

CITATION:

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In the determination of an individual's levels of intelligence, motivation, and academic success, the best perspective seems to be the one that attributes an equal amount of influence to the student, the school, and the parents. That is not to say that a particular weakness in one of those areas will doom the student to failure or that a particular strength in one of those areas will guarantee success. In conclusion, it is the interaction of these multiple factors that plays the most significant role in producing an intelligent, motivated, and academically successful student. Every individual situation is unique.

According to Santrock, schools and parents may have the opportunity to impact adolescents' motivation levels in a positive way if they create circumstances known to aid adolescents' in developing motivation. Santrock writes, "Students are more motivated to learn when they are given choices, become absorbed in challenges that match their skills, and receive rewards that have informational value but are not used for control. Praise also can enhance students' intrinsic motivation" (2008: 396). Therefore, if parents and educators build systems that incorporate options for students, accurately and appropriately fit tasks to students' capabilities with an eye to intellectual stimulation, and commend them on a job well done, their students are likely to benefit. Extensive research supports this notion of the nature of educator and parent involvement.

Through a study he conducted, Rainey (1965) established that when offered the freedom to develop unique experiments and when their efforts were supported, high school students in a science classroom showed "more care and interest in laboratory work" than a group that was guided by explicit directives (Santrock 2008: 396). In 1984, deCharms examined the outcomes in an investigation of African American, low-SES students whose self-determination was increased with the provision of responsibility and independence in such undertakings as goal formation, goal planning, and progress monitoring. DeCharms found that this group showed "higher achievement gains" and a higher probability of graduation from secondary school (Santrock 2008: 396). Similarly, parents have the duty and the chance to create a home environment where the same qualities are in effect, further benefiting their adolescents' sense of motivation.

Regarding the aspect of challenge in adolescent motivation levels, research by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and others (1990, 1993, 2006) presented the concept of flow to express the idea of optimal experiences and concluded that these happen most often when "people develop a sense of mastery and are absorbed in a state of concentration while they engage in an activity" (Santrock 2008: 397). Brophy (2004) has found that there is a higher likelihood of flow when adolescents are challenged and when they maintain perceptions of themselves as highly competent in the task at hand (Santrock 2008: 397).

With their daily roles of authority and guidance, educators and parents have a direct impact on whether adolescents encounter activities that challenge them. In addition, educators and parents have a responsibility to develop situations in which adolescents are able to build competence in skills. Typically, parents and educators are also able to offer

meaningful encouragement to adolescents, which could help adolescents' notions of self-esteem.

Furthermore, educators and parents are able to utilize different types of constructive activities with adolescents. Research shows that if students are prompted to recall main ideas and to generate responses to more difficult discussion questions, they will be more apt to be interested in learning than if they are engaged in surface learning, which involves simpler questions or verbatim recall (Santrock 2008: 397). Additionally, if parents and educators assume an active role in noting student interests and attempting to interlock those interests with subject matter content and skills learning, embedding all three in real-world circumstances that are meaningful, students are more likely to become cognitively engaged and responsible for their education (Santrock 2008: 397). Moreover, when parents and teachers create external rewards for progress or behavior that are connected to a measure of competence, they frequently help advance student motivation and interest (Santrock 2008: 397).

Lastly, Eccles (2007) has discovered parental expectations, as well as those of teachers and other adults, impact adolescent motivation and also probably adolescent performance. Santrock corroborates, finding evidence in works by Burchinal and others (2002) and Fan and Chen (2001). They make the claim that adolescents experience benefits when their teachers and parents make it known that there are high expectations set for them and when teachers and parents contribute support that will enable them to reach those expectations (2008: 399). Even if parents and educators fulfill all of these undertakings to the best of their abilities, it is not a guarantee that adolescents will achieve. The old adage comes to mind: "You can lead a horse to water, but you cannot make him drink."

Other factors that affect whether an adolescent will become motivated, intelligent, and academically successful relate specifically to the adolescent. For instance, adolescents may demonstrate two different reactions when encountering difficult or challenging situations. Valanne Henderson and Carol Dweck (1990) term these a mastery orientation or a helpless orientation. Mastery-oriented adolescents are characterized as task-oriented and are known to shift their focus to learning strategies and the process of achievement rather than their ability and the outcome. Helpless-oriented adolescents, on the other hand, feel trapped when confronted by difficulty and conclude that the difficulty originates due to a lack of ability. If they view their behavior as failure, anxiety ensues, thus contributing to worse performance.

Also vital to cognitive engagement, self-motivation, and self-improvement is the development of a mindset. According to Carol Dweck (2006), adolescents may become fixed in their mindset, believing that personal qualities are inflexible and set, or they may become believers in growth, and conclude that personal effort can render change and improvement (Santrock 2008: 398). While mindsets are likely influenced to a degree by adolescents' personalities, Dweck proposes the idea that "mindsets begin to be shaped as children and adolescents interact with parents, teachers, and coaches, who themselves have either a fixed mindset or a growth mindset" (Santrock 2008: 399). To continue,

Albert Bandura (1997, 2000, 2004, 2006, 2007a, b) finds that self-efficacy, which is the belief in one's ability to master a situation and to bring about favorable outcomes, is crucial to adolescent achievement (Santrock 2008: 399).

Another factor that adolescents have power and control over is whether they engage in goal setting, planning, and self-monitoring, which has been found by researchers, such as Anderman and Wolters (2006), Boekaerts (2006), Lapierre (2005), Schunk, Pintrich and Meece (2008), and Wigfield and others (2006), to be an important aspect of adolescent achievement. Santrock reports that Bandura and others have determined the positive influence of goal setting that involves specific, proximal, and challenging objectives. This type of planning requires effective time management, organization, and the establishment of priorities. While this is an adolescent responsibility, it is quite clear that parents and teachers are able to encourage and guide such behavior, which sends a "message that they [adolescents] are responsible for their own behavior and that learning requires their active, dedicated participation (Simmerman, Bonner, & Kovach, 1996)" (Santrock 2008: 401). Santrock also mentions that achievement problems often emerge when individuals procrastinate, become overwhelmed by anxiety, or try to protect their self-worth by avoiding failure (2008: 403).

There are also factors which may impact the adolescent's achievement and which may be uncontrollable by parents, educators, or adolescents. These include: the ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and culture of the adolescent (Santrock 2008: 405-407). In addition, Santrock reveals: "Not every individual born into the world can grow up to become a nuclear physicist or a doctor—there is a genetic limitation that keeps some adolescents from performing at the high intellectual levels necessary to enter such careers" (2008: 417). Therefore, it is a real possibility that adolescents suffer from less intelligence, less motivation, and less academic success due to unmanageable aspects.