

Teacher Expectancies and Teacher Classroom Behavior

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PUPILS' performance in the classroom seems to be influenced in large measure by what the teacher expects of them. Research convincingly demonstrates that teachers' expectations sometimes act as self-fulfilling prophecies. A few studies have revealed that teachers' expectations influence pupil achievement, and a number have revealed that expectations affect teacher-pupil interaction.

Investigators who have explored the diversity of teacher-pupil contacts within the same classroom consistently report great differences. Pupils differing in social status, achievement level, or sex regularly differ in the type of interactions they have with their teachers (for example, Davis and Dollard, 1940; Hoehn, 1954; Lahaderne, 1967). The cumulative weight of this evidence suggests that teachers in fact differ greatly in their treatment of and interaction with pupils.

Charters (1963), describing the work of Davis and Dollard (1940), suggested that lower class pupils gather most of the teachers' corrections, while higher class pupils reap rewards. Becker (1952), who interviewed 60 teachers in the Chicago public school system, noted that these teachers voluntarily made evaluations of their pupils and that evaluations were based primarily on pupils' social status.

Inequalities in the ratio of teacher-pupil interactive contact cannot be explained fully by the social class of the pupil. De Groat and Thompson (1949), for example, reported that high achievers more frequently received teacher praise, while low achievers received a disproportionate share of teacher disapproval. Similarly, Hoehn (1954) reported that the low-achieving pupil received a greater proportion of conflictive and dominative teacher contacts, while the high-achieving pupil received more promotive and supportive contacts. Lahaderne (1967) suggested that the kind of pupil-teacher interaction, as well as the absolute and relative frequency of interaction, differed with the achievement level of the pupil.

Frequent suggestions have been made (for example, Ayers, 1909; St. John, 1932; Davidson and Lang, 1960) that elementary school is more meaningful for girls than for boys. Males seem to exhibit a classroom behavior pattern that is alien to the behavior demanded by female first-grade teachers. Teachers then are forced to evoke classroom strategies to transform the male pupil so that he will accept the passive demands of school life. Teachers have been regularly reported to manifest more disapproval contacts with boys than they do with girls (Meyer and Thompson, 1956; Lippitt and Gold, 1959).

These conclusions, however, have not gone unchallenged. Davis and Slobodian (1967), in their pioneering research, tested the hypothesis that teachers' interactive behavior reduces the reading performance of males by conducting an observational study in 10 first grade classrooms. They found that teachers did not discriminate against male readers during reading instruction; that is, teachers did not behave differentially in favor of girls. However, they also reported that pupils perceived both differential teacher treatment (for example, that boys received more negative comment from teachers) and differential achievement (for example, boys read more poorly than did girls).

Later, Brophy and Good (1969) found that although boys and girls were shown to receive equal treatment during reading instruction, boys did receive more teacher criticism when the teacher-pupil interactions from all areas of classroom life were analyzed. They attributed this finding to sex differences in classroom behavior and not to discriminatory teacher behavior.

In his study investigating differential behavior of male and female mathematics and social studies teachers with male and female pupils, Sikes (1971) found that although the results showed that male and female teachers behaved differently, they did not discriminate differentially between male and female pupils.

Jeter and Davis (1972) recently addressed the issue of differential verbal interaction of fourth grade social studies teachers with boys and girls and differential verbal interaction with high- and low-expectation pupils. Analysis of their observational data revealed that teachers did not interact differentially with boys and girls. Teachers in this study, however, appeared to have been influenced in their interactions by the level of academic expectation they held for the pupil rather than by the sex of the pupil.

The studies reviewed here indicate that teachers do accord pupils in their classes systematically different interactions. Teachers appear to differentiate their behavior toward pupils as a function of several important pupil characteristics, among them being

mainly social status and achievement, and teacher expectation for pupils' academic performance.

The function of teachers' expectations of pupil achievement as self-fulfilling prophecies has been an engaging research problem during the past several years. Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968) gained considerable attention with their attempt to test the self-fulfilling prophecy hypothesis in the classroom. These investigators reported that pupil achievement data obtained at the end of the school year were significantly affected by performance expectations induced in teachers at the beginning of the year, and that the nature of the effects observed was consistent with the idea that teachers' expectations functioned as self-fulfilling prophecies. The methodology, however, in this study has been severely criticized (for example, Thorndike, 1968; Snow, 1969; Elashoff and Snow, 1971).

Several studies (Conn and others, 1968; Claiborn, 1969; Evans and Rosenthal, 1969; Beez, 1970; Fleming and Anttonen, 1971; José, 1971) have used the experimental method introduced by Rosenthal and Jacobson in which teachers' expectations are manipulated through some kind of treatment, for example, inducement of teacher expectations. Results from these experimental studies are mixed. Some support the differential expectation (self-fulfilling) hypothesis of teacher expectations (for example, Beez, 1970; Meichenbaum and others, 1969), whereas others do not (for example, Conn and others, 1968; Claiborn, 1969; José, 1971).

Another line of inquiry has used teachers' naturalistically formed expectations. In these studies, teachers' expectations for their pupils have been gathered and interactions have been observed between the teacher and pupils for whom the teacher holds high- and low-expectation of pupil achievement. Research to date has revealed significant differences in teachers' treatment of (interaction with) high- and low-expectation pupils both at elementary and at secondary levels (Brophy and Good, 1970; Mendoza and others, 1971; Cornbleth and others, 1972; Jeter and Davis, 1972). Comparison of results across studies reveals that at the primary

level, teachers afforded highs and lows approximately equal response opportunities, but provided highs with more positive and encouraging feedback (Brophy and Good, 1970). At the secondary level, teachers afforded lows fewer response opportunities, while the quality of interaction did not vary by pupil achievement level (Mendoza and others, 1971; Cornbleth and others, 1972). Teachers at the intermediate level afforded highs more response opportunities and provided highs with more positive and encouraging feedback (Jeter and Davis, 1972).

Baker and Crist (1971) reviewed the studies pertinent to investigation of teacher expectancy and advanced the following generalizations:

1. Teacher expectancy does not affect pupil IQ, but teacher expectancy may affect pupil achievement. Meaningful effects are likely if a strong teacher expectancy exists naturally or if the induction is strong and a near simulation of natural conditions, but unlikely with weak induction procedures.

2. Teacher expectancy in all probability affects observable teacher and pupil behavior, if the expectancy condition occurs naturally or provides a moderate to strong manipulation of inducement. The teacher behavior most likely

to be affected involves eliciting and reinforcing of pupils' responses, the type of attention given to pupils, the amount of teaching actually attempted, subjective grading of pupil work, and judgments or ratings of pupil ability and probable success. The pupil behavior most likely to be affected involves the kind of response given to the teacher, the pupils' initiation of activity, his class-appropriate behavior, and his feeling about school, self, and teacher.

Research reviewed here has provided important information about ways in which teachers communicate their differential expectations for pupil performance. Differences in teacher treatment of high- and low-achievement pupils have been found by most investigators who have studied the situation.

The compelling question for future research, therefore, is not whether there are expectancy effects, but how they operate in school situations and how they may be changed. Such research activity seems to promise the opening of communication of the research results and implications to teachers in a language of teaching understandable and meaningful to them, as well as in a format that facilitates modification of their classroom behavior.

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