AC, CDB, self-reported English, math, and science grades. Analyses for each criterion variable were separate. Also, the gender variable was dummy coded such that male data are presented as 1 and female data are recoded as 0.
*p =.05. **p =.01.

particular, home-school dissonance predicted higher performance approach and performance avoidance goal orientation, academic cheating, and classroom disruptive behavior. Home-school dissonance also predicted lower self-reported English and math grades for African American high school

students. Previous research with an African American and European American middle-grade sample yielded similar findings (Arunkumar et al., 1999). Specifically, Arunkumar et al. (1999) found that high levels of home-school dissonance were associated with lower levels of future hopefulness, academic efficacy, self-esteem, and GPA. Also, home-school dissonance was significantly associated with higher levels of anger and self-deprecation (Arunkumar et al., 1999).

Given these previous findings, it is not surprising that reports of home-school dissonance—though below the scale midpoint of 3—were significantly associated with several maladaptive school-based factors for African American high school students. For example, experiencing a difference between home and school contexts has implications for whether African American high school students want to look smart in a given class (i.e., performance approach goal orientation) or simply do not want to look like he or she is having difficulty in a class (i.e., performance avoidance). The nonstatistically significant association between home-school dissonance and mastery goal orientation was expected and suggests that home-school dissonance may be a classroom-based factor that is not conducive to optimal classroom practices such as behaviors that reflect deep cognitive processing and meaningful learning (i.e., mastery goal orientation). Furthermore, the inverse association between home-school dissonance and self-reported English and math grades may exemplify the notion that perceptions of school-based variables such as student-teacher relationship and home-school dissonance can predict how well students perform.

There are some limitations to the current study. To begin, the study's design is correlational; therefore, no causal statements can be made about significant relationships emerging from the data. Second, the cross-sectional nature of data collection does not allow education stakeholders to know the long-term effects of home-school dissonance on African American high school students. Future research should look to examine such associations longitudinally as this would give education stakeholders greater appreciation of the impact of home-school dissonance in the lives of African American students. Also, some statistical findings from the current study presented were close to, but not below, the standard .05 level of statistical significance necessary to conclude a given finding is not due to chance (i.e., the association between home-school dissonance and self-reported math grades). Though power analyses determine that a sample of 80 participants was enough to detect significance with a large effect size (Cohen's $d = .8$), future research should include larger sample sizes to safely provide statistical

significance interpretations for associations at or below the conventional .05 alpha level and, thereby, enhance generalizability of the study findings. Though the findings for the gender variable were consistent with those reported in the literature, future research should look to recruit greater numbers of male student participants, thereby allowing their representation to equal that of female student participants. Utilizing actual or teacher reports of GPA along with English, math, and science grades would also address the limitation of these self-reported variables in the current study and, thus, enhance the reliability of the measures along with the generalizability of the findings.

Overall, the current study showed that exposure to home-school dissonance is negatively associated with indicators in English and math and many maladaptive classroom behaviors for many African American high school students. While not the first study to quantitatively examine the impact of home-school dissonance (Arunkumar et al., 1999), it is the first to examine the role of home-school dissonance in the lives of African American high school students. Though several education researchers have spoken to the role of home-school dissonance in the lives of this specific student population and African American youth in general (Boykin, Tyler, Watkins-Lewis, & Kizzie, 2005; Gay, 2000; Webb-Johnson, 2002), to date, data to support such claims have not been presented vis-à-vis an investigation with an African American student sample. The current study addresses this void in the literature by providing data in support of the notion that home-school dissonance in the academic experiences of African American students actually does covary with several academic and psychological indices of school success for this population. Given these findings, it is important that greater attention is given to the elimination of home-school dissonance in the academic experiences of this population.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

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