
THE ILLUSION OF SOCIAL CLASS IDENTITY AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE: EXPLORING THE ROLE OF FATHER EDUCATION AS AN INDICATOR OF SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS

Chetan Sinha *
Christ University, India

Arvind Kumar Mishra **
Jawaharlal Nehru University, India

Abstract

The academic achievement of low social class students has been attributed to lack of ability and their socioeconomic Status (SES). However, a recent meta-analysis reported decreasing relationship between SES and academic achievement in the U.S. population (Sirin, 2005). The present study attempted to explore the relationship between social class identity processes and academic performance in an Indian context. The study took students' self report on all indicators of SES and separated high and low social class students on the basis of their fathers' education. The result showed that social class based identity process has less important role in explaining the existing academic achievement gap. Thus the need arises to explore other identities that may collaborate with the social class identity in an educational domain.

Keyword: socioeconomic status, social class, identity processes, academic achievement

Recent review of Indian studies exploring the psychology of social class and academic achievement found the major role of deficit socioeconomic status and abilities (*see* Srivastava, 2009). As Indian educational context is an amalgamation of many submerged identities and it depends upon the situation which makes the perceptions of identity more intense and thus effecting

Correspondence concerning this paper should be addressed to:

* Ph. D., Christ University, Department of Psychology. Address for correspondence: Hosur Road, Bangalore, India. E-mail: chetansinha@ymail.com

** Ph.D., *Jawaharlal Nehru University*, Department: Zakir Husain Centre for Educational Studies. Address for correspondence: Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India. E-mail: akmishra106@gmail.com

individuals' behaviour. The debate among social scientists in India mostly encircled around meritocracy and inequality (Karlekar, 1983). The supporters of meritocracy emphasized the role of human agency in their research such as ability, intelligence, aptitude etc which seems to be regulating the educational outcomes. The identification of the problem either in the deficit traits and social class, that is, socioeconomic status remained the most important explanation of academic achievement gap till now (Sidhu, Malhi, & Jerath, 2010; Srivastava, 2009; *see also* Sen, 1999; Stephens, Markus, & Fryberg, 2012). Examining the US population, Sirin (2005) observed the decreasing relationship between objective socioeconomic status (SES) and academic achievement. This raised the need to understand relationship between perception of SES as one's social class and academic achievement. Previous literature reported the relationship between SES and academic achievement in terms of objective indicators, for example, Oakes and Rossi (2003) explained SES on the basis of material wealth, occupation, and participation in educational and social institutions. Therefore, it is equally important to examine whether the emerging social class identity also shows the same effect on academic achievement?

SES, Identity Processes and Academic Achievement

The issue of SES and academic achievement gap has been observed from different perspectives (Steele, 2010). In explaining the phenomena of achievement gap from the observers' viewpoint (i.e. cognitive ability and motivation) mostly the individual level factors were held responsible. The low performance or high performance of individual seems to be mostly observed in the deficiency or sufficiency of the ability/competence or the resources of the individual. Overemphasis on the individual agencies and lack of resources put macro-level variables such as situations and contexts on low score which are supposed to shape one's subjective belief system.

One of the prominent social identity contingencies in the educational domain, that is, stereotype threat (Steele & Aronson, 1995; Steele, 1997; Steele, Spencer, & Aronson, 2002) yielded critical insights in understanding the construct academic achievement. In social class domain, stereotype threat among low social class children regarding ability was found to have negative effect (Croizet & Claire, 1998; *see also* Sinha & Mishra, 2013). Stereotype threat undermines low status group test performance by forcing them to

question who they are whereas their group identity bolsters their academic performance by affirming their sense of who they are (*see* Helms, 2006; Jones, 1997; Oldmeadow & Fiske, 2010). Human beings were assumed to be passive victims of this effect and they use various strategies to maintain their positive self concept deriving from their group membership which seems to be devalued in the specific domain leading to loss of interest and disidentification with schooling (Crocker & Major, 1989). This collective self-esteem (Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992) influences how the individuals may respond and feel efficacious when their social group's representation is called into question (*see* Leach, Queirolo, DeVoe, & Chemers, 2003).

Measures of SES

Though SES and social class had been used in the literature interchangeably, the perceptions or subjective meanings derived from one's socioeconomic position have not been researched extensively in Indian educational domain (*see* Srivastava, 2009). The meaning of SES limits itself to various objective indicators but shift has been observed when meaning is extracted from the word social class. Social class has derived its meaning through the perception and self observation in the comparative contexts based on relevant indicators like education, occupation, income, accumulated wealth etc. In Indian context, Kuppaswamy scale (1981) to assess one's socioeconomic status is highly utilized. This scale assessed SES objectively and combined the aforementioned indicators. However, traditional research measured the father or father figure's social and economic characteristics, such as education or labor force status, as the most salient indicators of SES, whereas current research generally tries to gather information from both mothers and fathers (Sirin, 2005). The guidelines prepared by the APA task force on SES (2006), emphasized on exploring the separate indicators of SES instead of taking the composite measure. Also, the parental education level was seen as most fundamental indicator to be explored which seem to be related with other associated indicators like occupation and income in the broader context for example, India.

As per the reports of APA Task Force on SES (2006), "The bottom line is that the various indicators of SES are not interchangeable. Each one assesses a different aspect of SES and reflects the intent and approach of the

investigator. Even within a domain of social position, such as occupation, there may be multiple dimensions. Too few studies in psychology measure any of these variables. In general, when SES is measured, studies assess one or more of these variables and refer to it as “SES”. *But one should have a specific theory of why that aspect of SES should relate to the outcome of interest* (Oakes & Rossi, 2003). Similarly, one should be careful about creating a composite measure. *It is generally more informative to assess the different dimensions of SES and understand how each contributes to an outcome under study rather than merge the measures”* (p. 11).

Brooks-Gunn, Linver, and Fauth (2005) pointed that parental education is related to the development of cognitive skills in children which is important for students’ academic achievement. In this context, Portes (2005) pointed that a significant part of what are generally considered social class differences in parental involvement and other factors are not necessarily dependent on parental income or occupation. According to him, many of the differences that impact children’s development stem from knowledge, skills, beliefs, and related practices that are learned both formally and informally (p. 141). Also Barnett, Rindermann, Williams and Ceci (2011) noticed that ‘educational level of parents was always more important for explaining (at least statistically) the cognitive ability level of children than the parental level of financial affluence’ (p. 673).

Role of fathers’ education in academic socialization

Recent study in Canadian context found the prominent role of fathers’ influence on children’s cognitive and behavioural functioning (Pougnet, Serbin, Stack, & Schwartzman, 2011). Some research studies in other context demonstrated that fathers’ presence in their children’s homes and parenting are positively associated with children cognitive outcomes across time after controlling for various demographic and socioeconomic factors (*see* Allen & Daly, 2002). Recently, in Indian context, Roopnarine, Krishnakumar, and Vadgama (2013) explored the role of fathers’ involvement and investment in infant and young children within changing work and family patterns. They critically looked into the research studies which analyzed the family socioeconomic patterns (socialization process) by either combining the indicators or concentrating on the single family with no fathers. The role of

father in the unprecedented economic and social changes within the Indian family was not much paid attention (Roopnarine, Krishnakumar, & Vadgama, 2013). The ideological beliefs about roles and responsibilities together with the existing label of 'head of the family' projections on the students' future academic scenario need to be analyzed further. As Indian context is considered as male dominated in terms of workforce and family decision making, previous research had taken for granted this aspects of the family and school life. The notions of masculinity where men rejoice their capability to take care of their family and children future in terms of education and job may be a major point of contestation (*see* Verma et al., 2006). Thus, present study tried to differentiate social class in terms of fathers education, as background of study surrounds school context where fathers education played important part in the future achievement. The stratification on the basis of fathers' education become legitimate in Indian sociocultural environment because it is considered as major source of income, educational socialization and occupational attainment.

Roopnarine, Krishnakumar, and Vadgama (2013) showed that in Indian and other context, till recent past, men mostly had "upper hand in controlling economic resources and exert greater input in decision making regarding household affairs compared to women (*see also* Desai et al., 2010)" (p. 225). The present work tried to position in the past historical context when the child probably had been socialized by the fathers in their attainment of education and getting higher grades for upward social mobility. However, it is also inferred that if fathers are graduate or above then there are possibility that mothers may also have same level of education in middle class context and this may acts as a turning point in refuting the beliefs about fathers education in present educational context. Though it was pointed that "sociohistorical and cultural forces may be crucial in understanding pathways to child and family development, a major embellishment of the traditionally dichotomus role conceptions of men and women characterized father as being austere and controlling" (Greenfield, Keller, Fuligni, & Maynard, 2003; Roopnarine, Krishnakumar, & Vadgama, 2013, p. 215).

In the social class context where education is seen as major force of economic and social mobility, it may be hypothesized that perception of education and academic achievement for upward economic advancement in the context of future sustainability will be different for children whose fathers are low or highly educated. However, this may be a different case where the

resources required to attain the demand of education may not be equally distributed. Present study may infer that students perception to improve their economic status on the basis of performing in classroom and breaking the stereotypes, as highlighted by earlier theoretical models (Steele, 2010), shall be equally cherished by all the groups of social class. Positioning one's identity on the basis of low social class consciousness may act as a critical point to look into the matter when there is advancement in technology in globalized world and people may hope to create their identity through their choices (*see* Arnett, 2002; *see also* Hossain, 2013). Thus, educational attainment may be one important tool and pathways for community and family honour (*see* Okagaki, 2001).

Overview of the Study

The human development report in India also showed that there is no correlation between income and health/education for some of the districts of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, including Medak and Rangareddy where field study was undertaken. The rank in terms of per capita income was much higher than the rank for education (Andhra Pradesh Human Development Report, 2007). The premise of the present study is based on the decreasing effect of SES on academic achievement and the study examines the pathways where perceptions of SES are hypothesized to make the same effect. This pathway manages concern about the role of students' perception of SES on academic achievement, thus engaging into identity processes. If SES has decreasing relationship with academic achievement then hypothesizing the effect of SES based identity processes may show the role of social class less prominent. The logic behind the present study is to understand the social class context in Indian school system. The most prominent study conducted to understand the effect of identity on problem solving didn't highlighted the role of perception of one's SES on academic achievement (*see* Hoff & Pandey, 2006). Thus the present study interrogates the role of social class on academic achievement and various linked identity processes like stereotype threat, collective self esteem, academic self efficacy, psychological disengagement and school identification.

Method

Participants

The 2x2x2 factorial design was operationalized in this study. The independent variables were, *SES* (low and high), *SES salience* (salient and non salient), and the *type of description accompanying the task* (ability diagnostic and ability non-diagnostic). 424 participants (Mean age=14.01 years; Standard Deviation (SD)=2.33 years) were involved in the study. Participants were assigned to the experimental (ability diagnosticity of the task) and control conditions (ability non-diagnosticity of the task) (part of the methodology and result is published elsewhere; see Sinha & Mishra, 2013). The sample selection from the schools was based on convenience.

Research Instruments

Academic Achievement. According to Mayer (2011), academic achievement can be understood in terms of person's performance on a knowledge test aimed at assessing specific knowledge components (e.g., facts, concepts, procedure, strategies, and beliefs). Thus, verbal test was used as measure of students' intellectual ability as a factor behind their academic achievement (see Mayer, 2011). Participants were allowed 10 minutes to complete the intellectual ability test comprising 15 items verbal task which was adapted from National Talent Search Examination (NTSE).

Collective Self-Esteem (CSE). After completing the verbal task students were observed on CSE (Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992), comprising four subscales viz., membership, private regard, public regard and importance to identity. The 16 items scale indicated alpha coefficients ranging between 0.83 and 0.88 for all the subscales. Every subscale has two items to be reversely coded.

Academic Self-Efficacy (ASE). ASE is an expectation of success which is related with the pattern of results obtained in the classroom test. Like a great deal of research on academic achievement we utilized a measure of academic self-efficacy (8 items) to assess students' expectancies for school-level work. Given our focus on entering students in the age group 13 to 15, we framed most items in the school context. Alpha was found to be 0.79.

Psychological Disengagement (PD). PD is measured by two variable viz., Devaluing and Discounting of academic domain. In devaluation children disengages themselves from academic domain where they feels at

disadvantage, for example, “being good at academics is an important part of who I am”, (reverse coded) and “academic success is not very valuable to me”. Discounting is based on perceived test bias. This is the process in which child discounts negative academic outcomes. Discounting was assessed specifically in terms of perceived test bias. “I feel that standardized achievement tests are definitely biased against me”. Together these eight items showed alpha ($\alpha=0.78$).

School Identification (SI). The SI is students’ identification with schooling in terms of belongingness and valuing (Voelkl, 1997). This is one-dimensional scale (Voelkl, 1996) consisting of 16 items. Present study used this scale to see how students from high and low SES group identify with schooling (e.g. "I feel proud of being a part of my school"). The coefficient-alpha reliability for the scale is 0.84.

Manipulation checks. In order to ensure that the variables SES salience and testing conditions were manipulated, simple information was sought from each respondent after they completed the test. As recognition is considered a more sensitive test of memory than the method of recall, each participant were given a sheet of paper on which the students were asked to recognize the relevant information related to instruction that was written on the first page of the test booklet. It was assumed that those respondents who were able to recognize relevant information correctly will also be influenced by this information. Out of 424 participants, 33 respondents were not able to recognize the information and therefore their responses were not included in the final analysis of data.

Design and Procedures

Students performed on a set of verbal problems. After completing the verbal test students filled out questionnaires. The questionnaires were identical for all participants except for the instructions given for verbal test. The questionnaires were shuffled before random distribution to four experimental conditions. Thus, the four experimental conditions consists of 1) i) ability diagnosticity and SES Salient--- ii) ability diagnosticity and SES non-salient, where task was described as difficult and students were asked to put lots of efforts, 2) i) ability non-diagnosticity and SES salient---ii) ability non-diagnosticity and SES non-salient, where task was described as simple attention task and impression was not evaluative.

In SES salience condition students were initially subjected to the tripartite indicators viz, parental education, parental occupation and income to understand their consciousness of SES, in an ability evaluative situation i.e. school (*also see* Davis-Kean, 2005). As it was difficult to fetch objective SES from the school administration, we consider students' self report to assess their SES. In the current study we used fathers' education to classify students' SES. As fathers' education was found to be correlated with all other indicators of SES, the present study utilized this indicator as prominent deriving factor of SES in an Indian context (*see* Table 1). Thus, student whose fathers' education was high school or below were classified in the low socioeconomic status (LSES) category and the children whose fathers' education level was graduation and above were classified in the high socioeconomic status (HSES) category.

Results and interpretation

Background of the result

Present study found 59.4% of children whose parents were from high income group (above 30,000 per month), 18.2% children from middle income group (between 10,000 and 30,000) and 22.4% children were from low income group (less than 10,000 per month). The nature of job for high income group was government service (excluding employee at the lower level of hierarchy), industrial manager and corporate employee and businessmen on large scale. On the other hand, nature of job for low income group was factory worker, daily wagger, clerk and unemployed. 42.7% of children fathers were graduates and 57.3% were school educated. On the other hand, 63.6% of mothers were graduates and 36.4% were school educated where most mother among educated were without any income generating job and among low educated and illiterates mother many were engaged in daily wage occupation. Parents who were categorized as highly educated were college degree holder and those who were categorized as low in education were school educated only. Mothers were mostly homemakers (classified as low occupation category) but here variation may occur in terms of family income, participation in economic decision making. On the other hand fathers' occupation was mostly government service (though there was hierarchy in job observed when income and education was taken into account). Regarding fathers occupation status, 80.4% were

government employee (were daily wagers, clerks, and factory workers) and 17.4% hold private owning (small scale mostly). 82.6% of mothers were engaged in household tasks and only 8.7% were working outside the home. Even mothers who were working outside the house were working as daily wagers, or some low paying jobs. Following results were obtained in the context of hypothesis (see Table 2).

Table 1. Correlation among the indicators of SES

SES	C	FE	ME	FO	MO	I
FE	DSS	1	0.52**	0.29*	0	0.73**
	NDSS	1	0.58**	0.38**	0.38**	0.76**
ME	DSS	0.52**	1	0.26	0.22	0.47**
	NDSS	0.58**	1	0.47**	0.55**	0.69**
FO	DSS	0.3*	0.26	1	0.23	0.43**
	NDSS	0.4**	0.47**	1	0.26	0.59**
MO	DSS	0	0.22	0.23	1	0.1
	NDSS	0.38*	0.55**	0.26	1	0.44**
I	DSS		0.47**	0.43**	0.1	1
	NDSS		0.76**	0.69**	0.44**	1

Note: ** p<.01; *p<.05

DSS - Diagnostic SES salience, NDSS - Non-diagnostic SES salience, FE - Father education, ME - Mother education, FO - Father occupation, MO - Mother occupation, I - Income

Table 2. Descriptions of the effects of SES, identity processes and Academic Achievement

	Diagnostic condition				Non-diagnostic Condition				F	P-value
	LSES		HSES		LSES		HSES			
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD		
PA	0.241	0.15	0.208	0.12	0.299	0.12	0.287	0.13	11.04**	p=.001
CSET	3.32	0.47	3.23	0.9	3.28	0.31	3.28	0.29	.177	P=.67
M	3.34	0.71	3.22	1.12	3.16	0.53	3.22	0.56	.664	p = .41
PR	3.44	0.61	3.27	1	3.36	0.67	3.30	0.53	.249	p=.61
PUR	3.36	0.61	3.27	0.98	3.06	0.95	3.22	0.46	1.09	p=.297
I	3.04	0.7	2.98	0.99	2.88	1.14	3.31	0.61	3.37*	p=.068
ASE	3.53	0.66	3.28	1.04	3.50	0.65	3.67	0.74	3.18*	p=.076
PD (Dev)	2.11	0.92	1.97	0.90	2.18	0.90	2.19	0.60	.356	p=.551
PD (Dis)	1.96	1.18	1.78	0.97	2.71	1.48	2.48	1.36	13.21**	p=.0005
SI	3.66	1.01	3.62	1.21	3.57	1.04	3.98	.44	2.28	p=.13

Conventional criterion - * p < .05; ** p < .01

PA - proportional accuracy; CSET - Collective Self Esteem Total; M - Membership; PR - Private Regard; PUR - Public Regard; I - Identity; ASE - Academic Self Efficacy; PD - Psychological Disengagement; Dev - Devaluation; Dis - Discounting; SI - School Identification

Academic Achievement: Verbal Task

Proportional accuracy (PA): The $2 \times 2 \times 2$ analysis of variance on proportional accuracy (the number of items correct divided by the number of items attempted) yielded results which partially supported the hypothesis. As with the measures of test performance and speed, there was no significant effect found between the diagnosticity of the task and participants' SES, [$F(1, 177)=.256, p=.614$; Cohen $d=0.05$] (*see also* Sinha & Mishra, 2013). There was no significant difference in SES saliency of the students and their proportional accuracy on the ability test ($p=.264$) (*see also* Sinha & Mishra, 2013). However, significant differences was observed between the diagnosticity of the task and proportion of items correct (SES saliency is constant) [$F(1, 177)=11.041, p=.001$; Cohen $d=0.32$], suggesting that situation may be responsible for the academic achievement. Bonferroni contrasts also revealed that LSES participants in the diagnostic condition were less accurate ($M=0.241$; $SD=0.15$; $N=57$) than LSES participants in the non-diagnostic condition ($M=0.299$; $SD=0.12$; $N=45$), $t(100)=2.11, p=0.037$ (Cohen $d=-0.43$; effect size $r=-0.20$). There was no significant difference between LSES ($M=0.241$; $SD=0.15$; $N=57$) students and HSES ($M=0.208$; $SD=0.12$; $N=35$) students in the diagnostic condition $t(90)=1.08, p=0.27$ (two tailed) (Cohen $d=0.24$; effect size $r=0.12$). In addition, it was observed that HSES students in the diagnostic condition ($M=0.208$; $SD=0.12$; $N=35$) have witnessed increase in proportional accuracy when in the non-diagnostic condition ($M=0.287$; $SD=0.13$; $N=41$), $t(74)=3.012, p=0.0035$ (Cohen $d=0.7$; effect size $r=0.33$) (*see* Figure 1).

Collective Self Esteem (CSE)

The items from four sub dimensions of CSE corresponds to membership (M), private regard (PR), public regard (PUR) and identity (I) of children. Overall CSE of students' under the diagnostic-SES salience condition showed non-significant interaction, [$F(1, 177)=.177, p=0.675$; Cohen $d=0.05$]. All other dimensions of CSE (M, PR, I) showed non-significant relationship except that public regard of LSES students' towards their social class based group in diagnostic condition ($M=3.36$; $SD=0.61$; $N=57$) and public regard of LSES students' in non-diagnostic condition ($M=3.06$; $SD=0.95$; $N=45$) was significant, $t(100)=1.93, p=0.05$ (Cohen $d=0.38$; effect size $r=0.19$) (*see* Figure 2).

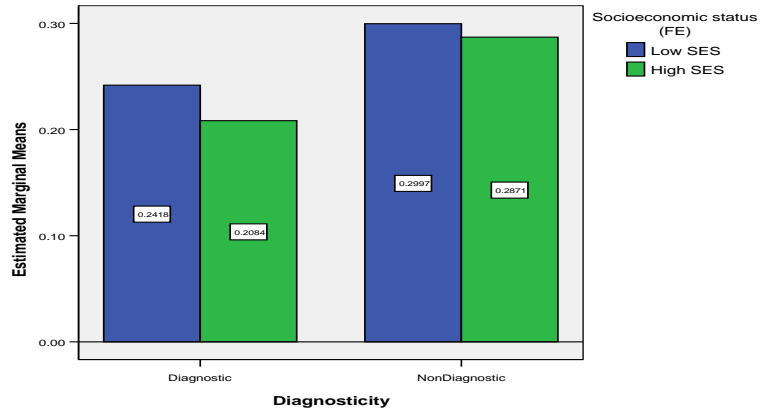


Figure 1. Proportion of items correct as a function of task diagnosticity and participants' SES categorization (see Sinha & Mishra, 2013)

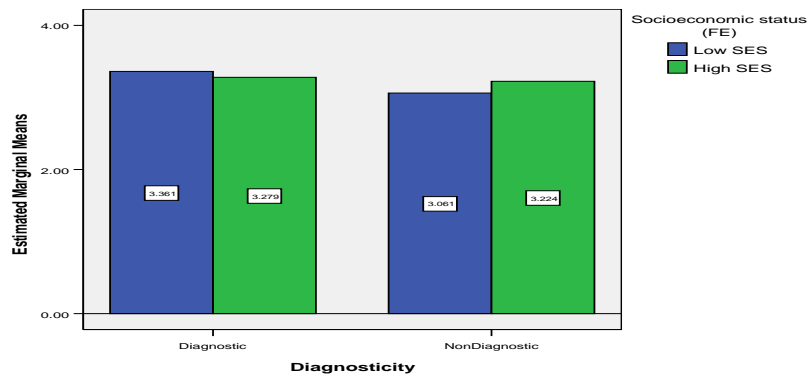


Figure 2. Participants' public regards towards their social class as a function of task diagnosticity and SES categorization

Academic Self-Efficacy

Academic self efficacy of students' under the diagnostic-SES salience condition shows insignificant results [$F(1, 177)=3.18, p=0.076; \text{Cohen } d=0.27$]. However, it was noticed that academic self efficacy is significantly related with school identification ($r=0.56^{**}$).

Psychological Disengagement

Devaluation: Devaluation under the diagnostic-SES salient condition found to have non-significant Interaction, [$F(1, 177)=.356, p=0.55; d=0.091$]. However, devaluation of the academic achievement domain was significantly related with discounting of the academic achievement domain ($r=0.34^{**}$), but surprisingly found to be weakly and significantly related with students' school identification ($r=0.11^*$).

Discounting: Students discounting of academic achievement domain under the diagnostic-SES salient condition found to have non-significant interaction, [$F(1, 166)=.013, p=0.90; d=0.02$]. All other interactions were also not significant. However, the main effect of diagnosticity of the task on the students' discounting of academic achievement domain was found to be significant, [$F(1, 166)=13.21, p=.0005; \text{Cohen } d=0.56$]. Discounting of academic achievement domain by LSES students in diagnostic condition ($M=1.96; SD=1.18; N=52$) and discounting by LSES students in non-diagnostic condition ($M=2.71; SD=1.48; N=42$) were found to be significantly different, $t(92)=2.73, p=0.0075$ (Cohen $d=0.57$; effect size $r=0.3$). Also, discounting by HSES students in diagnostic condition ($M=1.78; SD=0.97; N=32$) and by HSES students in non-diagnostic condition ($M=2.48; SD=1.36; N=41$) were found to be significant, $t(71)=2.46, p=0.016$ (Cohen $d=0.58$; effect size $r=0.28$). It was also found that students' discounting of academic achievement domain is weakly, negatively and significantly related with School Identification ($r=0.19^{**}$). Figure 3 shows that LSES students in both the manipulating conditions found to discount academic achievement domain more than their HSES counterpart.

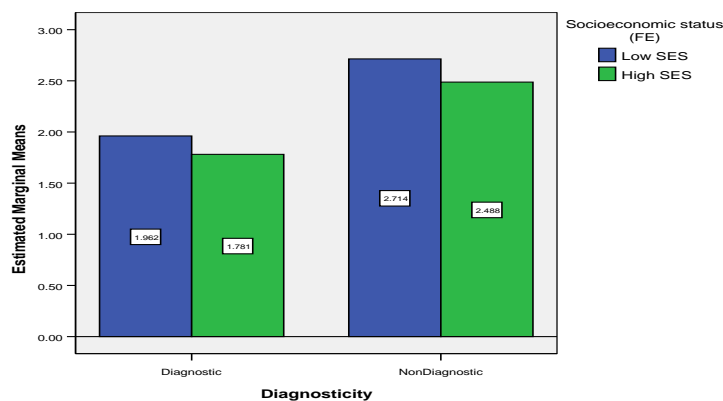


Figure 3. Participants' discounting of achievement domain as a function of task diagnosticity and SES categorization

School Identification

The school identification of the students under the diagnostic-SES salient condition were found to be non significant, [$F(1, 177)=2.28, p=0.13; d=0.23$]. All other interactions were also found to be non-significant.

Discussion

The present study is not most directly about the impact of SES on learning. Rather, the focus of this study is to understand the impact of socially situated constructions on SES as evident in the activated self-identity of learners when they face an explicitly academic task. The findings did not confirm the role of social class identity processes completely in an Indian context. As no effect of SES saliency was seen but the effects of diagnostic situation was observed on the students' performance. However, present research showed very distinct outcomes where LSES students' performance increased in non-diagnostic situation when compared with LSES counterpart in diagnostic condition. As the performance of LSES noticeably increased when put into the non-diagnostic condition, the results strikingly exposed the robustness of the evaluative situation itself.

Study found no direct role of SES saliency in Indian context as compared with the study that highlighted the prominence of social class effects on intellectual performance (*see* Croizet & Claire, 1998). Thus, the findings were congruent with the decreasing relationship between SES and academic performance showing SES doesn't form an identity which is fixed or voluntary that results into the confirmation of the stereotypes of ability (*see also* Sirin, 2005). LSES participants were found to be less accurate in the diagnostic situation when compared with HSES participants in the non-diagnostic situation. Also, it was observed that, both LSES and HSES participants were less accurate than the students in the non-threatening or non-diagnostic situations. But, LSES students were found to be better than HSES students' in both the conditions. Theoretically, the LSES students' underperformance was attributed to the threatened social identity in the most identified domain (Croizet & Claire, 1998; Steele & Aronson, 1995; Spencer & Castano, 2007). However, the context itself was never put to question which imposed its value on the self integrity of students. It was pointed that the students of lower status identify with schooling because it is the matter of honor for their social group to get educated (Okagaki, 2001, for other view *see* Fordham & Ogbu, 1986). Thus, at one hand students from low status group (e.g. African-American) try to do better in schooling and on the other hand they have to comply with their peer group norms to disidentify with the schooling (which is based on high status group norms) to retain their self esteem. However, in Indian context, the importance of group membership for LSES students' self worth shows non-significant results. It was posited that group members in some of the cases try to seek personal benefits by seeking group based identifications has not been supported by the findings (Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992). This finding shows that negative social and emotional impacts of one's group for class stereotyped students have not created any sense of personal value. Public regard refers to the individuals' perception of how people see their social group. Therefore, the perceived belief about their social class in the outgroup domain made the LSES students more inclined towards their social class identity when they were part of the diagnostic or evaluative situation. Otherwise, when put into the less threatening situation of non-diagnosticsity, LSES students' didn't cared much about others perception of their social class identity. Among the dimensions of CSE, public regard for their social group was found to be more for LSES students in threatening condition then in non- threatening condition. Public

regard towards one's social group was found to be associated with students' confidence and efficacy in the academic domain. As public regard towards one's social group is increased in the threatening context, students were also found to be less affiliated with the academics.

Students (LSES and HSES) discounted the academic domain when placed in the non- diagnostic situation. Though the manipulation of experimental condition didn't significantly affected self efficacy of students showing that knowledge of social class may give inconclusive results. Aronson, Inzlicht and Good (2006) posited that performance decrement may induce reduction in the self efficacy of students in the threatened situations. It was earlier posited that LSES have reduced self efficacy in comparison to HSES students (Arnold & Doctoroff, 2003).

The reason behind students' discounting of the domain together with slight increase in their membership perception is manifold. The most relevant cause which seems important at the outset is students' self perception of their hard work with the unexpected outcome led them to discount internal attributions and minimize self blame (Kelley, 1973; Major, Quinton, & McKoy, 2002). Therefore, blaming one's shortcomings on prejudice and discrimination can buffer people from many of the negative affective consequences of poor outcomes (Inzlicht & Good, 2006). Both the categories of students least discounted the education domain when put in the threatening condition in comparison to the less threatening situations. Pertaining to the above, it could be inferred that psychological disengagement was found to be negatively related with school identification. However, the nature of affiliation and identification has varied rationale related which seems to be dependent on the volatility of that group membership. Volatility of the group membership in terms of permeability and impermeability factors is a major point of contestation.

According to social identity theory, the selection of a particular strategy is critically determined by collectively shared beliefs about the nature of the social structure, such as beliefs about its legitimacy and stability or beliefs about the permeability of group boundaries. For example, group strategies of social change should be preferred to individualistic strategies when status inferiority of the ingroup is perceived as illegitimate and unstable and the boundaries between ingroup and outgroup are perceived as impermeable (*see* Simon, 2004, p. 36). It was also observed that collective self esteem (public

regard) as a measure of one's affiliation with the social group found to be in association with the students' psychological disengagement. The 'motivation to choose and expend effort in a domain subscribe to the importance of that area to the self, which is described as being "identified" with the domain' (*see* Osborne, 1995; Osborne & Jones, 2011, p. 150; Osborne & Walker, 2006; Ostrove & Cole, 2003). Theoretically, the identification with the school had been verified to be an important domain where LSES students identify. However, the inconclusive result of present study in terms of social class identity and school identification shows that consciousness of social status is marginally important in the context of school identification.

Conclusions

School system in India is different because its basic assumptions of teaching and learning are driven by many factors, and these factors don't operate in the same fashion as schools in other cultural contexts. Basically, the cultural systems comprises the social structure and its functioning which is embedded into the psyche of people in the form of several social psychological divides such as caste, gender, religion and in turn social class hierarchies (*see* Herring & Agarwala, 2008). Recent work exploring the role of caste identity on performance (Hoff & Pandey, 2006) found the persistent role of discriminatory effects even after experimental equalization of the low and high caste groups. This study suggested that discrimination is not limited to the equalization of opportunities but go beyond that, it is in the perceptions and justification of the discriminatory social context.

The process to identify those potent variables that initiated the debate was found to be located in the idea generated within the tradition of social identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Social identity theory emphasizes on the social context which shape individuals' self perception. Latter work on students' academic achievement in the minority context came out with important suggestion that one's social identity and its associated stereotype may hinder the performance of students. More specifically, in the African-American students' context it was noticed that when minority students enters into the ability evaluative context their performance automatically started to show decrement in comparison to that of white American students. This low performance of minority students triggered many related behaviour which were

part of their stereotyped identity like, disidentification, disengagement, lowered self efficacy etc in an Indian context. However, it was also noticed in the literature that there are upsurge in minority ingroup identification showing their urge for self esteem and worth which was not felt in the present study. However, relating LSES identification equivalent to other identity binaries such as caste, gender or African American in western context may be not a sufficient conclusion. So, the need arises to integrate the social class with other impermeable identity may clear the picture. Competence or ability to perform well in school is based on students performance on intellectual ability test, present study made use of scores on intellectual ability test as a marker of academic achievement (e.g., entrance test for elementary school or higher is based widely on intellectual ability test comprising verbal task). The nature of present study is driven by the fact that the relationship between objective SES and academic achievement was decreasing. Thus, need also arises to explore how social class affect the perception of students in an ability stereotyped situations. This may pave the way for better understanding of this relationship where literature kept possibility of mediators such as situational impact and students' consciousness of their social class identity.

It was observed that school context provides evaluating situation in which students' class based social identity becomes salient and this in turn results in decreased performance. Although the students struggle to identify with the school because the latter is considered as means of upward social mobility, their experience in the school is not very positive. Previous studies have shown that there is mismatch between home culture of children from low SES and that of school. Formally articulated meaning of school activities and its expected outcome such as academic achievement is not shared by the students from low SES. Due to this mismatch, academic performances of these students are adversely affected. Therefore, it becomes imperative to see how academic achievement is represented among different social categories, to have better understanding of what actually academic achievement means to the students. As present study explored the effect of social class based identity processes on academic performance and limited to monocultural identity (social class), future study can compensate its limitations by exploring ethnic minorities such caste and religion. One other major concern can be Eurocentrism in education curricula and pedagogy, so does identifying oneself

in White perspective acts as a compensation to get rid of negative effects of stereotypes? This can be explored further.

It may bring more clarity to the understanding of psychology of academic achievement in Indian context and identity in the historical perspective, if future research investigates the association of identities working together in the school circumstance. That is, how school students of different identity background working in complexities give meaning to academic achievement. Of specific interest were how they perceived factors influencing academic achievement and how the students' social identity contingencies (Purdie-Vaughns, Steele, Davies, Dittmann, & Crosby, 2008) based on different social categories effects academic achievement.

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