Effects of Parent–Child Relationships and Classroom Goal Structures on Motivation, Help-Seeking Avoidance, and Cheating

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ABSTRACT. The author examined predictive relations among South Korean high school students’ (N = 753) perceptions of their social–psychological environments, personal motivational beliefs, and academic behavior in math. Students’ perceptions of their both classroom mastery and performance goal structures predicted their personal mastery goals. Perceptions of parent–child relationships and a classroom performance-goal structure predicted performance-approach and performance-avoidance goals. Students’ personal motivational beliefs functioned as mediators between their perceptions of social–psychological contexts and their academic behavior. Perceptions of parental support, conflict with parents, and a classroom performance-goal structure were common direct and indirect predictors of help-seeking avoidance and cheating via personal performance-approach and performance-avoidance goals, respectively. Self-efficacy mediated all relations between contextual perceptions and academic behavior.

Keywords: adolescence, cheating, goal theory, motivation, self-efficacy, social context, structural equation modeling

SOME STUDENTS DO WELL in school; others do not. Some students who perform well academically do so for the wrong reasons, whereas others who do not perform as well nonetheless enjoy school and demonstrate positive attitudes toward learning. Researchers often turn to individual learners’ personal motivation to explain differences between the students who demonstrate adaptive behavioral
and emotional patterns and those who exhibit maladaptive patterns. However, recent evidence suggests that personal motivation of learners, especially that of young children and adolescents, is heavily affected by their perceptions of the social and psychological environments that surround them (Eccles, Midgley, et al., 1993; Eccles, Wigfield, et al., 1993).

Perceived expectations, pressures, and support from parents, teachers, and peers can cause students to feel confident or helpless, focus more strongly on a certain type of goal over others, and find assigned learning tasks more important and interesting or useless and irrelevant in achievement settings. My first purpose of the present research was, therefore, to ascertain the roles played by students’ perceptions of their social–psychological environments in their motivation and learning. I assessed perceived parental support, achievement pressure, and classroom learning environment in a group of Korean high school students for this purpose, along with their personal motivation, help-seeking avoidance, and cheating.

My second purpose was to explore the potentially multidimensional nature of Korean adolescents’ perceptions regarding their parents and their relationships with their parents. This is perhaps a unique contribution of this research. Whereas most extant research has assessed and treated parent–child relationships as unitary constructs, such conceptualization may prove too simplistic to adequately represent Korean students’ view of their parents. Parent–child relationships in Korean contexts may include multiple aspects, and each likely plays a slightly different role in student motivation (Park, Kim, & Chung, 2004). Individuals in East Asian cultures, including the current sample of Korean adolescents, are generally known to hold what is called interdependent self-construal (Heine, 2001; Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Because of cultural norms and expectations, significant adults such as parents and teachers are assumed to play a more salient role in the psychology of these students than students in Western cultures. In the present study, I hypothesized these influences would surface as a more complex pattern of relationships with student motivation.

A related question involves the relative impact of parents and teachers on student motivation. Research generally documents an increasing impact of teachers on students as they grow older (Spinath & Spinath, 2005). In comparison, for Korean high school students—who are acutely aware of their parents’ fervent interest in their education and academic achievements (K. S. Kim et al., 1994; Y. H. Kim, 1992) and desire to keep their parents from being disappointed (Heine, 2001)—I hypothesized that perceived parental pressures and aspirations might play a more consequential role for their motivation and behavior in school than would teachers’ expectations and demands. My third purpose of this investigation was to examine the tenability of this hypothesis.

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Overview of Student Motivation and School Learning

Self-efficacy, achievement goals, and task value are personal motivation constructs that are effective for distinguishing students with different motivational profiles (Bong, 2004). Students with a strong sense of self-efficacy hold firm convictions about their capabilities to successfully learn and perform given academic tasks at desired levels (Schunk, 1991). Highly self-efficacious students are hardworking, are unafraid of undertaking challenging problems and assignments, express high intrinsic motivation, do not easily give up at temporary impediments and letdowns, and, as a result, enjoy the benefit of strong scholastic performance (e.g., Bandura & Schunk, 1981; Bong, 2002; Pajares & Miller, 1994; Zimmerman & Kitsantas, 2005). Academic self-efficacy of students has been the most consistent and even a better predictor of their subsequent academic attainment than their own previous achievement levels.

Motivationally sound or debilitating behavioral tendencies can also arise from different achievement goals students pursue in specific situations. Achievement goals as a whole refer to the primary reasons and underlying purposes learners try to accomplish when they engage in achievement-related endeavors (Ames, 1992; Dweck & Leggett, 1988; A. J. Elliot & Harackiewicz, 1996; Pintrich, 2000). Among different theoretical accounts regarding the nature and number of functionally distinct goals, the one proposing mastery, performance-approach, and performance-avoidance goals has received the strongest empirical support.

The ultimate purpose of students who pursue a mastery goal is to improve their competence. These students believe that ability is something they can develop by acquiring new knowledge and skills, and they consider temporary failures a natural part of new learning. They thus need not shun novel or difficult tasks, even if they may struggle or fail. In comparison, students who adopt either a performance-approach or performance-avoidance goal believe that ability is more or less fixed. As a result, these students regard occasional setbacks and failures as evidence that they lack ability and hence as something to be avoided. Whereas students pursuing either type of performance goals experience strong fear of failure (Conroy & Elliot, 2004; A. J. Elliot & Church, 1997; A. J. Elliot & McGregor, 2001), those with strong performance-approach goals tend to express confidence in their capacity and strive to have their superior ability validated by others (Grant & Dweck, 2003). In contrast, the most important concern for students with strong performance-avoidance goals is to conceal their relative incompetence from others. They frequently use self-handicapping strategies, demonstrate low persistence and high procrastination, and are unwilling to seek help when it is needed in fear of others learning of their inabilities (Urdan, 2004; Wolters, 2004).

In addition to self-efficacy beliefs and achievement goals, the intrinsic and extrinsic value learners perceive in given academic pursuits also determine the
quality of their efforts and accomplishments. Students engage in and perform well on activities and academic subjects that they find interesting, successful mastery of which they deem important and useful (Bong, 2001b; Meece, Wigfield, & Eccles, 1990). Although competence perceptions are more predictive of students’ level of task performance, task-value perceptions are more predictive of their task engagement and selection decisions (Wigfield & Eccles, 1992).

Perceptions of Social–Psychological Environments and Student Motivation

Perceptions of classroom goal structures. Students’ personal motivation beliefs, such as self-efficacy and achievement goals, are in part products of the broader social and psychological atmosphere in which they function (Eccles, Midgley, et al., 1993; Eccles, Wigfield, et al., 1993). Motivation researchers have repeatedly demonstrated the apparent ease with which learners displayed a specific motivational orientation after being exposed to a relatively short-term experimental procedure. For example, Schunk (1982, 1983, 1984), Schunk and Hanson (1985), and Schunk, Hanson, and Cox (1987) successfully manipulated the strengths of students’ self-efficacy beliefs by using different types or combinations of modeling and verbal feedback. A. J. Elliot and Harackiewicz (1994, 1996), E. S. Elliott and Dweck (1988), and Mueller and Dweck (1998) also routinely led participants of various ages to a particular achievement goal through simple experimental treatments, such as false performance feedback or verbal instructions on the aims of the study. The high success rates of various experimental manipulations are indirect yet strong evidence that motivational beliefs of learners largely reflect their immediate surroundings. It is not surprising that investigators turned their attention to students’ learning environments after the importance of personal motivation in their learning and performance was clearly established.

Research findings on the impact of school, classroom, and family environments show that more critical for the motivation of learners is not their actual environment but rather how they subjectively perceive and interpret the messages conveyed in those environments. Therefore, in studies of learning environment conducted within the achievement goal tradition, students’ perceptions of the goal structures in their classrooms and schools emerge as a strong predictor of the achievement goals they pursue in those contexts (Bong, 2005; Roeser, Midgley, & Urdan, 1996). When students believe that their teachers deem mastery of the learning tasks and deep understanding of the material more important than test scores per se, they tend to embrace similar attitudes toward learning and espouse a personal mastery goal. When students feel their classroom and school cultures promote competition and reward better performers, then they are likely to internalize these values and personally adopt either a performance-approach or a performance-avoidance goal.

Students’ perceptions of the learning environment also directly affect their motivation and socioemotional adjustments (Roeser & Eccles, 1998; Roeser,
Eccles, & Sameroff, 2000). Perceived mastery goal structures in the environment typically predict positive outcomes, such as greater effort and persistence, less procrastination, more frequent use of cognitive and metacognitive strategies (Wolters, 2004), decreased help-seeking avoidance and self-handicapping (Ryan, Gheen, & Midgley, 1998; Turner et al., 2002), stronger self-efficacy, and better academic grades (Roeser et al., 1996; Wolters). Perceived performance goal structures in the environment often yield detrimental motivational tendencies, such as less persistence and increased procrastination (Wolters), greater use of self-handicapping strategies (Urdan, 2004), and cheating behavior (Anderman & Midgley, 2004; Murdock, Hale, & Weber, 2001). Ryan et al. (1998) also reported that students in classrooms in which the teachers emphasized relative ability and competition demonstrated a stronger inclination to avoid help seeking than did those in mastery-oriented classrooms.

**Parental support and achievement pressure.** Perceptions of parental support and expectations generally function as a positive motivator for learners (Ethington, 1991). Parents’ confidence in their children’s academic abilities, child-rearing practices providing autonomy and warmth, reinforcement of specific achievement behaviors, and involvement in their children’s learning as well as school- and classroom-related activities help children form positive self-perceptions and academic motivation (Eccles, Wigfield, & Schiefele, 1998; Gonzalez-DeHass, Willems, & Holbein, 2005; Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994). Still, more research is needed within the achievement-goal framework on the influence of teachers, parents, and peers (Blumenfeld, 1992).

Evidence exists that children of mothers who stress ability and relative standing more likely lean toward pursuing performance-oriented achievement goals. Bong (2003b) reported students’ perceptions of their mothers as emphasizing obtaining higher test scores and doing better than their peers in school predicted a stronger performance-approach goal in Korean elementary and middle school samples. In a similar vein, Ablard and Parker (1997) found that academically gifted children are significantly more likely to display an unhealthy motivational propensity, such as dysfunctional perfectionism, when their parents declared performance-oriented goals. Another finding that is of direct relevance to the present investigation is Ablard and Parker’s report that an overwhelming majority (69%) of the Asian parents participating in their study listed performance-oriented academic goals for their children, compared with only 25% of the European-American parents who stated such goals.

Because of the effects of parent-listed performance goals on the children’s dysfunctional motivation (Ablard & Parker, 1997), it is suspected that the high endorsement rating of such goals by Asian parents might represent a sign of negative parental influence on student motivation. Coupled with the strong value Asian parents attach to their children’s education (Fuligni, 1997; Mau, 1997),
the result suggests an alarming possibility that they might commonly exercise excessive achievement pressure on their children.

**Parent–child relationships in the context of Korean education.** Researchers have documented that achievement pressure from parents is a source of major stress for Korean students (K. S. Kim et al., 1994; Y. H. Kim, 1992) and interferes with their coping (Chung, 1991). For historical reasons, Korean parents hold a particularly firm belief in the value of education for their children and, by extension, their children’s school achievement (Chung). The end of Japanese annexation and the Korean War demanded a competent workforce to quickly rebuild the country, and those equipped with better credentials enjoyed immediate and long-lasting benefit of their educational background. As a result, Korean parents perceive a strong link between educational qualifications, public recognition, and social accomplishment, and, in turn, pressure their children for higher attainment at school. Because a college diploma is the most conspicuous educational credential, Korean parents press their children to attend a prestigious university (Bong, 2003a).

In one survey, 98% of mothers and 77% of fathers of high school seniors reported that they wanted their children to enter a university. Ninety-eight percent of the students also reported such a goal (K. S. Kim et al., 1994). In another study, 90% of the 1,390 parent participants indicated they wanted their children to receive tertiary education (Y. H. Kim, 1992). As previously mentioned, several scholars (e.g., Heine, 2001; Markus & Kitayama, 1991) have claimed that individuals in East Asian cultures operate with an interdependent self, with which significant others’ thoughts, feelings, and actions largely dictate how one should behave in a given social milieu. Because it is important to maintain harmony between the self and others, those holding interdependent self-concepts exhibit a keen and persistent interest in relevant others’ reactions and demonstrate a strong desire to please them.

In achievement settings, these concerns and desires often transform into feelings of obligation to satisfy and not disappoint one’s parents and teachers. Definitions of success and failure for Asian students therefore are expected to depend heavily on the approval and disapproval of parents and teachers (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Oishi & Diener, 2001). In particular, in the Korean context, doing well in school is almost synonymous with maintaining good parent–child relationships. U. Kim, Park, and Koo (2004) provided a plausible explanation of why this is so. They suggested that the concept of emotion holds an important place in Korean psychology, especially in parent–child relationships. Korean parents, especially mothers, are viewed and treated as figures that show enormous generosity toward their children and make huge sacrifices for their children’s education. The children are motivated to preserve strong emotional bonds with their mothers, thereby assimilating their mothers’ values toward education into
their own and, in turn, trying to compensate for parental sacrifices with high academic achievement.

In the present research, I hypothesized these psychological intricacies to play out in several forms. First, the Korean high school students would express strong agreement with the statements regarding the parent–child relationships assessed, such as parental achievement pressure, feeling grateful toward and close with their parents, and respecting their parents. Second, these emotions and a sense of obligation toward parents would predict stronger performance-approach and performance-avoidance goals of the students because these goals are rooted in fear of failure and represent the desire to impress or not disappoint others (Conroy & Elliot, 2004; Elliot & Church, 1997; Elliot & McGregor, 2001; Grant & Dweck, 2003). One could also expect that as students perceive greater achievement pressures from parents and feel stronger obligation to return the emotional support they received from parents, they might demonstrate stronger tendencies to cheat or avoid seeking help so as not to disappoint parents.

U. Kim et al. (2004) further suggested that teacher–student relationships in Korea are different from those in Western cultures in that they are often considered an extension of parent–child relationships. In general, research findings attest to the greater impact of teachers than of parents on school-aged children’s self-perceptions and motivation. Spinath and Spinath (2005), for example, found substantial correspondence between both parents’ and teachers’ evaluations of children’s competence and the children’s own self-perceived capabilities. However, teachers’ evaluations contributed an increasingly larger amount of unique variance to the children’s ability self-perceptions than did parents’ evaluations as the cohort’s grade level increased from second to fourth grade.

The opposite is true among most Korean adolescents. They greatly care about how their parents receive them and respond to their school achievement (U. Kim & Park, 1999; Park et al., 2004). They strive to avoid disappointing or receiving negative judgments from their parents (Heine, 2001). For many of them, teachers are deemed as a parental envoy or substitute parents in school settings (U. Kim et al., 2004) who frequently emphasize that students should try to compensate for their parents’ sacrifices and meet their parents’ expectations. These factors likely render them more vulnerable to the pressures and reactions from their parents than those from their teachers.

In sum, in the present study, I investigated the relationships between students’ perceptions of the social–psychological environments created by their parents and teachers, their academic motivation, and their academic behavior, such as use of cognitive and self-regulatory strategies, help-seeking avoidance, and cheating in the context of math class. I conceptualized this research primarily within the achievement-goal framework, with added attention to the role of self-efficacy and task-value beliefs as part of essential personal motivation.
Method

Participants and Procedures

A total of 905 freshmen and sophomores (roughly equivalent to U.S. grades 10 and 11) at two high schools in Seoul, South Korea, participated in the survey. Survey administration took place in the fall 2005 semester during regular classroom hours in various subjects. Individuals administering the survey assured students of the confidentiality of their responses. I analyzed only portions of the survey that were relevant to the research questions in this study.

First, I visually inspected the database to locate cases with missing responses on more than 10 consecutive items. I considered these cases insincere responses and removed them from the database. The final sample size used in the analyses was \( N = 753 \) (315 girls, 438 boys). Missing rates per variable ranged from 0.0 to 3.3\% (i.e., 25 cases). I observed no systematic pattern among the missing responses. Because I deemed the missing rates negligible enough so as not to threaten validity of the conclusions and the latent variable technique used required a complete database, I replaced all missing responses with series means. Reliability estimates of the scales were mostly acceptable, ranging between \( \alpha = .60 \) and \( .92 \) (\( Mdn \alpha = .76 \)). The only exception was the three-item task value scale with \( \alpha = .57 \). Despite task value being one of the primary motivation variables in this research, I excluded it from analyses because of the lack of internal consistency among the responses.

Measures

Students rated the following items using a 6-point response scale ranging from 1 (\textit{not at all true}) to 6 (\textit{very true}). All items on motivation, strategy use, help-seeking avoidance, cheating behavior, and perceptions of classroom goal structures referred to students’ math class or math as a subject area. The survey was administered in Korean.

Academic self-efficacy. I used six items from the self-efficacy subscale of the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ; Pintrich & De Groot, 1990). I did not use three items on the original scale that ask respondents to engage in social comparison for theoretical reasons (e.g., Bong & Clark, 1999; Bong & Skaalvik, 2003). Students reported the strength of their subjective convictions that they could successfully perform various tasks in math (e.g., “I am sure that I can do an excellent job on the problems and tasks assigned for math class”).

Achievement goals. I used the revised achievement-goal subscales of the Patterns of Adaptive Learning Scales (PALS; Midgley et al., 2000). There were five
mastery goal items (e.g., “It’s important to me that I learn a lot of new concepts in math this year”; “One of my goals in math class is to learn as much as I can”), five performance-approach goal items (e.g., “It’s important to me that others think that I’m good at my math work”; “One of my goals in math is to show others that I’m good at my work”), and four performance-avoidance goal items (e.g., “It’s important to me that I don’t look stupid in math class”; “One of my goals in math class is to keep others from thinking that I’m not smart”).

Strategy use. I adopted the cognitive strategy use (e.g., “When I do my math homework, I try to remember what the teacher said in class so I can answer the questions correctly”) and self-regulation (e.g., “When I study math, I ask myself questions to make sure I know the material I have been studying”) subscales of the MSLQ in the present study. There were six items on each of these scales.

Help-seeking avoidance and cheating behavior. The five help-seeking avoidance items came from Ryan and Pintrich (1997). These items assessed students’ tendencies to avoid seeking help in math class even when it was needed (e.g., “When I don’t understand my math work, I often guess instead of asking someone for help”). I assessed students’ cheating behavior in math with the three items in the PALS (e.g., “I sometimes copy answers from other students during math tests”).

Perceptions of classroom goal structures. I used the classroom mastery and classroom performance goal structure subscales of the PALS. There were five items on a perceived classroom mastery goal structure (e.g., “In our math class, really understanding the material is the main goal”) and three on a perceived classroom performance goal structure (e.g., “In our math class, getting good grades in the main goal”).

Parental academic pressure and emotional support. I assessed achievement pressure and emotional support from parents with the scales U. Kim and Park (1999) developed and validated. These researchers investigated familial, school, peer, and societal influences on psychological and behavioral functioning of Korean adolescents, with a particular focus on their engagement in delinquent behaviors. The scales demonstrated good reliability in their original research, with $\alpha = .81$ for parental academic pressure (e.g., “My parents want me to enter one of the prestigious universities”) and $\alpha = .82$ and .93 for emotional support from the father and the mother (e.g., “My parents comfort me when I’m having a difficult time”), respectively. Although the original items refer to mother and father separately, I revised them to refer to “parents” in the present study.

Perceptions of parent–child relationships. I adapted items on students’ perceptions of parent–child relationships from the scales used by Park et al. (2004). The
original scale consisted of five subscales, each of which contained seven items. The subscales ask respondents about how grateful they are to their parents for the support their parents give and the sacrifices they make for the family (e.g., “I thank my parents for supporting my family without expressing how difficult it is for them”), how guilty they feel for not living up to their parents’ expectations (e.g., “I feel guilty for not living up to their expectations”), how close they feel to their parents (e.g., “I can tell my mom and dad what I think without hiding my honest opinions”), how much conflict they experience with their parents (e.g., “My parents force me to do things and ignore what I really want to do”), and how much they respect their parents (e.g., “I respect my parents”). For the present research, I selected three items judged to be most representative of the construct from each of the five subscales. Again, I merged identical items separately referring to mother or father into a single item referring to “parents” in the present study.

**Data Analysis**

Before examining the predictive utility of social and contextual variables, I examined potential multidimensionality of Korean adolescents’ perceptions of parental academic pressure, emotional support, and parent–child relationships. Because there was no firm theoretical ground to anticipate any fixed number of underlying constructs, I performed exploratory factor analyses (EFAs) with students’ responses on the parental academic pressure and parental emotional support scales as well as all the subscales of the parent–child relationships.

After the dimensionality issue of the parent-related variables was resolved via EFAs, I performed confirmatory factor analyses (CFAs) to confirm measurement models for the hypothesized latent variables and examine bivariate relationships among the latent variables. When the measurement models demonstrated acceptable fit, I conducted structural equation modeling (SEM). The SEM models tested comparative utility of the contextual perception variables for predicting Korean high school students’ motivation, along with the mediating role of students’ personal motivation between perceived social and psychological environments and their self-regulation in math.

**Results**

*Descriptive Statistics and Correlations Among Observed Variables*

Table 1 shows descriptive statistics and reliability of the scales. All scales related to students’ perceptions of their parents and their parent–child relationships were associated with mean scores above 4.00 on a 1–6 response scale, with the conflict with parents scale being the only exception (\(M = 3.10\)). This indicates that the Korean high school students participating in this research generally
agreed with the content of the items on these parent-related scales. The scales of respect for parents \((M = 4.76)\), feelings of guilt toward parents \((M = 4.59)\), and thankfulness toward parents \((M = 4.53)\) demonstrated particularly high average scores, along with the perceptions of parental academic pressure scale \((M = 4.59)\). The respondents also expressed strong agreement with the items on the perceptions of classroom mastery goal structure scale \((M = 4.20)\).

I found intriguing patterns in the zero-order correlation coefficients among these observed variables as well, as shown in Table 2. I obtained a strong positive correlation coefficient \((r = .72)\) between performance-approach and a performance-avoidance goals, as has typically been reported in many existing studies. Unlike most previous investigations, however, performance-avoidance goals also exhibited significant positive correlation with mastery goals \((r = .38)\) and academic self-efficacy \((r = .31)\). It is also noteworthy that the two performance goals—a performance-approach and a performance-avoidance goal—displayed remarkably analogous patterns of relationships with other variables with few exceptions.

The bivariate correlation coefficients among the parent-related variables revealed that some of these variables were too highly correlated to be considered distinct psychological constructs. For example, the feelings of closeness toward

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mastery goal</td>
<td>3.99</td>
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<td>Performance-approach goal</td>
<td>2.86</td>
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<td>Performance-avoidance goal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Perceptions of classroom mastery goal structure</td>
<td>4.20</td>
<td>0.76</td>
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<td>Perceptions of classroom performance goal structure</td>
<td>3.81</td>
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<td>Cognitive strategy use</td>
<td>3.72</td>
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<td>Self-regulatory strategy use</td>
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<td>Help-seeking avoidance</td>
<td>3.16</td>
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<td>Cheating behavior</td>
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<td>Perceptions of parental academic pressure</td>
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<td>Perceptions of parental emotional support</td>
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<td>Thankfulness toward parents</td>
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<td>Feelings of guilt toward parents</td>
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<td>Feelings of closeness toward parents</td>
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<td>Conflict with parents</td>
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<td>Respect for parents</td>
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*Note. \(N = 753\).*
TABLE 2. Zero-Order Correlation Coefficients Among Observed Variables

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<td>2. Performance-approach goal</td>
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<td>4. Academic self-efficacy</td>
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<td>5. Perceptions of classroom mastery goal structure</td>
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<td>7. Cognitive strategy use</td>
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*Note.* Coefficients greater than ±.08 are statistically significant at $p < .05$. 

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**The Journal of Experimental Education**
parents and perceptions of parental emotional support scales demonstrated a correlation coefficient of .80. The thankfulness toward parents and respect for parents scales also displayed a correlation coefficient of .71.

Last, both help-seeking avoidance and cheating behavior scores showed significant negative correlations with students’ mastery goals, academic self-efficacy, perceptions of a classroom mastery goal structure, and cognitive and self-regulatory strategy use. In contrast, the same two variables correlated significantly and positively with students’ performance-approach and performance-avoidance goals. Perceptions of a classroom performance-goal structure did not correlate significantly with either help-seeking avoidance or cheating behavior.

**Exploratory Factor Analyses of Parent-Related Variables**

Before testing validity of the hypothesized measurement models and exploring structural relations among the psychological variables of interest, I performed an EFA with principal axis factoring with all of the parent-related scales. Factors with eigenvalues greater than 1.00 were extracted and underwent varimax rotations. Students’ responses on the perceptions of parental emotional support and feelings of closeness toward parents scales loaded on the same factor. This factor was named perceptions of parental support. Perceptions of parental academic pressure, feelings of obligations toward parents, and conflict with parents remained independent factors. I deemed this four-factor solution the most valid representation of the current sample of Korean high school students’ perceptions toward their parents and their parent–child relationships.

**Confirmatory Factor Analyses**

Next, I tested measurement models specified partly on the basis of the EFA results in a series of CFAs. I treated students’ responses on individual survey items as indicators of latent psychological variables. I performed all CFAs with the EQS program (Bentler, 1995). I consulted several goodness-of-fit indexes for evaluating the model fit. These included the chi-square statistics, Bentler-Bonnett nonnormed fit index (NNFI), comparative fit index (CFI), average absolute standardized residuals (res.), and statistical significance of factor loadings and factor variances. Values of NNFI and CFI greater than .90 and res. less than .10 are typically taken as evidence of satisfactory model fit (Kline, 1998).

An initial CFA model with all hypothesized latent variables and no correlated error failed to reproduce the pattern of covariance among the observed variables to an acceptable degree, \( \chi^2(2393, N = 753) = 6221.24, p < .001 \) (NNFI = .85, CFI = .86, res. = .05). The results showed that three items had loadings not substantial enough (\( \lambda < .30 \)), suggesting they were not effective indicators of the hypothesized latent variables. I removed these items from further analyses. Errors and
uniquenesses of individual items were allowed to covary in subsequent CFAs to improve the model fit. When correlated error paths were incorporated, correlation between several factors also increased. In particular, the cognitive strategy use factor demonstrated a correlation coefficient near unity with self-regulatory strategy use ($\phi = .93$). When the two factors were merged as a single strategy use factor and the model respecified, the strategy use factor again displayed a near-unity correlation coefficient with the mastery goal factor ($\phi = .95$). Therefore, the two strategy use variables were removed from the model altogether and the parameters reestimated. The final model was associated with acceptable fit indexes, $\chi^2(1681, N = 753) = 3878.58$, $p < .001$ (NNFI = .90, CFI = .91, res. = .04).

Table 3 shows correlation coefficients among the latent variables from the final CFA model. I observed a strong positive correlation between feelings of obligations toward parents and perceptions of parental support ($\phi = .79$). These two factors displayed moderate to strong negative correlation with conflict with parents ($\phi$s = –.31 and –.54, respectively) and moderate to weak positive correlation with perceptions of parental academic pressure ($\phi$s = .29 and .14, respectively). The conflict with parents factor showed strong positive correlation with perceptions of parental academic pressure ($\phi = .47$).

Contrary to most existing investigations reporting negative relationships between students’ perceptions of a mastery- and a performance-goal structure in the classroom, the two factors in this study demonstrated significant positive correlation ($\phi = .56$). Students’ personal mastery achievement goal also exhibited strong positive correlation with the two classroom perception variables ($\phi$s = .88 and .84, respectively), which was surprising. Although students’ performance-approach and performance-avoidance goals also demonstrated positive correlation with the two classroom perception variables, their relationships with a classroom performance goal structure ($\phi$s = .47 and .46, respectively) were much stronger than those with a classroom mastery goal structure ($\phi$s = .15 and .23, respectively). The two performance goals were positively correlated ($\phi = .85$), consistent with the extant literature.

The help-seeking avoidance and cheating behavior factors were positively correlated ($\phi = .43$) and displayed a highly analogous pattern of relationships with other variables. Both showed negative correlation with variables such as perceptions of parental support ($\phi$s = –.09 and –.11), perceptions of classroom mastery goal structure ($\phi$s = –.23 and –.18), mastery goal ($\phi$s = –.20 and –.15), and academic self-efficacy ($\phi$s = –.29 and –.29, respectively). In contrast, both were positively correlated with the conflict with parents ($\phi$s = .25 and .24) and performance-avoidance goal factors ($\phi$s = .21 and .10, respectively).

**Structural Equation Modeling**

Last, I tested the predictive and explanatory relations between students’ perceptions of their social and psychological environments and their motivation
### TABLE 3. Zero-Order Correlation Coefficients Among Latent Variables

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<th>Variable</th>
<th>1</th>
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*p < .05.
in school via SEM. I hypothesized that the six variables related to students’ perceptions of either their parents (i.e., feelings of obligations toward parents, perceptions of parental support, conflict with parents, and perceptions of parental academic pressure) or their classrooms (i.e., perceptions of classroom mastery and performance goal structures) would predict the four personal motivation variables (i.e., mastery goal, performance-approach goal, performance-avoidance goal, and academic self-efficacy), which would, in turn, explain students’ help-seeking avoidance and cheating behavior. This initial model thus relied on an implicit assumption that any impact from the contextual perceptions of students on their academic behavior would be fully mediated by their personal motivation (Patrick, Ryan, & Kaplan, 2007; Roeser et al., 1996). This model demonstrated acceptable fit to the empirical data, \( \chi^2 (1693, N = 753) = 3948.04, p < .001 \) (NNFI = .90, CFI = .90, res. = .05), yet with room for further improvement as suggested by modification indexes.

The multivariate La Grange multiplier tests indicated that adding several direct paths from the contextual variables to students’ help-seeking avoidance and cheating behavior would significantly improve the model fit. In the first revision, I added a direct prediction path from conflict with parents to cheating behavior. In subsequent revisions, I incorporated direct paths from conflict with parents and feelings of obligations toward parents to help-seeking avoidance. This final model with three additional parameters was associated with significantly improved chi-square statistics, \( \chi^2 (3, N = 753) = 34.02, p < .05 \), and slightly improved goodness-of-fit indexes compared with those of the initial model, \( \chi^2 (1690, N = 753) = 3914.02, p < .001 \) (NNFI = .90, CFI = .91, res. = .04). More important, it was considered a more theoretically valid representation of the observed covariance structure. Figure 1 shows path coefficients among the latent variables that were statistically significant at \( p < .05 \).

Students’ perceptions of both classroom mastery and classroom performance goal structures predicted their mastery achievement goals. This is not surprising because the two classroom goal structure variables were positively correlated (\( \phi = .56 \)). Yet it is interesting because although a mastery goal shared some of its unique variance with a classroom performance goal structure, neither a performance-approach nor a performance-avoidance goal did the same with a classroom mastery goal structure. Perceptions of a classroom mastery goal structure were a stronger predictor of a mastery goal (\( \gamma = .62 \)) than were those of a classroom performance goal structure (\( \gamma = .45 \)). Students’ performance-approach goals were negatively predicted by their feelings of obligation toward parents (\( \gamma = -.41 \)) and their perceptions of parental academic pressure (\( \gamma = -.14 \)). Significant positive predictors of a performance-approach goal, such as perceptions of parental support (\( \gamma = .57 \)), conflict with parents (\( \gamma = .43 \)), and perceptions of a classroom performance goal structure (\( \gamma = .45 \)) were also positive predictors of a performance-avoidance goal (\( \gamma s = .37, .34, \) and .44, respectively).
the six contextual perception variables positively predicted students’ academic self-efficacy beliefs. Nevertheless, perceptions of parental support ($\gamma = .68$) and a classroom mastery goal structure ($\gamma = .31$) were much stronger predictors of self-efficacy than was conflict with parents ($\gamma = .19$), perceptions of parental academic pressure ($\gamma = .13$), or perceptions of a classroom performance goal structure ($\gamma = .15$). Feelings of obligation toward parents was a significant negative predictor of students’ self-efficacy beliefs ($\gamma = -.47$).

Students’ personal motivation variables partially mediated the relations between their perceptions of socioemotional environments and their tendencies to avoid help-seeking and cheat in math. Whereas a mastery achievement goal ($\beta = -.18$) and academic self-efficacy ($\beta = -.39$) were negative predictors of help-seeking avoidance, a performance-approach goal was a positive predictor of help-seeking avoidance ($\beta = .24$). Cheating behavior was predicted positively by a performance-avoidance goal ($\beta = .25$) and negatively by academic self-efficacy ($\beta = -.29$). Among the contextual perception variables, conflict with parents was a direct predictor of both help-seeking avoidance ($\beta = .21$) and cheating behavior ($\beta = .19$). Feelings of obligation toward parents was also a direct predictor of students’ propensities to avoid seeking necessary help in math ($\beta = .16$).
Discussion

Perceptions of Parent–Child Relationships and Classroom Goal Structures in Student Motivation

As is true in any survey research, one cannot claim causality on the basis of correlational patterns among the variables. Such an inherent limitation notwithstanding, the present results nonetheless suggest some potential mechanisms regarding how students’ perceptions of their social and psychological environments transform into their motivation and academic behavior in school. In particular, findings from this study confirm the critical and multifaceted function of parents and teachers in guiding the learners to either adaptive or maladaptive motivational and behavioral paths.

In this research, students’ perceptions of their classroom goal structures were assessed in reference to their math classes, as was their personal motivation in reference to math as a subject area. In contrast, students’ perceptions toward their parents and relationships with parents were assessed in broad terms. In particular, I asked the Korean high school students participating in this survey to report pertinent feelings and cognitions in their everyday contexts without any reference to particular achievement situations or academic domains. Nevertheless, these general perceptions of support, demands, and pressures from the parents were able to explain the motivational tendencies of these students in a specific subject area. Feelings of obligation in the form of thankfulness, guilt, and respect toward parents, perceived emotional support from and feelings of closeness to parents, conflict with parents, and parental academic pressure were all significant predictors of some aspects of student motivation in math. On the whole, the results imply that the quality of relationships parents maintain with their children could exercise a pervasive force on their children’s functioning in many specific learning situations.

Sustaining good parent–child relationships for most Korean parents and students requires decent academic performance on the part of the children (U. Kim et al., 2004). That is, poor academic performance is one of the chief sources of conflict between Korean parents and children. The Korean high school students participating in the present survey reported less willingness to seek help and greater inclination to cheat in math as they experienced stronger conflict with their parents. Furthermore, the strengths with which they felt obligation toward their parents directly predicted the degree to which they avoided seeking help in math when it was needed.

Because the need to look for help in class could imply potential failure and be seen as evidence of not performing up to the parents’ and teachers’ academic standards, students try to avoid such a possibility, as they feel stronger obligations to redeem their parents’ sacrifice by doing well in school. As observed in the present study, this help-seeking-avoidance tendency was stronger among
those who were low in self-efficacy and performance oriented, as opposed to mastery oriented, because these students suffer from stronger fear of failure and are less willing to reveal their weaknesses to others.

Findings regarding students’ cheating behavior in math can be understood similarly. Still, there were some noticeable differences. Feelings of obligation toward parents and conflict with parents directly predicted the degree to which students avoided seeking help. The relations of students’ help-seeking avoidance with other contextual variables were mediated by their personal performance-approach goals. In comparison, feelings of obligation toward parents alone did not predict students’ willingness to cheat in math. Conflict with parents led students to greater cheating behavior directly and indirectly through their personal performance-avoidance goals. Parental support and a classroom performance goal structure also contributed to students’ willingness to cheat in math via performance-avoidance goals. Therefore, cheating appears to result from a set of more negative contextual perceptions and maladaptive motivational beliefs than does help-seeking avoidance.

It is intriguing that the few direct links from students’ perceptions of the contexts to their academic behavior all involved parent-related perceptions and not those related to their classroom culture. Perhaps more interesting, there exists seeming differentiation between the role of perceptions of parent–child relationships and classroom goal structures in the types of personal motivational beliefs these perceptions and structures created in students. Diverse parent-related perceptions of the Korean high school students foretold the strengths of their desire to either demonstrate their superiority or conceal their inferiority in the form of personal performance-approach and performance-avoidance goals. This makes sense in view of the definition of performance goals, which reflects, in part, individuals’ concern with how they are evaluated by others (Grant & Dweck, 2003).

None of these perceptions of the parent–child relationships, however, predicted the degree to which students regarded task mastery as their underlying achievement purpose. Students’ mastery goal was instead explained by their perceptions of classroom goal structures. Bong and Kim (2006) documented the same pattern of results with Korean high school girls. In that study, personal performance-approach goals of girls were predicted by their perceptions of parental expectations, and their personal performance-avoidance goals were predicted by their perceptions of both performance goal structures in their school and parental expectations. However, neither perceived school performance goal structures nor parental expectations demonstrated a significant link to the girls’ personal mastery goals, which were predicted only by their perceptions of mastery goal structures in their school.

Turner et al. (2002) discovered substantial differences between low-avoidance and high-mastery and high-avoidance and low-mastery classrooms in the nature and types of the teachers’ instructional and motivational discourses. Judging
from their findings, the extent to which students personally adopt and maintain a mastery achievement goal throughout the course may depend more heavily on the amount of cognitive and emotional support teachers provide in those specific classrooms than on what parents communicate to their children in everyday contexts because these are one step removed from the immediate learning situation. This conjecture is speculative and needs to be tested in future research.

**Achievement Goals and Self-Efficacy in Help-Seeking Avoidance and Cheating Behavior**

In addition to establishing students’ perceptions of their parents as one of the key predictors of their academic motivation, the present results highlight the significance of students’ motivational beliefs in their academic functioning. Whereas the perceptions of parent–child relationships and classroom goal structures significantly predicted students’ achievement goals and self-efficacy in math, only a few of these variables directly predicted students’ help-seeking avoidance and cheating behavior. Instead, a majority of the contextual perception variables displayed indirect links to students’ academic behavior via their personal motivation, consistent with many previous reports (e.g., Bong, 2005; Church, Elliot, & Gable, 2001; Patrick et al., 2007; Roeser et al., 1996).

Holding a high mastery achievement goal and feeling confident about one’s capability to perform successfully in math reduced the tendency to avoid seeking necessary help in math. As students felt more self-efficacious, they also engaged in less cheating behavior. On the contrary, pursuing either a performance-approach or a performance-avoidance goal proved maladaptive when it came to help-seeking avoidance and cheating. As students reported a stronger performance-approach goal, they also expressed a stronger desire to evade others’ help, presumably in fear of exposing their relative weaknesses. Students were also more prone to cheat when their ultimate goal in math was to avoid appearing less capable than others. Therefore, the present investigation demonstrated the function of students’ personal motivation as an effective mediator of contextual influences on their academic behavior. The results also validate the importance of domain-specific achievement goals and self-efficacy of students in determining their academic self-regulation or the lack thereof (Patrick et al., 2007).

Although some of the relationships between students’ contextual perceptions and personal motivation departed from a more conventional pattern (no doubt reflecting cultural differences), those relationships between students’ personal motivation and academic behavior appeared mostly consistent with predictions drawn from the existing literature (e.g., Anderman & Midgley, 2004; Murdock et al., 2001; Ryan & Pintrich, 1997; Urdan, 2004; Wolters, 2004). A stronger mastery goal and academic self-efficacy functioned as positive motivators such that they significantly reduced avoidance of seeking help, cheating behavior, or both.
A stronger performance-approach goal increased help-seeking avoidance and a stronger performance-avoidance goal increased cheating behavior.

The ongoing debate on the positive role of a performance-approach goal (e.g., Harackiewicz, Barron, Pintrich, Elliot, & Thrash, 2002; Midgley, Kaplan, & Middleton, 2001) typically revolves around positive relationships with objective performance indicators, such as course grades, test scores, and performance levels on various experimental tasks. Researchers arguing about the potential harm of a performance-approach goal often point to the possibility that students with a strong performance-approach goal switch to a performance-avoidance goal over time as learning becomes increasingly more challenging (Bong, 2005; Brophy, 2005). Neither were achievement measures included nor achievement goals assessed repeatedly in this study, which does not allow me to draw firm conclusions on the adaptive or maladaptive nature of a performance-approach goal. Nevertheless, if pursuing a performance-approach goal causes students to avoid seeking help essential for successful task mastery because of their concerns about appearing less competent than their peers, as demonstrated in the present research, that alone presents convincing rationale for why they should be led away from adopting such a goal.

**Findings Unique to Korean Students**

For this group of South Korean high school students, perceptions of what their parents expected of them wielded great influence on their motivation and self-regulation in school. Feelings of obligation toward parents and perceived conflict with parents expressed by these students not only predicted their personal motivation but also significantly and directly predicted their help-seeking avoidance and cheating behavior. These results contrast with those regarding students’ perceptions of the classroom-goal structures because the classroom goal structures had only indirect relationships with students’ behaviors via students’ personal motivation beliefs. Except for the perceived conflict with parents, all other parent-related perception variables were associated with mean ratings of 4.00 and above on a 1 (not at all true) to 6 (very true) response scale. This is additional evidence that the feelings and perceptions under consideration were pertinent to Korean adolescents’ achievement-related psychology.

Several findings appear to be exclusively related to Korean culture and Korean students’ psychology. The first is the set of factors that emerged from students’ responses on the parental academic pressure and emotional support and perceptions of parent–child relationships scales. Among the seven scales used in this research, the perceptions of parental academic pressure scale and the conflict with parents subscale each formed an independent factor. The perceptions of parental emotional support scale combined with the feelings of closeness toward parents subscale into a single factor. The last factor seems most distinctive to Korean culture, which
encompasses multiple and complex parent-related emotions such as thankfulness toward parents, feelings of guilt toward parents, and respect for parents.

Another interesting finding is the function of these multifaceted feelings and emotions toward parents in Korean students’ achievement motivation. Korean researchers asserted, on the basis of empirical evidence, that parental achievement pressure, emotional and social support from parents, and feelings of indebtedness and guilt toward parents are important and positive predictors of Korean adolescents’ motivation (U. Kim & Park, 2005; U. Kim, Park, & Park, 2000). However, the present results indicate that the picture may not be that simple. A strong sense of obligation toward parents, in this study, lowered students’ performance-approach goal and self-efficacy beliefs and raised their help-avoidance tendency in math. Perceptions of parental support and achievement pressure also act as a double-edged sword. Because the present sample of Korean high school students reported higher levels of parental support, they displayed stronger academic self-efficacy, but at the same time, they were more strongly oriented toward both performance-approach and performance-avoidance goals in learning situations.

Bong and Kim (2006) hypothesized that the effects of perceived social and psychological contexts might be moderated by the strength of learners’ personal performance-approach goals. In Bong and Kim’s study of Korean high school girls, the girls’ perceptions of performance-goal structures in their school negatively predicted their feelings of school belonging and task value but were not able to predict their positive school affect. However, when the sample was evenly divided into high- and low-performance-approach-goal groups, the relationships between perceptions of performance-goal structures in school to all three variables became considerably more negative for the girls in the high personal-performance-approach-goal group. In contrast, the predictive paths between the same variables were no longer significant or negative among the girls who reported relatively low personal performance-approach goals.

Moreover, personal performance-approach goals also appeared to moderate the effects of parental expectations in this group of Korean high school girls (Bong & Kim, 2006). Perceptions of parental expectations were a positive predictor of the girls’ academic self-efficacy, self-efficacy for self-regulated learning, and performance-avoidance goals. When the sample was again split in half by the median performance-approach-goal score, the seeming positive impact of parental expectations on beliefs of self-efficacy remained only among the girls with low performance-approach goals. For the girls with low performance-approach goals, perceptions of parental expectations did not intensify personal performance-avoidance goals either. For the girls expressing high performance-approach goals, on the contrary, perceptions of parental expectations did not demonstrate a significant relationship with any self-efficacy beliefs. Instead, as these girls perceived higher expectations from their parents, they displayed a stronger tendency to pursue a performance-avoidance goal in school.
In light of these results, it is important for investigators to make careful distinctions among what seem to be subtle differences in student perceptions and emotions. The same verbal comments and feedback from parents and teachers can be interpreted by different students as either an expression of achievement pressure or genuine concern and interest in how they are doing in school. It is imperative that these slight differences in psychological meanings and nuances are captured in future assessments of contextual perceptions before coherent implications can be generated.

Last, the definition of a performance-approach goal for Korean students deserves extra attention. In previous studies with Korean middle and high school students, a performance-approach goal typically demonstrated strong positive correlation with adaptive motivational beliefs, such as a mastery goal, beliefs of self-efficacy and task value, and course grades in diverse academic subject areas (Bong, 2001a, 2005). The performance-approach goal of the present sample of Korean high school students also displayed strong positive associations with their academic self-efficacy and mastery-achievement goal. These findings are puzzling because the same performance-approach goal predicted students’ maladaptive self-regulatory orientation, such as increased avoidance of help-seeking when it was needed. Likewise, students’ personal mastery goals were predicted by their perceptions of not only a classroom mastery goal structure but also a classroom performance goal structure.

The answer may lie in the extremely competitive evaluation system that characterizes the Korean secondary school environment (Bong, 2003a). Whether and how much better or worse students perform compared with other students ultimately determines the academic grades they receive in Korean secondary schools, often irrespective of their objective levels of progress or accomplishments. For these students, achieving at high levels has necessarily meant getting better scores than their peers throughout their school life. By the time these students reached high school, it might have become difficult, if not impossible, for them to think of doing well apart from doing better than others. Some of the adaptive motivational features that typically characterize students with a strong mastery orientation could thus be observed among those with a strong performance-approach goal as well (S. Kim, personal communication, May 11, 2007).

Because the present sample consisted of Korean high school students, it is possible that pursuing a performance-approach goal had paid off in the past for these students, most likely in the form of better school grades. Positive and negative motivational components are assumed to coexist in the performance-approach goal of these students, which may partly explain its complex pattern of relationships with other personal motivation and perceived learning environment variables in the present investigation. In essence, students functioning in an extremely competitive learning environment such as the Korean secondary schools, in which comparative social advantages largely determine important incentives and rewards, may hold a
different and more sophisticated concept of a performance-approach goal than do others in a more supportive learning environment. This inference is in line with Grant and Dweck’s (2003) assertion that a performance-approach goal consists of multiple dimensions, ranging from simple aspirations to obtain better outcomes to desires to perform better than others and prove one’s worth in public. My hypothesis supports Grant and Dweck’s idea that these dimensions can and should be separated and that their differential impact on student motivation, emotion, and behavior must be studied independently.

REFERENCES


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