

Mathematics Homework and Intergenerational Reproduction of Confidence

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Teachers assign homework for many purposes including the reinforcement of skills taught in school, the completion of unfinished work, and to encourage children to read outside of school time. However, the complexity of what happens when schoolwork is “sent-home” cannot be overlooked. Clarke (2012) draws on Bourdieu (1993) to highlight the way in which intergenerational reproduction of educational inequities is manifested in approaches such as sending home schoolwork that a child could not do in school. In our current research, we focus on mathematics homework and the role of the mother or female caregiver. Mathematics anxiety, low confidence, and low self-efficacy are still being reported as more common among girls than boys (O’Keeffe et al., 2018). Girls continue to be less likely than their male counterparts to choose from the STEM school subjects and careers (Archer et al., 2013). The gender gap in terms of confidence in mathematical ability remains. Ganley and Lubienski (2016) note that the gender gap, though small, is persistent and warrants further exploration as the gap cannot be explained, the gap increases over time (whereas the literacy gender gap narrows over time), the initial small gap leads to *stark disparities* in mathematics related career pathways, and hence, adds to the issue of the gender pay gap.

Compounding this is the intergenerational reproduction of gender-based low confidence and self-efficacy. For example, O’Bryan et al. (2004) highlight mothers are more likely to communicate mathematics gender stereotypes and as a result, influence their children’s self-efficacy. In this presentation, we will explore the way in which intergenerational reproduction of low mathematical confidence is supported by the practice of sending school mathematics work home.

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