



Intergenerational continuity in attitudes toward reading and reading behavior☆



Maximilian Pfost*, Irene M. Schiefer, Cordula Artelt

Department of Educational Research, University of Bamberg, Germany

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 26 February 2016
Received in revised form 2 August 2016
Accepted 11 September 2016
Available online xxxx

Keywords:

Reading behavior
Attitudes toward reading
Reading enjoyment
Family influences

ABSTRACT

Students' reading preferences develop in social contexts, and parents shape such environments. Assuming a process of transmission across generations, we analyzed the role of mothers' attitudes toward reading and reading behavior. A sample of 380 ninth-grade students completed a questionnaire to assess their attitudes toward reading (with respect to utility and enjoyment) and to collect details about their extracurricular reading behavior. Mothers were interviewed and asked to provide comparable information about their own reading behavior and attitudes. Results showed substantial positive relations between mothers' and students' attitudes toward reading and reading behavior, although the effects were small in magnitude. Taken together, even when children reach adolescence, socialization effects from parents can be found in the domain of reading.

© 2016 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

Efficient reading skills are vital for participating in cultural, political, and economic life (UNESCO, 2005). Although primary school in general lays the foundation for students' reading ability, individual differences in reading achievement, motivation, and behavior are in large parts attributable to family influences, and this holds not just for young children (Baker, Scher, & Mackler, 1997; Bus, van Ijzendoorn, & Pellegrini, 1995) but for older children as well (Klauda, 2009). In addition, research has provided evidence for a positive relation between parents' and children's cognitive abilities (de Coulon, Meschi, & Vignoles, 2011; Longstreth et al., 1981) as well as for a positive relation between parents' and children's academic values (Gniewosz & Noack, 2012). This means that parents and their children share certain attributes, and this makes them similar to each other as parents provide experiences and opportunities for their children but also pass their genes on to the next generation (Rutter, 1998). This transmission across generations has often been labeled intergenerational continuity. Within our study, we will use the concept of parent-to-child transmission and adapt it to the domain of reading. We will show that parents' own attitudes toward reading and their reading behavior are important variables to consider when it comes to explaining students' individual differences in attitudes toward reading and extracurricular reading behavior.

1.1. Attitudes toward reading, reading behavior, and reading development

Multiple variables affect or are related to students' extracurricular reading behavior, including students' attitudes toward reading (Greaney & Hegarty, 1987). In this paper, we define an attitude as "a psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favor or disfavor" (p.1, Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). Here, entities may be understood as comprising not just concrete or abstract objects but also behaviors and classes of behavior such as reading or reading situations. Attitudes are mostly conceptualized as being multidimensional, containing a cognitive, an affective, and a behavioral component (Breckler, 1984; Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). In line with this, attitudes toward reading may contain, at first, evaluative beliefs or opinions about reading (the cognitive component; e.g., containing the values we place on reading as an instrument for educational and vocational success or cultural participation; Lewis & Teale, 1980; Stokmans, 1999). Secondly, attitudes toward reading may contain prevailing feelings or emotions in relation to reading (the affective component; e.g., the pleasure we expect while reading). And thirdly, attitudes toward reading may contain some form of action readiness for reading (the behavioral/conative component; Mathewson, 1994; Stokmans, 1999). In educational research, however, attitudes toward reading are often reduced to one single or unidimensional component, mostly reflecting the affective component of reading enjoyment.

By analyzing the development of reading attitudes in students, empirical research has provided evidence for a general decreasing trend in evaluative feelings toward reading, e.g. reading enjoyment, over the course of schooling (Kush & Watkins, 1996; McKenna, Kear, & Ellsworth, 1995; Smith, Smith, Gilmore, & Jameson, 2012; except Ley, Schaer, & Dismukes, 1994, who did not find such negative trend). This

☆ This research was supported by Grants AR 301/9-2, AR 301/10-1 and PF 840/2-1 from the German Research Foundation (DFG).

* Corresponding author at: Department of Educational Research, University of Bamberg, 96045 Bamberg, Germany.

E-mail address: maximilian.pfost@uni-bamberg.de (M. Pfost).

negative trend seems especially pronounced for the lowest performing readers, possibly reflecting the cumulative influence of negative feedback (McKenna et al., 1995): Low performing readers are more likely to experience frustration and failure while reading which ultimately may result in a negative attitude toward reading. Thus, it does not seem surprising that mostly positive relations between reading achievement and attitudes toward reading have been found. This is supported by a recent meta-analysis (Petscher, 2010). Furthermore, girls seem to have more positive attitudes toward reading than boys (Kush & Watkins, 1996; McKenna et al., 1995; Smith et al., 2012), and this difference does not seem to be attributable to gender differences in reading ability (McKenna et al., 1995). Finally, reading attitudes have been found to be related to leisure-time reading behavior (Greaney & Hegarty, 1987; Ley et al., 1994; Rowe, 1991; Shapiro & Whitney, 1997; Stokmans, 1999), the latter being substantially related to reading achievement (Mol & Bus, 2011). This relation to reading achievement has primarily been found with regard to fiction book reading. However, small but significant correlations were also found between newspaper reading and reading achievement (Pfost, Dörfler, & Artelt, 2013). And eventually, the association of reading attitudes and leisure-time reading behavior seems especially pronounced for reading enjoyment but not for the utilitarian or escape function of reading (Greaney & Hegarty, 1987; Stokmans, 1999). This means that correlations between book reading and reading enjoyment exceeded correlations between book reading and evaluations of the utilitarian or escape aspect of reading.

1.2. Parental influences on children's attitudes toward reading and reading behavior

Concerning parents' reading activities, there is some empirical evidence for a relation between parents' and children's reading behavior. Condensed into one statement, we may say that avid readers tend to have parents who are avid readers themselves (Cardoso, Fontainha, & Monfardini, 2010; Klauda, 2009; Mullan, 2010). Furthermore, Mullan (2010) provided evidence that the time mothers spend reading is related to the time their daughters spend reading but not to the time their sons spend reading, whereas the effect of the time fathers spend reading is limited to their sons. Edmunds and Bauserman (2006) however stressed the role of mothers for children's reading motivation whereas fathers were only of subordinate importance. And Chandler (1999) finally showed that this association is not limited to the time parents and students spend reading, but also concerns genre and author the students chose to read. Nevertheless, we should keep in mind that all aforementioned empirical studies are cross-sectional and often cover a wide age range. This limits the interpretability of the findings as cross-sectional results do not allow to draw any inferences about the timing of the effects. Regarding mechanism in the intergenerational transmission of reading activities, several possibilities are discussed (Klauda, 2009; Mullan, 2010; Strommen & Mates, 2004): At first, parents who read themselves act as a role model that children later may imitate. Secondly, beyond acting as a role model, parents who read might provide more support in reading through the provision of opportunities for reading. For example, research has shown that avid readers receive more often books as a present or indicate more often joint public library visits (Shapiro & Whitney, 1997). Thirdly, parents may affect students' reading activities through communication and interaction, for example by means of family booktalk or the provision of book recommendations (Chandler, 1999; Klauda & Wigfield, 2012).

Concerning the specific role of parents' attitudes toward reading for the formation of students' attitudes toward reading, little is known. Cross-sectional studies have shown that attitudes toward reading explain individual differences in reading behavior (Greaney & Hegarty, 1987; Shapiro & Whitney, 1997; Stokmans, 1999), and the formation of attitudes themselves depends on cognitive, affective, and behavioral processes (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). This means that students' attitudes toward reading may emerge or change if they learn new information

that forms or changes their beliefs that are associated with reading, due to the emotions they experience while reading or due to prior reading behavior. Parents are an important source of information about reading and experiences with reading, thus helping to form children's attitudes toward reading (Baker et al., 1997; Hertel, Jude, & Naumann, 2010; Stubbe, Buddeberg, Hornberg, & McElvany, 2007). On the one hand, positive affect toward reading may be fostered indirectly when children observe that their parents enjoy reading. In this way, the parents act again as role models. On the other hand, parents may directly express their own attitudes toward reading and thereby provide some type of information about reading as the attitude object. In addition, parents provide literacy opportunities for their children in accordance with the values they place on reading (Baker et al., 1997), indirectly influencing their children's reading attitudes.

Empirical research on the formation of students' attitudes toward reading has provided preliminary evidence for the role of parents' reading behavior and attitudes. After reviewing the available research, Klauda (2009) concluded that parents' beliefs about reading are positively related with adolescents' reading motivation and behavior. Furthermore, positive effects on students' reading motivation and behavior were quite strong when parents had positive beliefs about reading as a source of pleasure and entertainment but not if the role of reading was seen in a utilitarian manner or from a skill-developing perspective (Baker & Scher, 2002; Klauda, 2009). However, analyses of the German data from the PISA 2009 study showed that both components of parents' attitudes assessed in PISA (i.e., reading enjoyment and reading utility) positively predicted students' reading enjoyment, although the effect was more pronounced for parents' reading enjoyment than for their reading utility. The amount of time parents spent reading was not related to students' reading enjoyment (Hertel et al., 2010).

Taken together, research has provided evidence that first students' attitudes toward reading are affected by students' current reading level, and second that students' attitudes toward reading play a role in their initiation and maintenance of reading activities. However, less is known about the role of parents—in particular, the specific role of parents' own attitudes toward reading and reading behavior—for the formation of students' attitudes toward reading and reading activities. Prior research dedicated to the formation of reading attitudes and activities often focused on pre- and primary school children (cf. Baker et al., 1997, for a review) or did not consider longitudinal data (Cardoso et al., 2010; Chandler, 1999; Hertel et al., 2010; Mullan, 2010). Furthermore, most studies on intergenerational continuity have been limited to considering only the affective components of reading attitudes and have neglected any consideration of more cognitive or evaluative components. And finally, the reading of newspapers and magazines was rarely taken into account.

1.3. Aims of the present study

Focusing on such research gaps, the following research questions were addressed in the present study. First, we asked whether parent-to-child continuity in attitudes toward reading and reading behavior can be demonstrated in secondary school students. Due to previous research findings, positive correlations between parents' and students' attitudes toward reading as well as parents' and students' reading behavior were expected. Second, we asked whether beyond mere association, parents' attitudes toward reading as well as parents' reading behavior affect change in students' attitudes toward reading and students' reading behavior between Grade 7 and Grade 9. Although in comparison to younger children the role of parents in forming adolescents' reading habits may be less important, we still expected to find effects of parent-to-child transmission in attitudes toward reading and reading behavior. Consequently, parents' reading attitudes and behavior were expected to predict change in students' reading attitudes and behavior. And third, we asked whether gender moderates effects in mother-to-child transmission of attitudes toward reading and reading behavior. In accordance with findings by Mullan (2010), effects of intergenerational

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/4940111>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/4940111>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)