

Sym1PaperB2: Expecting girls to do better in languages and boys to do better in maths? Not always. An investigation on gender bias in teacher expectations in Chinese high schools

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Biography

Shengnan is a research fellow at Woolf Fisher Research Centre, in the Faculty of Education and Social Work. Shengnan's doctoral research focuses on teacher expectations and teacher expectation effects in the Chinese secondary school context. She is particularly interested in teachers' behaviours that could communicate differential expectations to students, the stability of teacher expectations, and teacher expectations for children of migrated workers in China.

ABSTRACT

The expectations that teachers hold about their students' future achievement may function as self-fulfilling prophecies and affect students' learning opportunities, self-efficacy and academic motivation, and ultimately their learning outcomes. Previous research has shown that teacher expectations might be in line with student actual prior achievement but can be biased by student demographic characteristics such as ethnicity, gender, and socioeconomic status. Among the studies that have explored the links between student demographics and teacher expectations, evidence around student gender has been the most inconclusive. Controversies have been sparked around whether and how gender affects teacher expectations and how such influence could be moderated by other student characteristics and cultural and educational contexts. Considering the profound influences gender-related teacher expectations might exert on girls' and boys' learning opportunities, achievement outcomes, and future career choices, there is a great need for a more comprehensive understanding of this phenomenon.

For this presentation we collate the findings from five independent studies conducted in the Chinese context. Our samples involve a total number of 24 high schools, 322 teachers, and 8,648 students from 5 regions in China, ranging from rural areas, small cities, to a metropolitan city. Our results suggest the existence of gender bias in teacher expectations in the Chinese high school context. Specifically, the direction and magnitude of gender bias may be moderated by student factor (grade level), subject factor (Chinese/maths/English), school factor (school type/structure), and time factor (longitudinal change). Accordingly, a conceptual diagram is proposed to depict the potential influential factors of this complex phenomenon.