Shoot for the moon, if you miss you'll at least land in the stars: How parental and youth expectations affect educational attainment

The Influence of Parental Expectations on youth outcomes

Past research has shown that parental expectations, both perceived and actual, do have some level of influence on youth outcomes. A number of studies have focused on parental expectations of educational achievement. (Rutchick et. al 2009; Benner & Mistry 2007; Gill and Reynolds 1999; Englund et al 2004; Mistry et al 2009; Davis-Kean 2005; Neuenschwander et al 2007). These studies have shown that parental expectations do influence youth overall academic achievement. One key finding that is evident from these studies is parents with higher educational expectations for their children tend to have youth with higher levels of educational attainment (Eccles 1993; Benner 2007; Englund et al 2004; Halle et al 1997 and Alexander et al 1994) as well as youth with higher educational expectations for themselves (Eccles 1993; Gill and Reynolds 1996; Dauber & Epstein, 1993; Garg et al. 2002). Additionally, other studies have shown that, parental behavioral expectations (i.e. expectation of pro-social behavior and disapproval of anti social behavior) was associated with lower rates of antisocial behavior in adolescents and higher rates of pro social behavior, (alcohol and substance use (Nash et. al. 2005; Simons Morton et al 2001), involvement in delinquency, involvement in violence (Resnick et al 2004 and Ohene et al 2006), higher rates of school attendance (Taylor and Lopez 2005).

Status Attainment Theory: Parent's status, youth's identity, young adult status attainment

Status attainment theory suggests that the initial factor that influences individual status attainment is one's family of origin. Parents' educational achievement and occupational status

affect parental expectations and aspirations of their children and therefore would seemingly have an affect on youth's desire to achieve a particular status. Research has also found that high educational aspirations of parents are associated with high aspirations in children (Sewell and Shah 1986). One important discussion that exists in status attainment theory is that of socialization. The concept of socialization suggests that youth learn from their environment how to interact in society. From this standpoint, parent's expectations and status should have a great deal of influence on youth desired and actual status achievement (Kerckhoff 1976). The expectancy –value model of achievement as presented by Eccles and colleagues (Eccles & Wigfield 2002; Eccles Parsons et al 1983) suggest that the parent beliefs and behaviors influence the child's goals and self concept which in turn influence their own expectations for success and academic achievement. From this perspective parent expectations and behaviors are not only important aspects in the academic achievement of children but also in the development of their own self schema and personal beliefs about their capabilities. Eccles (1993) found that parents attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions about their child's abilities are critical mediators of children's motivation and self competence From this perspective parent expectations and behaviors are not only important aspects in the academic achievement of children but also in the development of their own self schema and personal beliefs about their capabilities.

The role of socialization in the development of a youth's self concept, interests, and motivations all relate to the overall concept of one's identity formation. Parents as socializers of reality or in this case adolescent identity are important factor in the overall success of their children. Adolescent identity formation literature suggests that parenting practices in late adolescence and identity formation are interlinked and adolescents respond more positively to supportive parenting styles during this period of identity formation (Beyers and Goosens 2008).

Marcia (1980) defines identity as a "self structure, internal and self constructed dynamic organization of drives, abilities, beliefs, and individual history" (pg). She argues that the more aware individuals are of this structure the more aware they are of their own strengths and weakness and able to maneuver their way in the world. Few studies have looked at how family process variables help to explain the interconnectedness of parental practices (socialization) and adolescent identity development (youth's self concept and personal expectations as it relates to youth status attainment or their position within the educational and occupational hierarchy of society.

Socioeconomic Status Differences in Status Attainment

When dealing with the overall issue of status attainment there are a number of variables that must be taken into account. These include family of origin (income, education level, occupation) and individual characteristics (aptitude, educational achievement, and motivation). Taking into consideration both individual and family level variables, a couple of studies have looked at how individual achievement is affected by family level variables. Davis- Kean (2005) studied the indirect affects of family income and parental beliefs and behaviors on child academic achievement. Her study found that parental beliefs and behaviors do affect academic achievement; and that these behaviors are influenced by parent education and income. Halle et al (1997) studied differences in low income minority families and found that low income mothers with higher education had higher expectations that were related to their child's subsequent achievement in math and reading. These more positive expectations predicted higher amounts of achievement related behavior at home and as well as higher positive perceptions of children for academic success. Finally, Alexander, Entwisle, and Bedinger (1994) found that parents of

moderate to high SES held beliefs and expectations that more closely mirrored actual child performance than those of low-income families, whose beliefs did not actually correlate with their children's actual academic performance (beliefs were higher than outcomes). The aforementioned studies help to demonstrate how family socioeconomic status does effect youth academic achievement (which in turn effects educational, occupational, and overall status attainment).

Current Study

This study attempts to build upon the previous literature to examine how parental expectations affect youth overall status attainment (Educational attainment) in young adulthood. Using youth expectation and parental expectation variables allow us to further understand the process of status attainment in young adulthood as related to the expectancy value model (the idea that youth achievement is mediated by both parent and youth expectations). Additionally this study attempts to examine the possible effect of socioeconomic status on the relationships between expectations and youth status attainment. This study attempts to address the following research questions: 1) Do parental educational expectations affect overall youth status attainment in young adulthood? 2) Do differences exist between different socioeconomic classes for the ways in which parental and youth expectations influence young adult status attainment? 3) Is there a relationship between parental and youth expectations? If so, does this relationship influence young adult educational status attainment?

Methodology

Data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997 (NLSY97) was used for this study. The NLSY97 was created to document the transition from school to work and adolescence to adulthood for a cohort of youth between the ages of 12 and 18 as of December 31, 1996. This longitudinal study currently consists of twelve waves of data with the first round starting in 1997 and round twelve occurring in 2008 (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2009). Data used for this study has been taken from round 1(1997), round 3 (1999), and round 11 (2007). NLSY97 is a nationally representative sample of youth ages 12 to 18 born between January 1, 1980 and December 31, 1984. The initial sample consisted of 8,984 youth in round one with an 82% retention rate up to round eleven (7,418). The initial sample was split 51% male and 49% female with the following racial/ethnic breakdown: Non-black/non-Hispanic: 4,665 (51.9%)**,** Black: 2,335 (26%)**,** Hispanic or Latino: 1,901 (21.2%), and Mixed: 83 (0.9%). This sample is comprised of two independent area probability subsamples. The first is a cross sectional sample of 6,748 youth representative of the population at the time. The second sample is a supplemental sample intended to oversample Hispanic and non Hispanic Black youth living in the U.S. during round one and born during the same time as the cross sectional sample. Both subsamples were selected using standard area probability methods using primary sampling units (PSUs), segments, and HUs (housing units – addresses) (Moore et. al 2000).

Subsample

Of the original 8,984 youth sampled in 1997 only youth born in 1980 or 1981 (ages 15 or 16) were eligible to be surveyed on their beliefs about the future. The total number of youth who fall into this category is 3,565 youth. Responding parents of youth ages 15 and 16 were also asked about their beliefs that certain events would occur in their child's life during a specific time period. Youth and Parents were asked to respond using a scale ranging from 0 (impossible)

to 100 (certain). This study focuses only on respondents who had complete data for both youth and parental expectations to the following questions, youth expectation of being in school next year, youth expectation of being arrested by next year, youth chance of dying by next year, youth expectation of pregnancy by next year, youth expectation of receiving a college degree by age 30, parent expectation of youth receiving a high school diploma by age 20, and parent expectation of youth receiving a college degree by age 30, as well as data for the outcome variable, youth highest grade completed in 2007. This reduced the sample to a total of 2, 342 youth[1]. Because the NLSY97 uses oversampling procedures for Black and Hispanic respondents, weighting is necessary to avoid biased results in these populations. Additionally, because this sample uses data from multiple waves it is important that a custom survey weight is calculated to take into account data from multiple years as well as the complex survey design. A custom weight for was calculated using the custom weight calculator provided by the NLS investigator site for all respondents who were present in 1997, 1999, and 2007.

Procedures and Measures

A youth questionnaire was administered to respondents in each round. Youth were asked questions about their employment, schooling, training, income, assets, program participation, family formation, family background, expectations, attitudes, behaviors, time use, health, environment, and event history. A parent questionnaire was administered to corresponding parents during round one. Only one parent per youth was asked to participate and was required to reside in the same household as the youth. In addition, a school survey was conducted for each

[1]Sample comparisons were made between the original subsample of 15 and 16 year olds (3565), those with complete data for both parent and youth expectations (2830) and those with both parent and youth expectations as well as highest grade completed in 2007 (2342). Results of these comparisons found that youth in all three samples did not vary significantly on race, gender, family structure, and youth expectation of school next year, which suggests that deletion of missing cases will not result in skewed results.

youth and high school transcripts were gathered in 2000 for youth respondents and coded as another source of information. (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2009).

Youth Demographic Characteristics

Three variables were used to measure the demographic characteristics of youth, race, age, gender. Respondent race was categorized as either, Black, Hispanic, or Non Black/Non Hispanic, due to the small number of ethnic groups in the sample[2]. Age was measured as the respondent age in years as of December 31, 1996. Only 15 and 16 year olds are represented in this sample since they were the only youth who received the expectation questions in round 1. For gender males were coded as 1 and females as 0.

Youth's Aptitude and Ability

In the summer of 1997 and fall of 1998 respondents were administered the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (CAT-ASVAB) ASVAB were used as a measure of youth's aptitude and ability in round 3 (1999). The Math Verbal Percentile score was used in this study as a measure of youth's Mathematical Knowledge Arithmetic Reasoning Word Knowledge and Paragraph Comprehension. Scores range from 0 to 100. (For descriptive purposes the scores were categorized into quartiles).

Parent and Family characteristics

Six variables were used to account for parental and family characteristics, parent educational attainment, parenting style, whether or not respondent's biological mother was a teenage mom, family structure, residential location in 1997, and socioeconomic status.

[2] Dummy variables were also created for each racial category for the purposes of analysis.

Mother's Educational Attainment: The NLSY 97 provides parent education information for both biological and non biological parents in round 1 (1997). This variable measures the highest grade completed by the respondent's residential parent. This variable ranged from 0 to 8th year of college and was collapsed into the following four categories: less than high school, high school diploma, some college and/or associates degree, and bachelor's degree or higher.

Parenting Style: This study uses the measure of residential mother's parenting style. Child Trends Inc. calculated parenting style using the four style typology of Maccoby & Martin, (1983). Parents were classified in of the four categories, authoritarian (high demandingness, low responsiveness), authoritative (high demandingness and responsiveness), permissive (low demandingness, high responsiveness), or uninvolved (low demandingness and responsiveness) based upon youth's response to two questions;

> 1) When you think about how s/he acts towards you, in general, would you say that s/he is very supportive, somewhat supportive, or not very supportive?
>
> 2) In general, would you say that s/he is permissive or strict about making sure you did what you were supposed to do?
>
> (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 1999).

Further classification of this variable resulted in a dichotomous variable indicating whether residential mothers were authoritative (=1) or not (=0).

Teen mom: Research indicates that children of teenage mother's often face difficulty that there same age counterparts do not face (Brooks-Gunn & Furstenberg 1986; Card 1981), a measure of whether or not the youth's biological mother was a teenage mom is included in this study. Biological mom's age at first birth is given in years (range 0 to 50+) and then classified

into a dichotomous variable, teen mom (19 and younger) coded as '1' and non teenage mom coded as '0'.

Family structure: Family structure is measured as a dichotomous variable that indicates if the respondent youth lived with both biological parents in 1997. This variable is coded as condition applies (=1) or condition does not apply (=0).

Residential location: Residential location for youth is measured as residence in a metropolitan statistical area (MSA) at the age of 12 as reported by parent-figure during the round 1 interview. This variable is classified into four categories suburban, urban, non metro, and non-identified.

Socioeconomic Status: Socioeconomic status is measured using the Household Poverty Ratio for the year 1996 (round 1). Families were categorized as either at or below poverty, near poverty, or below poverty. Dichotomous variables were also created for analysis purposes for each SES category with (1= condition applies 0=condition does not apply).

Expectations

During the youth and parent questionnaires in round 1 youth and parents were asked a number of questions about their beliefs for the future. They were asked to respond using a scale of 0 (impossible) to 100 (certain). Expectation items used for this study have been categorized into short term and long term expectations for both the youth and their parents. All expectations items for this study were classified into two categories, low expectations or high expectations[3]. Youth and parent scores are based on their responses to the following questions:

[3] Where responses fall for the two categories for each expectation question (high and low) is based upon the distribution of the responses.

Youth expectations

Short term

School next year: What is the percent chance that you will be a student in a regular school one year from now? [0=low (<90) 1=high (>=90]

Arrest: What is the percent change you will be arrested in the following year?

[1=high (>=11) 0=low (<=10)]

Death: What is the percent change you will be die in the next year?

[1=high (>=20) 0=low (<20)]

Pregnancy: Females: What is the percent chance you will get pregnant by next year?

[1=high (1-100) 0=low (0)]

Males: What is the percent chance you will get someone pregnant by next year? [1=high (>=10) 0=low (<10)]

Long term

College degree by 30: What is the percent chance you will receive a college degree by age 30? [0=low (0-72) 1=high (>=73)]

Parent Expectations

Short Term

High School diploma by20: What is the percent chance that this youth will receive a high school diploma by age 20? [0=low (<=94) 1=high (>=95)]

Long term

College degree by 30: What is the percent chance that this youth will receive a college degree by age 30? [0=low (0-69) 1=high (>=70)]

Educational Status Attainment

This study measures educational status attainment as the highest grade completed by the youth in 2007 (round 11). At this time sample youth should range from age 25 -26. This variable ranged from 0 to 8th year of college and was collapsed into the following four categories: less than high school, high school diploma, some college and/or associates degree, and bachelor's degree or higher.

Analysis Plan

We address the three main research questions using descriptive and multivariate statistics. First we present univariate and bivariate description of the sample, and second we present multinomial logistic regression models predicting the youth's educational attainment in 2007. Three models were tested to determine which factors influence young adult educational status attainment: **Model 1:** Youth expectations; **Model 2**: Youth and parent expectations; **Model 3:** Youth and parent expectations, and individual and family background characteristics.

Results

Table 1 describes the sample overall and by educational attainment in 2007. The sample is predominantly non-Hispanic White, has approximately equal percents male and female and age groups, and about half the sample lived with both biological parents in 1997. Approximately 68 percent live in families above poverty, 18 percent live near poverty and almost 14 percent lived in poverty. Most of the youth's mother's had either a high school or some college education, and there is an even distribution across the ASVAB percentile scores. Nearly one-quarter of the youth's mother had a teen birth, and the majority were raised with either a permissive or authoritative parenting style.

Table 1 also includes a description of the sample by educational attainment in 2007. As shown, significant Chi-square values are found for educational attainment by race/ethnicity/ gender, family structure, SES, mother's education, ASVAB percentile score, teen mother status, and residential location. For example, a higher percent of non-Hispanic Whites attained a college education, more non-Hispanic blacks attained some college education, and Hispanics disproportionately achieved a high school education. A higher percent of females compared to males attained a college education, and a smaller percent completed less than high school. A higher proportion of those whose family income was above the poverty line achieved a college education, while fewer with poverty and near poverty family incomes achieved a college education. The youth's mother's education is also significantly associated with educational attainment. We see in Table 1 that a higher percent of those whose mother has a BA degree also attained a BA degree, and conversely, a higher percent whose mother attained less than high

school has themselves attained a high school degree or less (32.4 and 36.5 percent, respectively). A larger percent of those with high scores on the ASVAB test also attained a college degree, and a higher percent of those with low scores on the ASVAB test attained a high school degreeor lower. The residence results clearly show that a higher percent of youth from metro suburban areas attained a college degree (37.3 percent) compared to those from nonmetro (26.9 percent) and metro central city areas (27.1 percent). Parenting style and age were not significantly associated with educational attainment in the bi-variate results.

Multivariate Results

Table 2 present the results from multinomial logistic regression models predicting educational attainment. Three comparisons are presented in Table 2: achieving less than high school compared to obtaining a BA degree, attaining a high school degree compared to attaining a BA degree, and obtaining some college compared to obtaining a BA degree. Parameter estimates and relative risk ratios are included in Table 2.

Model 1 in Table 1 includes only youth expectations predicting educational attainment. In the less than high school comparison columns we see that with the exception of expectations for dying, all youth expectations significantly reduce the relative risk of obtaining a BA versus less than a high school degree. In the model comparing a BA to a high school degree only youth educational expectations (to be in school next year and to obtain a college degree by age 30) are associated with this comparison. In the final columns all youth expectations except pregnancy expectations significantly lower the relative risk of obtaining a BA compared to some college. Thus, in model 1 we find that youth expectations in 1997 are significantly associated with

educational outcomes in 2007. This is true for a variety of youth expectations, but only the educational expectations are statistically significant across all three comparisons.

Model 2 adds parental expectations in 1997 to the multinominal logistic regression estimates of educational attainment. Across all three comparisons we find that high parental expectations in 1997 for their child to complete a college education by age 30 significantly reduce the relative risk of obtaining less than high school (rrr=.09), high school (rrr=.16), and some college (rrr=.30). Short term parental expectations for their child to obtain a high school degree by age 20 are only associated with the comparison between obtaining a BA and less than a high school degree. High parental expectations for obtaining a high school education by age 20 significantly reduce the relative risk (rrr=.20) of obtaining a BA versus less than high school. In model 2 the youth expectations retain their significance. The only noticeable difference is youth expectations for being arrested are no longer significantly associated with obtaining a BA versus some college.

Model 3 adds individual and family background characteristics to model 2. The effect of youth and parental expectations are similar to those in model 2, controlling for individual and family background characteristics, with the exception of youth's pregnancy expectations in the comparison between BA and less than high school, which is now insignificant. Several individual and family background characteristics are strongly associated with educational attainment across all three comparisons. For example, the youths' mother's educational attainment strongly predicts educational attainment comparisons across all three comparisons. Lower maternal educational attainment is associated with lower relative risks of less than high school, high school, and some college, compared to a BA degree. Living with both biological parents in 1997 also significantly reduces the risk of obtaining any education in comparison to a

BA degree. Compared to non-Hispanic whites, in this final model Hispanic youth have higher relative risks of obtaining a high school degree and some college compared to a BA degree. Non-Hispanic Black youth also have lower relative risks of obtaining a BA versus less than high school.

Conclusions

Further work on this paper will include examining how SES moderates the association between expectations and educational attainment.

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Table 1. Sample Description and Educational Attainment Bivariate Analyses

Variable	Less than HS	HS Degree	Some College	BA or Higher	Overall	Chi^2
Race/Ethnicity						149.54*
NH White	13.8	25.4	23.3	37.6	73.4	
NH Black	26.0	25.0	29.0	20.0	14.7	
Hispanic	23.0	33.0	29.0	15.0	11.9	
Gender						24.09*
Male	18.7	27.7	24.9	28.7	48.9	
Female	14.9	24.5	24.7	35.9	51.1	
Age						1.39
15	17.5	25.4	24.4	32.7	50.3	
16	16.1	26.9	25.2	31.8	49.8	
Family Structure						224.08*
2 bio parents	26.6	29.3	25.4	18.7	52.3	
Other	7.9	23.3	24.3	44.5	47.7	
SES						281.66*
Poverty	38.2	30.2	22.6	9.2	13.6	
Near Poverty	28.2	33.2	22.7	15.9	17.9	
Above poverty	9.2	22.6	26.2	42.0	68.4	
Mom's Edu						420.63*
LT HS	36.5	32.4	18.1	13.0	16.4	
HS	16.0	32.8	26.7	24.5	35.3	
Some college	12.1	24.0	30.3	33.7	26.0	
BA+	4.0	12.0	22.0	62.0	22.4	
ASVAB						688.22*

0-24%	37.2	38.4	18.9	5.5	22.7	
25-49%	17.1	36.8	26.7	19.4	23.8	
50-74%	9.1	23.3	31.0	36.6	25.3	
75-100%	1.0	9.7	22.7	66.6	28.2	
Teen mother	26.2	33.9	23.2	16.6	22.9	126.26*
Parenting Style						
						16.31
Uninvolved	21.4	31.5	26.2	20.9	9.5	
Permissive	16.4	25.0	24.5	34.2	42.7	
Authoritarian	15.1	28.4	28.7	27.8	9.07	
Authoritative	14.0	25.2	24.5	36.5	38.7	
MSA Status						69.24*
Nonmet	17.0	35.2	20.8	26.9	21.4	
Met-suburban	13.8	23.2	25.7	37.3	52.5	
Met-CC	22.9	24.0	26.0	27.1	25.0	

Table 2. Multinomial Models Predicting Educational Attainment in 2007

Variable	Less than HS vs. BA		HS Degree vs. BA		Some college vs. BA	
	β	***RRR***	***β***	***RRR***	***β***	***RRR***
Model 1: Youth Expectations[1]						
Constant	*2.72*	*-*	*3.41*	*-*	*2.73*	*-*
School next year	*-1.03**	*.09*	*-1.25**	*.29*	*-1.03**	*.36*
Arrest	*-.310**	*.50*	*-.23*	*.79*	*-.31**	*.73*
Death	*-.298*	*.87*	*-.21*	*.81*	*-.30**	*.74*
Pregnancy	*-.072**	*.64*	*.03*	*1.03*	*-.07*	*.93*
College degree by 30	*-1.50**	*.07*	*-2.50**	*.08*	*1.50**	*.22*
Model 2: Model 1 + Parent's Expectations[2]						
Constant	*6.62*	*-*	*4.48*	*-*	*3.60*	*-*
School next year	*-1.99**	*.14*	*-1.12**	*.33*	*-.94**	*.39*
Arrest	*-.63**	*.53*	*-.17*	*.84*	*-.29*	*.75*
Death	*-.08*	*.92*	*-.21*	*.81*	*-.30**	*.74*
Pregnancy	*-.38**	*.68*	*.03*	*1.03*	*-.07*	*.93*
College degree by 30	*-1.82**	*.16*	*-1.92**	*.15*	*-1.16**	*.31*

Parent expects HS degree by 20	*-1.63**	*.20*	*-.32*	*.77*	*-.28*	*.75*
Parent expects college degree by 30	*-2.45**	*.09*	*-1.85**	*.16*	*-1.12**	*.30*
Model 3: Model 2 + family and individual characteristics3						
Constant	*10.7*	*-*		*-*		*-*
School next year	*-2.28**	*.10*	*-1.19**	*.30*	*-1.21**	*.30*
Arrest	*.-75**	*.47*	*-.19*	*.83*	*-.30*	*.74*
Death	*-.20*	*.82*	*-.21*	*.81*	*-.34**	*.71*
Pregnancy	*.02*	*1.02*	*.34*	*1.41*	*.107*	*1.11*
College degree by 30	*-1.33**	*.27*	*-1.58**	*.21*	*-.83**	*.44*
Parent expects HS degree by 20	*-.88**	*.42*	*.23*	*1.26*	*.10*	*1.10*
Parent expects college degree by 30	*-2.18**	*.11*	*1.50**	*.22*	*-.99**	*.37*
Race/Ethnicity						
Hispanic	*.49*	*1.62*	*.59**	*1.80*	*.72**	*2.05*
Black	*-.79**	*.46*	*-.74*	*.48*	*-.07*	*.93*
Mother's Education (BA omitted)						
Mom lt HS	*2.00**	*7.42*	*1.60**	*4.93*	*.91**	*2.48*
Mom HS	*1.67**	*5.31*	*1.51**	*4.53*	*.94**	*2.56*
Mom some college	*1.22**	*3.39*	*1.10**	*3.01*	*.78**	*2.19*

Age	*-.33*	*.72*	*-.07*	*.93*	*-.08*	*.93*
ASVAB	*-.04**	*.96*	*-.03**	*.97*	*-.01**	*.99*
Residence (nonmetro omitted)						
Suburban Metro	*-.16*	*.85*	*-.55**	*.58*	*-.05*	*.95*
Central City metro	*.12*	*1.12*	*-.43*	*.65*	*-.05*	*.93*
Not Identified	*1.53*	*4.77*	*1.29*	*3.63*	*1.26*	*3.55*
Mother had a teen birth	*.72**	*2.05*	*.60**	*1.83*	*.21*	*1.24*
Male	*.60**	*1.82*	*.26*	*1.30*	*.20*	*1.22*
Authoritative parenting style	*-.17*	*.85*	*-.06*	*.94*	*-.20*	*.81*
Lived with both bio parents in 1997	*-1.48**	*.23*	*-.81**	*.44*	*-.74**	*.48*
Poverty	*1.02**	*2.80*	*.04*	*1.04*	*-.02*	*.98*