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Educational Attitudes of Black, White and Hispanic Mothers

Antonio Ramon Acuna
Loyola University Chicago

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EDUCATIONAL ATTITUDES OF BLACK,
WHITE, AND HISPANIC MOTHERS

by

Antonio R. Acuna

A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate
School of Loyola University of Chicago in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
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VITA

The author, Antonio Ramon Acuna, is the son of Antonio Jose Acuna and Odette Wilson Acuna. He was born June 20, 1954, in Oak Park, Illinois.

His elementary education was obtained in the Methodist school system in San Jose, Costa Rica and at Wheaton Christian Grammer School, Wheaton, Illinois. His secondary education was completed in 1972 at Wheaton Academy. He received his Bachelor of Arts from Bethel College in St. Paul, Minnesota, in 1977.

Upon graduation, Mr. Acuna was employed by the State of Illinois as a social worker. Mr. Acuna entered the doctoral program in clinical psychology at Loyola University of Chicago in 1983. He completed the requirements for a Masters of Arts degree in 1986. Mr. Acuna completed his internship in 1988 at Cook County Hospital, Chicago, Illinois. Presently, Mr. Acuna is employed as the director of the Erie Teen Health Center.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The issue of academic achievement among minority racial groups is controversial and timely. Historically, the 1954 Brown decision (see Nettles, Thoeny, & Gosman, 1986) declared segregated schools to be inherently unequal. This landmark Supreme Court ruling began the gradual process of addressing the educational status quo so as to insure equal educational opportunities to people of all ethnic groups. In the 1960's President Johnson's "War on Poverty" also addressed the issue of educational inequities. Education was seen as the great equalizer and a variety of novel, federally funded, educationally oriented programs were initiated. In addition, a number of remedial and educational curricula have been implemented over the years in an attempt to boost academic performance (Lee, Schnur, & Brooks-Gunn, 1988). Still, 20 to 30 years later, despite these large scale efforts, there exist large academic gaps between majority and minority students (Ortiz, 1986).

Perhaps the most acute example of ethnic group difference in academic achievement is in the area of high school completion. A number of nation-wide, longitudinal studies have documented the statistically significant dropout rate differences that exist between ethnic groups. By and large, minority students drop out of high school at a 50% higher rate than majority students (Barro & Kolstad, 1987). These figures are even more pronounced in poverty-stricken urban areas, largely inhabited by minorities. In a number of inner city high schools within Chicago, for example, the dropout rate exceeds 60% of the initial freshman class (Gerald, 1985).

However, gaps in academic achievement exist in academic areas other than high school. The literature documents differential rates of achievement at a variety of levels. Beginning at the elementary age, minority students consistently score lower on reading, math, and standardized achievement tests (Ortiz, 1986; Matthews, Carpenter, Lindquist, & Silver, 1984). These differences also are evidenced at the junior high and senior high levels. In summary, on standard criteria of academic achievement from first to twelfth grade, minority students have been unable to bridge the gap

between themselves and majority students despite a variety of efforts to remediate the problem.

A number of perspectives have been articulated over the years to explain ethnic differences in academic achievement. These theories can be grouped into three broad categories. The "genetic endowment" perspective suggests that academic and intellectual differences are a result of genetic predispositions, thus relegating minorities to a position of inferiority (Jensen, 1980). The "cultural" perspective suggests that racial or ethnic patterns of functioning may not be compatible with majority culture functioning (Carter & Segura, 1979). The third theory, the "structural" school pinpoints socioeconomic factors as primarily responsible for the chronic underachievement displayed by minority groups (Ogbu, 1978). Unfortunately, these perspectives lack sufficient confirmatory research.

Previous research in the area of academic achievement has examined a variety of factors, ranging from school and parental qualities to characteristics of the student, in an attempt to identify factors that contribute to differential levels of success (Fernandez and Shu, 1989). However, the research is limited in two respects. First, the research predominately

examines behavioral correlates of academic achievement, and does not examine the possible contribution of parental attitudes toward education. Second, research has not studied the development of attitudes toward education. An entire body of research, in part relating to the efficacy of the federal Head Start program, points to the relevance of examining the roots of school success (Lee, Shnur, & Brooks-Gunn, 1988).

The present study was designed to address the limitations of previous research. The specific factors which may have an impact upon differences in academic achievement among ethnic groups must be examined carefully as they begin to develop. In addition, it is important to look to theories of achievement to provide a possible theoretical framework for the research.

The present study was planned to develop and utilize a measure of educational attitudes which could be used with White, Black, and Hispanic inner-city mothers. The aim of the study was to identify pertinent attitudes and examine whether various ethnic group differed in regard to these attitudes. Subjects were participants in Head Start parent education groups. Based on the literature on academic achievement differences, it was hypothesized that minorities would

hold different educational attitudes than would non-minorities.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The 1960's was a time of important social re-organization. On a variety of fronts, efforts were made to reduce the educational differences between the majority and minority populations. In particular, a number of academic programs were implemented to enhance the learning opportunities of those not equally benefiting from educational resources. These programs included increased college aid, special after-school programs and large scale pre-school programs (Jones, 1984). Project Head Start, a notable example of a pre-school program, was born out of President Johnson's "Great Society" and "War on Poverty". However, 25 years hence significant and pervasive racial differences in school achievement still exist. Minority students are still not equitably represented throughout the academic strata and opportunity gaps have not been closed (Ascher, 1987).

This literature survey begins with an examination of patterns of achievement inequities among minority

groups in secondary, primary and preschool grades. Next, the three primary theories that have been proposed to account for these disparities will be reviewed. An examination of parental contributions to academic achievement follows. Particular emphasis will be placed on understanding the relationship between parental attitudes and children's academic performance. Also, previous efforts to determine cultural differences within the field of parental attitudes will be reviewed. Finally, a comprehensive model of academic achievement will be utilized as a framework for better understanding parents' perception of academics.

Academic Inequities

Perhaps the most glaring example of minority group inequity in the academic sphere comes from recent high school drop-out statistics. Black and Hispanic students drop out of high school at significantly higher rates than White students (Hispanics=18.7%; Blacks=16.8%; and Whites=12.3%), as evidenced in Barro and Kolstad's (1987) national, longitudinal survey. Other studies (Grant & Snyder, 1983; Rumberger, 1983) have resulted in similar estimates (Hispanic=23%, 27%; Blacks= 15%, 21.2%; and Whites= 10%, 13%). The aforementioned studies

document, over a period of time, the differential dropout rates in a large cohort of students.

Studies conducted in elementary school also point to ethnic group gaps in scholarship. Jones (1987) analyzed data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) over a 15 year period, 1970 to 1984. The NAEP is a periodic assessment of a national sample of three age groups (9, 13, and 17) in reading and mathematics. Among the major findings is that the differences between achievement scores for Black and White students were one to three years, with Blacks lagging behind. On the average, nine year-olds were one year behind, and the differential gradually increased, leaving Black 17-year-olds three years behind. In particular, the results for 1984 nine-year olds reversed a trend of gradual narrowing of the academic gap between Blacks and Whites.

Results from analysis of the mathematical segment of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) provide further documentation that inequities exist in the educational achievement of Black and Hispanic students in the United States (Anick, et al., 1981). National Assessment results are based on the performance of a national, representative sample of over

70,000 9-, 13-, and 17-year-olds. Between 250 and 450 mathematical achievement test items were administered to these students during the 1977-1978 school year. Results indicate that both Black and Hispanics' performance was significantly below the national average at each age assessed. At age nine, Blacks were 11 percentage points below the national average, and the difference increased as the students grew older. The difference was 15 percentage points at age 13 and 17 points at age 17. A similar, but less pronounced pattern was found for Hispanics. At age nine, their average score was nine percentage points below the national norm; by age 13, the difference increased to 12 points and by age 17, it was still 12 percentage points below the national average.

Analysis of achievement by content area and cognitive level displayed similar results. The assessment focused on five major areas: (1) numbers and numeration, (2) variables and relationships, (3) geometry (size, shapes and position), (4) measurement, and (5) graphs and tables. The difference between the national average and averages of Blacks and Hispanics was consistent over all three cognitive levels, never deviating more than three points. For example, at age

nine Black students averaged 11 percentage points below the national average in computation. Finally, the study indicates that Black students participate on the average in one less math course than their White counterparts. The authors call for an increased effort to eliminate the inequities that exist in the mathematical education of minorities (Anick, Carpenter, & Smith; 1981).

Matthews, Carpenter, Lindquist, and Silver (1984) provides the results of a 1982 NAEP follow-up study. Again the population is composed of a national, representative sample that included over 45,000 students. Results indicate little, if any, improvement for minority students, except at age 13, since the 1978 assessment. At age 13, both the Black and Hispanic students improved their scores, relative to the White students by 3.5 percentage points. At each age assessed, from 40% to 69% of the black and Hispanic students were in the lowest quartile of achievement. Finally, there was a modest improvement in the participation of Black students in math courses; however they continue to lag behind White students. For example, only 33% of black 17-year-olds have taken a geometry course in comparison to over 55% of their White counterparts.

Continued evidence of an achievement gap between

minority and nonminority children comes from the NAEP's report on reading proficiency (Ortiz, 1986). While the report demonstrates gains by minority children in the last decade, Hispanic and Black students continue to read at significantly lower levels than Whites. The 1984 sample included approximately 30,000 students in grades 4, 8, and 11. At each age level Whites displayed 10 to 13% higher reading scores than Black and Hispanic children. The difference between Hispanic and Black students was negligible. The author notes that when the parents' level of education and the reading activities of the family were partialled out, ethnic group differences dropped by 4% for 4th graders, 7% for 8th graders, and 8.5% for 11th graders. However, the author notes that the study did not control for other possible factors that differentiate the experience of minority and nonminority children, such as aspirations and encouragement by parents, which could have accounted for an increased portion of the variance.

A number of state and local agencies have also examined the issue of academic achievement, such as the Board of Education of the State of Florida (1987), Fairfax County, Virginia (Smith & Andrew), and Illinois Board of Education (Gerald, 1986). Consistent with the

aforementioned studies, Beal (1987) noted that Hispanic and Black students, at all grade levels, scored significantly lower than White students on the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (Iowa's). The Iowas are a popular and widely used test of academic achievement. In particular, the author noted that minority students scored significantly lower on vocabulary items and that remediation efforts should be directed to this area.

Finally, research on children in Project Head Start supports the notion of ethnic gaps in achievement in young children. In a longitudinal study of 969 disadvantaged Black and White preschoolers, it was noted that Black children scored significantly lower than did White children on cognitive measures such as the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test after a year of Head Start. (Lee et al., 1984). Thus, in each of the age periods in which academic achievement has been examined there have been consistent racial differences, with minorities trailing White students.

In essence, the issue of racial inequity in the academic sphere is well documented. Programs of the 1960's and 1970's that were designed to increase minorities' access to and attainment in education have apparently not had positive results on a large scale,

since there still exists large gaps between Whites and minorities across a variety of academic indices. While the academic racial differences are addressed in the literature, there is no agreement as to why minorities are not able to benefit from the educational system.

Theories of Achievement Differences

A variety of theories have been put forth to explain chronic ethnic group differences in academic performance. These theories can be grouped into three broad categories: those which view racial differences as a result of genetic endowment, those which attribute the discrepancy to cultural factors, and those which point to the effects of poverty in explaining achievement differences.

One controversial theory suggests that racial differences in academic achievement are caused by differences in genetic endowment of critical intellectual factors related to academic learning. Most notably Arthur Jensen (1980) attributes average IQ differences between Blacks and Whites to biological inferiority. In this perspective, academic differences by race are a natural consequence of innate predispositions, for which remediation need not be considered. Jensen has been criticized for his

methodology and for not taking into account important socio-economic factors (Scarr and Weinberg, 1976).

In contrast, other theories emphasize cultural factors as playing a major role. Studies attempt to isolate characteristics unique to minority groups which might account for academic disparities (Hendricks & Montgomery, 1984; Evans & Anderson, 1973). From this viewpoint, particular cultural characteristics are challenged as being incompatible with academic achievement. For example, minority cultures frequently are described as having an external locus of control, causing them to be less aggressive in seeking achievements which will better their futures. A danger with this argument is the insinuation that minority cultures are inferior or deprived in comparison to majority culture standards.

A third general theory emphasizes socioeconomic factors as primarily responsible for the disproportionate under-attainment of minority students. Rather than focusing on biological or cultural differences, the socioeconomic perspective assumes that poverty related factors play the most important role in affecting academic achievement. For example, the quality of schools in urban versus suburban areas has

been an area of investigation (West, 1985). Referred to as the "structural" theory because of its emphasis on the class structure in which minorities are found in the lowest economic level, this perspective also attempts to understand the role of the "underclass" in present day society.

One study which raises the issue of the importance of ethnicity in affecting academic achievement comes from Fernandez and Shu's 1988 re-analysis of the High School and Beyond study. The original High School and Beyond study (Barro & Kolstad, 1987) attempted to identify the characteristics of dropouts by following a national sample of 35,000 high school students for three years, beginning with their sophomore year. Fernandez and Shu concluded that Hispanics drop out of school for reasons beyond those frequently cited in the literature (e.g., academic incapacities, or low family income, or parents with little education, or discipline problems, or being over age). The authors were quick to point out that many Hispanics do drop out for the aforementioned reasons, but Hispanics who are not "at risk" (e.g., who are middle class, academically gifted, interested in school, and willing to behave) also leave before graduation at higher rates than their White, Asian, and

Black counterparts. Fernandez and Shu (1988) raise questions about the reasons that seemingly capable Hispanic youth are compelled to drop out of school. It is notable that most recent Department of Education statistics confirm that the Hispanic dropout rate continues to increase, rising to 35.7% last year, almost triple that of White students and double that of Black students (N.Y. Times, 1989). Fernandez and Shu call for an investigation into cultural factors which may contribute to this differential dropout rate.

Cultural Contributions to Academic Achievement

One approach to understanding cultural contributions to academic achievement has been to examine broad-based cultural beliefs and characteristics, and to determine the relationship of these characteristics to academic success. Cultural differences between Whites and Hispanics have been most consistently documented in three areas: cooperative/competitive human relationship styles, field dependent/independent cognitive styles, and authoritarianism. Overall, most studies have assumed that competitiveness, field independence, and lack of authoritarianism are associated with higher achievement. Several studies have demonstrated that Hispanics are

more cooperative or prosocial and less competitive than Whites (Kagan & Knight, 1979; McClintock, 1974). Kagan (1977) concluded that Mexican-American children are more motivated by altruism or group enhancement goals, while White children have stronger competitive motives. Similarly, Spangler (1982) concluded that Hispanics are more field dependent than are Anglo-American children. Finally, Ramirez (1976) reviewed studies revealing that Hispanic families are highly authoritarian and father dominated. One recent study examines the link between such values and academic achievement. In following up on these studies, Buenning & Tollefson (1987) studied 108 fifth-through eighth grade students, 51 of whom were Mexican-American, and 57 of whom were White. They reported that students who were identified as high achievers (upper four stanines on a standardized achievement test) were more competitive and more field independent than were students identified as low achievers (lower five stanines on a standardized achievement test). These studies have attempted to delineate unique cultural characteristics, and demonstrated some support for their link with academic achievement.

Another approach to viewing cultural factors in

achievement has been to investigate attitudes toward education directly. Unfortunately, the literature is inconsistent regarding the aspirations, expectations, and motivational climate of minorities. Some studies reported that Mexican-Americans have lower educational expectations, such as expectations to attend college (Heller, 1968; Madsen, 1964). In Munoz and Garcia (1978) the development of aspirations is investigated. In their interview of California university students, the authors found that 55% of the Hispanics in their sample began thinking of attending college during their 10th grade or later and 26% did not consider the possibility until their final year in high school. In contrast, the vast majority (74%) of the White students had planned to attend college during their elementary school years. The authors conclude that majority students begin forming firm academic expectations considerably sooner than minority students. Their research suggests the need to examine cultural variables contributing to achievement in earlier grades, and hints at the potential need for intervention in the elementary school years.

Cultural Differences in Parental Attitudes

One avenue for transmitting cultural values which

may impact educational attitudes is through parents (Vasquez, 1982). A variety of approaches have been employed to examine the role of minority parents in the academic socialization process. The results provide some support for cultural differences in parental attitudes, but are inconclusive, as will be noted below. Many of the studies are limited in that differences in parental attitudes are examined within a particular culture, rather than comparing across cultures. Further, the vast majority of the recent research has been done with adolescents (junior high school age and older), limiting the understanding of the impact of parental attitudes on the early development of school performance. This research is reviewed, however, for its potential implications for research with younger children.

Vasquez (1978) found that "mother encouragement" (as measured through interviews with students) to do well in school was one of the most important variables in discriminating "successful" and "unsuccessful" groups of Hispanic university students. The author suggests that the support and encouragement offered by mother counteracted the effects of poverty and racial discrimination.

In a slightly different vein, Gutierrez and

Montalvo (1982) found a high correlation between certain maternal behaviors and the tendency to dropout of high school in students of Puerto Rican descent. In particular, the homes of dropouts were differentiated by an unsupportive atmosphere for school achievement, infrequent discussions of schoolwork, and older siblings who had dropped out.

One of the more thorough studies to investigate ethnic differences in the academic socialization process was conducted by Evans and Anderson (1973). The authors compared Mexican-American and White junior high students and their parents on a number of achievement and achievement motivation indices. The authors utilized Rosen's theory of achievement syndrome (Rosen, 1956), which entails three components, achievement motivation, achievement value orientation, and educational aspiration, to guide the construction of their questionnaires. In addition, the authors included measures of self-concept and self-esteem in their measurement instruments. The findings suggested that Hispanic parents did not stress attending college, nor promote independence in their children to the same degree as White parents. However, the authors did find that Hispanic parents did assist their children with

their homework and stressed the importance of academic achievements as much as White parents.

With regards to the students' responses, Hispanic students displayed significantly lower levels of self-esteem, planning for the future, and educational aspirations than the White students. In addition, the Hispanic students appeared significantly more "fatalistic" than their White counterparts. The authors relate the Hispanic parents' level of independence training to their children's lack of confidence, low aspirations, and fatalistic world view (correlations between parents report of independence training and listed variables ranged from $-.197$ to $-.473$). The authors consider a sense of independence, or autonomy, to be very important if a student is to identify with new reference groups that stress academic achievement. In particular, the authors conclude that very different patterns of socialization and cognitive development occur between Hispanic and White students which are likely to be associated with child-rearing practices that might or might not promote autonomy.

Relationship between Parental Attitudes and Child Achievement

Essential to an investigation of the parental

attitudes which may impact on children's academic performance is the establishment of a relationship between parental attitudes and child's behaviors. While it may appear intuitively correct that parents' attitudes affect their children's behaviors, the current literature does not identify these attitudes as the principal determinant of children's behaviors. Overall, studies demonstrate a stronger positive relationship between parental behaviors and child outcomes than between parental attitudes and child outcomes (Thompson, 1985). Thompson notes that the value of studying parental attitudes increases when the attitudes relate to specific parental behaviors. Despite these limitations of considering the effects parental attitudes, however, a body of research exists which suggests that such attitudes do play a significant role in the development of academic performance.

Perhaps the most compelling work in the area that simultaneously provides a basis for further investigation comes from Miller (1986, 1988) and his work in the field of children's cognitive development. Within a social cognitive framework, Miller initially assails the "lag" that exists in investigating what parents think about children and how these beliefs

affect the child's development. Miller considers the origins of parental beliefs, the relation between beliefs and parental behaviors, and the relationship between beliefs and children's cognitive development. Miller (1988) reviewed nine different relevant studies. The studies, by and large, consist of parents completing questionnaires that assess their knowledge of different developmental aspects, such as readiness for school (Ireton, Shing-Lun, & Hampen, 1981), which are later correlated with child's outcome behavior. Miller summarizes the findings by noting a significant yet small correlation (.25) between parental attitudes and observed behaviors. Further, Miller describes a path-analysis linking parental beliefs to children's ability at ages three and four to function on seven cognitive tasks. This research suggested a relationship of .24 (significant at the .05 level). Thus, Miller concludes that parental beliefs do relate to the quality of their child's intellectual functioning. These results remain significant even when potentially confounding factors such as S.E.S. are controlled.

Earlier studies also support the importance of studying parental attitudes and academic achievement. One such study, by Crandall, Dewey, Katkovsky, and

Preston (1964), investigated environmental factors in the child's experience which might impede or facilitate the development of intellectual and academic competence. Crandall et al. (1964) stated, "most children have developed by the time they enter grade school, fairly consistent differences in the values they attach to academic achievements, in the standards they use to judge their efforts, and in the strategies they employ to attain their academic goals" (p. 54). The study investigates the relationship between parents' attitudes and children's early grade-school academic performance.

Crandall et al.'s (1964) study consisted of 80 parents and their children (20 girls, 20 boys). All children were elementary school students, and ethnic background was not reported. Parents were interviewed using several achievement related indices, such as the parents' evaluation of the child's intellectual competence, the parents minimal standards for achievement, the parents' instigation of intellectual activities, and the parents' participation with his child in intellectual activities. These scores were correlated with the children's IQ and achievement test scores. Results of the study indicated that only mothers' evaluation of and satisfaction with their

children's intellectual competence were positively related to the children's actual academic performance (average correlation was .46), while those of the fathers were not significantly related.

Another work that supports the importance of investigating the relationship between parental attitudes and child's performance comes from St. John (1972). At issue is the question, do parental attitudes towards schooling contribute to the attitudes of their children? In particular, the author used questionnaires with Black and White parents and children. The sample consisted of 234 mothers and their children (all 6th graders). Subjects completed a 10 item semantic differential scale that assessed components of academic self-concept, such as "My child is (Stupid _ _ _ Smart). In addition, mother's aspiration and expectation for child's future education were assessed. These scores were correlated with the child's academic self-concept and aspiration, plus the child's academic achievement, as measured by his IQ and grade point average. The author states that there exists a significant relationship between mother's and child's academic attitudes (correlations ranged from .16 to .57, with most correlations above .42). Even with IQ and family

background controlled, maternal attitudes help explain a significant amount of the variance in children's academic self-confidence and ambition. These correlations were evident in Black and White families.

Further evidence of a relationship between parental beliefs and child's performance comes from an article by Seginer (1983). The author reviews 11 separate studies which attempt to measure the effect of parental educational expectations on child's academic performance. In a majority of these investigations, mothers or both parents of elementary school age boys and girls were interviewed. Most investigators defined parents' expectations in terms of years of schooling and occupation expected for their child. The studies supported the general contention that children's academic performance is positively correlated with parents' expectations (Gigliotti & Brookover, 1975; Shipman, McKee, & Bridgeman, 1976). Seginer, in addition, outlines an expansion to the expectation-achievement model. In particular, Seginer proposes that further efforts concentrate in two areas: one, a better understanding of the origins, or antecedents, of parents' expectations and two, the factors which mediate parents' educational expectations. Within this

framework, particular attention is drawn to parents' own academic expectations as a central factor in determining their expectations for their children.

Lastly, Thompson (1985) investigated the relative influences of the environment on educational performance. In the study 95 environmental measures of the school, neighborhood, and home were correlated with the measures of educational performance. The sample consisted of 392 7- through 10 year-olds and their parents. Results indicated that School and Neighborhood variables showed little association with educational performance, while measures of the Home environment were associated with educational performance. In particular, Parent variables, such as Home Literacy and Educational Ambition demonstrated the strongest association with educational performance. The author concludes that emphasis should shift away from the examination of impoverished material surroundings, to supporting and developing parental attitudes and behaviors that can enrich the academic performance of children.

Comprehensive Models of Academic Achievement

A comprehensive theoretical framework which incorporates a variety of contributing factors is helpful in designing a thorough study of parental

attitudes towards academic achievement. One such framework can be found in the work of Eccles Parsons. Parsons has conducted numerous studies (1977,1878,1982) investigating the impact of parents' beliefs on children's self-concept and achievement in the field of mathematics. Parson's research has centered around understanding differential gender performance in mathematics. In this work, she tackles questions similar to those raised in literature on ethnic differences in achievement. For example, factors traditionally associated with achievement, such as IQ and socio-economic status, did not account for female's tendencies to lag behind males in mathematical achievement. Similarly, even when ability and socio-economic status are controlled, minorities (Hispanics in particular) continue to lag behind Whites in academic achievement (Fernandez & Shu, 1988) Thus, Parsons' work provides insight into more subtle factors which may influence academic achievement.

The thrust of Parsons' work is to parcel out the developmental origins of current sex differences by comprehensively assessing the various determinants which influence a child's attitudes, beliefs, and performance in mathematics. Of particular interest to Parsons is how

parents hold values which may be conveyed concerning math, such as the difficulty or value of certain math courses to their children. In particular, Parsons examined parents' attitudes towards the importance of math, the effort required, the degree of difficulty, and the child's math ability. Results indicated that parents, especially mothers, had a stronger influence on a child's achievement beliefs than fathers and teachers. For example, mothers attitudes were positively correlated with indices of achievement such as math grades and math achievement test scores (average correlation was .42, significant at the .01 level) In addition, parents estimated that math was more difficult for their daughters than their sons, and that advanced math courses were more important for their sons. Further, the students' self-concept and math expectancies were positively correlated to their mothers' beliefs about their math potential and aptitude (correlations were .45 and .58, respectively). Hence, the significant influence that parents exert over their children's academic choices is demonstrated in Parsons' work.

Parsons' model of achievement socialization serves a point of departure for better understanding the

differential achievement rate exhibited between ethnic groups. In an attempt to construct a comprehensive model for examining achievement related motives and behaviors, Parsons has encompassed a number of important theoretical constructs into her achievement model. These constructs can serve in a similar manner in the development of an instrument which taps into the attitudes which influence the messages that Black, White, and Hispanic mothers convey to their children concerning the broad experience of education and academics.

Parsons outlines 10 major theoretical constructs in her discussion of math attitudes, which are as follows: (1) interest value of the tasks, (2) utility value of the task, (3) the perceived effort involved in the task, (4) the cost of failure, (5) self-concept of ability, (6) familiarity, (7) expectations, (8) traditional gender roles, (9) causal attribution, and (10) social alternatives to the task. The theoretical underpinnings of each of these constructs will be discussed, in addition to its relationship to differential academic achievement.

Theoretical Constructs

The interest value of a task is defined as the

inherent, immediate enjoyment one gets from engaging in an activity (Eccles, 1983). Hence, the degree to which a task is able to fulfill needs determines the value a person attaches to that task. Eccles goes further to state that individual differences on this variable are created by differential past experiences with the task and with differential information from peers, teachers, and parents.

A different but related construct is the utility value. The utility value of the task is determined by the importance of the task for some future goal that might be unrelated to the process nature of the task. For example, a student might enroll in an advanced mathematics class despite having little interest in the subject. The student realizes the instrumentality of mathematics in reaching her goal. Sherman (1980) noted that the students' perception of usefulness of a course was strongly related to plans to continue or to drop. The application to the present study is noteworthy, in that it would be beneficial to see whether ethnic groups differ in the usefulness that they attach to the academic process.

Perceived effort needed for success has also been identified as a key determinant of achievement behavior

(Kukla, 1972). The following reasoning is put forth: the anticipated amount of effort increases in relation to the amount of effort considered worthwhile, then the value of the task to the individual should decrease. The messages that parents give to their children concerning the amount of work involved in academics is a possible point of differentiation between ethnic groups.

Another variable under consideration is the cost of failure. To what extent does the possibility of failure influence academic decisions? Eccles (1983) posed the question, whether females are less likely to take risks than males and whether this is related to their tendency not to enroll in classes where their skills and expectations for success are not well defined. Whether there is a similar differential effect between ethnic groups is worthy of inquiry.

Self-concept of ability is defined as the assessment of one's own competency to perform specific tasks or to carry out role-appropriate behaviors (Eccles, 1983). It is considered, by most authors, as a key causal determinant of a variety of achievement behaviors (Kukla, 1978; Nicholls, 1976). Intervention procedures designed to raise students' confidence in their abilities have been shown to induce gains in the

students' subsequent achievement behaviors. (Dweck, 1975). In a similar vein, Armstrong and Kahl (1978), demonstrated that students' ratings of their mathematical abilities predict the amount of math they plan to take in high school. Hence, while these studies indicate that self-concept of ability is related to achievement behaviors such as course plans and actual performance, it is not clear whether there is a difference between ethnic groups concerning the types or strength of the confidence inducing attitudes.

Familiarity with the academic community is another determinant reported as significant. This variable focuses on the degree to which parents are comfortable interacting in an academic atmosphere. In a related vein, O'Donnell (1987) reports that an intervention strategy focusing on familiarizing Hispanic mothers with aspects of a college education, such as requirements for admission and a university setting, significantly changed the mother's perception of higher education, not only for her daughter, but for herself. This research suggests that ethnic groups differ in their level of comfort and degree of familiarity with academic areas.

The concept of expectancy is defined as the estimated probability of success. Seginer (1983)

reports that high achieving children tend to come from families who have high expectations and who consequently are likely to set high standards. Empirical studies on the relation between parent's expectations and academic performance support this contention, despite variations in definitions of expectations and achievement (Seginer, 1983). Do ethnic groups vary in the academic standards and goals they establish for their children?

The need to behave according to a set of social prescriptions for sex-appropriate conduct, or gender-role identity is a construct that has garnered significant research (Eccles, 1983). Specific tasks are identified as either consistent or inconsistent with one's sex-role identity. The extent to which a task is consistent with one's identity influences the value of the task. Central to the argument is the process of sex-typing a task. Do ethnic groups differ in their sex-identification of appropriate and inappropriate tasks for their youth? Taking the argument one step further, are certain activities also ethnic-typed? Matute-Bianchi (1986) in her comparison of Mexican-American and Japanese-American high school students found that to be a good student was inconsistent with being a "Chicano". The existence and sources of these

ethnic differences merit investigation.

Attribution theorists have suggested another set of variables as important mediators of individual differences in achievement motivation (Weiner, 1974; Heider, 1958). According to these theorists, it is not success or failure, but the causal attributions made for either of these outcomes that influence future expectancies. For example, if people attribute success to a stable factor such as ability, then they expect continued success. However, if they attribute success to an unstable factor such as good luck they should be uncertain about their future outcomes. In particular, Eccles (1983) argues that attributions play a critical role in the formations of one's self-concept of ability when confronted with novel tasks. Kukla (1978) suggested that it is primarily attributions to ability that influences subsequent achievement behavior. How parents interpret academic success or failure is worthy of investigation, with particular respect to whether there are ethnic group differences.

Finally, one variable identified as potentially interfering with academic success is the loss of time for valued, social alternatives (Parsons, 1983). For example, do academic choices jeopardize other important

goals, such as social activities? Decisions to try hard in school or to drop out are not made in isolation, but within a broad social array of behavior options. Are certain tasks more compelling than academic goals for certain ethnic groups?

The aforementioned studies indicate the complexity of the subject. Whereas the issue of ethnic differences in achievement motivation has been addressed many times before, most studies have failed to focus on a comprehensive review of specific educational attitudes. Eccles' model of achievement provides a number of components that have not been included in previous research in the area. The present study borrows heavily from Eccles' model in order to understand better the possible nuances that differentiate ethnic groups in their perceptions of academics. It is hoped that such information will provide background knowledge which can contribute to closing the educational gaps that exist between ethnic groups.

Hypotheses:

The literature on academic achievement indicates a consistent gap between Black/Hispanic and White students. At the same time the literature points to the role of the parents in the determination of their

child's academic record. The present study was designed to develop an instrument which measures parental attitudes toward education, while examining patterns of these attitudes among various ethnic groups. Parsons' model of academic achievement appears to be applicable to the problem at hand. Parsons outlines 10 different variables which impact on a student's decision to pursue mathematics in high school. Employing the aforementioned 10 variables as a framework, the present study attempts to differentiate the ways in which minority parents view academics differently than majority parents. On the basis of the literature which indicates significant gaps between minority and majority students on a variety of academic achievement indices, it was hypothesized that minority mothers, Hispanics in particular, would score lower than majority mothers on the 10 main variables.

In general, preliminary analyses focused on the properties of the adapted instrument. Then, the responses of mothers from different ethnic groups were be compared on each of the 10 scales. More specifically, hypotheses are as follows:

Hypothesis I:

Hispanic and Black mothers will be less likely to

describe education as "interesting" or "enjoyable" than White mothers.

Hypothesis II:

Both Black and Hispanic mothers will be less likely than White mothers to see academics as useful, or necessary, in the accomplishment of their goals or their child's goals.

Hypothesis III:

Hispanic and Black mothers will report that educational success requires significantly greater effort than White mothers.

Hypothesis IV:

White mothers will perceive their and their children's academic failure as more costly than Hispanic or Black mothers.

Hypothesis V;

It is hypothesized that Hispanic mothers will display a poorer self-concept of abilities than White or Black mothers.

Hypothesis VI:

Hispanics and Black mothers will report being less familiar with academic activities than White mothers.

Hypothesis VII:

White mothers will have higher academic expectations for

their children than will Hispanic and Black mothers.

Hypothesis VIII:

Hispanics and Blacks will report more than Whites that academics or education is in some way inconsistent with their ethnic and racial background.

Hypothesis IX:

Black and Hispanic mothers will be more likely to attribute academic success or failure to unstable factors, such as luck, than White mothers. White mothers will be more likely to make academic attributions to stable factors such as one's abilities.

Hypothesis X:

Hispanic and Black mothers will perceive the loss of valued alternatives to academics, such as social opportunities, as more severe than White mothers.

CHAPTER III

METHOD

Sample

The sample was composed of mothers who had children enrolled in Project Head Start. Project Head Start is a federally funded pre-school program which provides academic and social enrichment for disadvantaged children. Children who are enrolled in Head Start range in age from 3 to 5 years old. The only requirement for enrollment is economic status. Various economic cutoffs, depending on size of family, are employed to assure that Head Start serves families that live below the federally established poverty line. For example, a family of four must earn less than \$10,054 a year to qualify for Head Start enrollment.

Regarding the ethnic background of the participants, previous research has customarily utilized three groups: Hispanics, Whites, and Blacks. However, to understand better differences in the Hispanic community, a decision was made to separate Hispanics into Mexicans and Puerto Ricans. While sharing a common

language, Mexicans and Puerto Ricans have different cultural traditions, histories, and immigration patterns. Hence, four ethnic groups were identified for the present study: Whites, Blacks, Mexicans, and Puerto Ricans. The initial sample consisted of 177 respondents; however, people other than mothers, such as fathers, grandmothers, and other relatives were eliminated from the study. This reduced the sample to 153 respondents. The final sample consisted of 44 Black, 37 White, 27 Puerto Rican, and 45 Mexican mothers.

In terms of looking at the sample as a whole, there were approximately even numbers of children of both genders (81 females and 72 males). (See Table 1 for descriptive information pertaining to the sample.) In terms of marital status, 73 (48%) of the sample reported being married, 41 (27%) reported being never-married, 13 (9%) reported living with their partner, 12 (8%) reported being divorced, and 11 (8%) reported being separated. Regarding, the mother's level of education, 31 (20%) mothers reported an eighth grade education or less, 55 (36%) mothers stated receiving between a ninth and eleventh grade education, and 66 (64%) mothers reported having received a twelfth grade education or

Table 1

Descriptive Characteristics of the Sample by Ethnicity

Demographic Variable	Ethnicity			
	White	Black	Puerto Rican	Mexican
Educational Level				
Mean	11.57	11.89	10.46	7.89
S.D.	1.71	1.15	2.97	3.03
Time in U.S.				
Mean	27.58	27.96	23.67	11.77
S.D.	5.41	7.09	7.98	6.37
Marital Status				
*Never married	29.7	52.3	11.1	8.9
*Divorced	10.8	4.5	11.1	6.7
*Married	43.2	25.0	51.9	71.1
*Widowed	2.7	2.3	3.7	0
*Separated	10.8	9.1	3.7	4.4
*Living with partner	2.7	6.8	18.5	8.9
Background				
*Urban raised	91.7	86.4	51.9	48.9
*Rural r				

Note. Items preceded by an * are expressed in percentages.

higher. The mean for the mothers' educational status was tenth grade. In terms of the setting in which the mothers were raised, 107 (70%) stated growing-up in a urban setting, while 43 (30%) reported being raised in a rural setting. With regards to length of time in the U.S., 30 (20%) mothers reported living in the U.S. less than 12 years, while 122 (80%) stated living in the U.S. more than 12 years. The mean stay was 22 years.

In terms of examining the demographic variables for the mothers along ethnic divisions, White mothers described themselves primarily as married (43%), with an average of eleven years of schooling, raised in an urban setting(92%), and having lived in the U.S. for an average of 28 years. Black mothers tended to describe themselves as never been married(52%), high school graduates, raised in an urban setting(86%), and having lived in the U.S. for 28 years. In comparison, Mexican mothers described themselves as married(71%), having 7.8 years of education, raised in a rural setting(51%), and having lived in the U.S. for 11 years. Finally, Puerto Rican mothers portrayed themselves as married(52%), with 10.4 years of education, raised in an urban setting(52%), and having lived in the U.S. for an average of 23 years.

Recruitment of Subjects. In Chicago, Worthington, Hurst, and Associates (WHA), a psychological consulting firm, is the primary provider of mental health services to the Head Start program. WHA cooperated in the implementation of this study. WHA coordinated selection of sites. All sites scheduled for a mental health workshop during the months of December, 1989, and January, 1990, were designated for subject recruitment. A total of 23 sites were utilized for data collection, 10 of which were in predominantly White neighborhoods, four in Mexican neighborhoods, and nine in Black/Puerto Rican neighborhoods. In exchange for their assistance, a parent workshop curriculum was developed on the topic, "How to Encourage your Child's Academic Success".

Mothers rather than both parents were identified to participate in this study for three reasons. First, a large portion of Head Start households are headed by single women. Second, it is almost exclusively women who attend the parent education workshops. Third, the literature indicates that mothers are more influential than fathers and other relatives in determining a child's academic socialization (Eccles, 1983). However, all individuals who attended the workshop were invited to complete the questionnaire and to participate in the

subsequent workshop on school retention.

Measure

The survey instrument was designed to identify educational attitudes of Black, White, and Hispanic mothers, and was based on Eccles (1983) model of academic motivation (see Appendix A for the questionnaire). Eccles' research had identified 10 different components of academic motivation; they include: interest value, utility value, effort value, perceived task difficulty, cost of failure, academic self-concept, academic attribution, loss of valued alternatives, academic stereotypes, and academic familiarity. Eccles (1982) had asked parents to rate their children's academic and leisure activities along these indices. For example, "Which of the following activities (reading, math, sports, etc.) is the most difficult for your child?" Because the present study was designed to examine general educational attitudes, Eccles' format was not utilized. For the present study, statements were developed to reflect the 10 components of academic motivation.

The survey instrument consisted of 57 items divided into the 10 scales. A five point Likert scale was employed in which respondents selected from

"strongly agree" through "no opinion" through "strongly disagree". The questionnaire required approximately 60 minutes to complete and was provided in both Spanish and English. Two outside authorities (both bilingual health care providers) confirmed the accuracy of the Spanish version by translating the questionnaire back into English.

In addition to questions on academic socialization, demographic items were included so that the sample could be accurately described. Demographic questions included: the respondent's marital status, level of education, ethnic background, length of time living in the U.S. and in Chicago, the gender of their Head Start child, and whether the respondent was raised in an urban or rural setting. The study insures anonymity, and hence, confidentiality, in that the respondent's name was not solicited.

Procedure

The questionnaires was administered to Head Start parents as part of the Parent Education component of the Head Start mental health plan. Parents meet on a monthly basis with a mental health consultant to receive and discuss information related to mental health. The majority of these workshops are designed to improve the

parent's skills in disciplining their children. Additional workshop topics include AIDS, communication skills, and alcoholism.

The Parent Education meetings are approximately 2 hours long. This was sufficient time to administer the questionnaire and to conduct a workshop on school retention. Concerning the specific administration of the questionnaire, the consultant explained that the purpose of the questionnaire was to gather information on academic attitudes. Participation was voluntary. Five parents attending the meetings either declined to participate or were unable to complete the questionnaire. The questionnaire was given to all parents at the same time. Each question was read aloud, in both languages, if necessary, since some Head Start parents do not read well. Issues covered in the questionnaire were then discussed as part of a workshop on school retention.

Statistical Analyses

Analysis of the data proceeded in two stages. The first stage addressed the internal consistency of each of the instrument's scales. Specifically, Cronbach's test of internal consistency was utilized to determine whether scales were strengthened by the deletion of

certain items. Items which reduced the level of internal consistency were dropped from the analysis (see Results).

The second stage of data analysis involved testing the hypotheses regarding ethnic group differences in educational attitudes. More specifically, ANOVA's were used to test whether differences existed between White, Black, and Hispanic mothers on each of the educational scales. Further, ANOVA's were used to test whether differences existed as a result of demographic characteristics on the educational scales. Also, a series of analysis of covariance was used to control for the effects of various demographic factors on the main effects for ethnicity.

Lastly, various statistical tests were performed in order to better understand demographic factors within the sample. For example, Pearson Product-Moment correlations were used to measure the degree to which the continuous demographic variables were related, and ANOVA's were used to examine whether ethnic groups differed from each other in terms of demographic variables.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The data analysis is divided into two major sections. The first section deals with the development of the educational attitudes instrument. In particular, the 10 subscales are examined with regard to their internal consistency. The second section of the analysis focuses on testing the hypotheses that ethnic groups would differ in responding to the questionnaire. In addition to testing the hypotheses, the relationship between other demographic data and responses on the questionnaire was explored. Further, the relationships among the demographic variables were examined.

Instrument Reliabilities

A variety of statistical analyses were employed in order to determine the reliability of the scales of the instrument (see Appendix). First, a series of inter-correlations were performed, in which each questionnaire item was correlated with its own scale and then with all the other scales. Items that correlated higher with another scale than with their own were

eliminated from the questionnaire and from further analysis. This procedure resulted in the elimination of five items from the overall instrument.

Second, a test for Cronbach's alpha was conducted on both the original (57 item) and the abbreviated version (52 item) of the instrument. Table 2 displays the alpha level for each of the scales before and after item deletion and indicates the items which remain from each scale. In addition, item-total statistics from the Cronbach alpha analysis confirmed the appropriateness of removing the previous item deletions, as the deletion of these items did improve the scales' alpha levels. Further, alpha levels were not improved by the deletion of additional items.

The range of alphas, even within the abbreviated instrument was lower than anticipated. The alphas ranged from .03 (Scale Social Alternatives) to .61 (Scale Traditional Gender Roles). None of the scales reached the traditional lower bound of acceptable reliability of .70 (Ghiselli, Campbell, & Zedek, 1981). Two explanations for the low internal consistencies are possible. First, reliability increases with the number of items in each scale. In order to decrease respondent burden each scale had only 5 to 7 items. Typically, it

Table 2

Scale Reliabilities for the Educational Attitudes Scale

Revised Scale	Initial Alpha	Items Retained	Alpha
1. Interest	.55	1,2,3,4,5	.58
2. Utility Value	.52	7,8,10,11	.55
3. Effort	.45	12,13,14,16,17	.49
4. Cost of Failure	.37	18,19,20,21,22	.37
5. Self-concept	.58	23,24,25,26,27,28	.58
6. Familiarity	.26	30,31,32,33	.35
7. Expectations	.45	34,35,36,37,38,39	.45
8. Traditional values	.61	40,41,42,43,44	.61
9. Attributions	.28	45,46,47,49,50,51	.32
10. Social alternatives	.03	52,53,54,55,56,57	.03

is recommended that psychometric tests have more than 20 items (Gheselli et al, 1981). Second, a histogram of the frequencies of item responses indicates very little response variability (i.e., respondents tended to hedge their responses by choosing one of the middle responses as opposed to either disagreeing or agreeing strongly). Low variability in item response reduces correlations with other variables. Alphas reflect average correlations between all variables in the scale. As a result, the alphas for each scale were attenuated (Cohen & Cohen, 1983; Gheselli et al, 1981).

In the case of scale 10 (Social Alternatives), item elimination did not considerably improve the degree of alpha and it was dropped from the analyses. Despite the relatively low internal consistencies, a decision was made to retain the other scales. Thus, the final form of the instrument consisted of nine scales, which were comprised of a total of 45 items. The abbreviated version of the instrument was utilized in the remainder of the analysis.

A review of the nine educational scales, their title and brief description follows: (1) Interest reflects the intrinsic value a respondent attaches to academic activities; (2) Utility measures to what degree

a respondent views education as helpful in achieving life goals; (3) Effort reflects how much work is perceived in academic activities; (4) Cost of Failure is concerned with assessing the perceived consequences of academic underachievement; (5) Self-Concept involves the assessment of one's academic competency; (6) Familiarity reflects the respondent's degree of comfort and level of knowledge in relation to academic affairs; (7) Expectations attempts to determine the academic expectations one has for their children; (8) Traditional Gender Roles assesses the sex stereotyping of academic activities; and (9) Attributions determines whether the respondent attributes causality to internal or external factors.

Testing the Hypotheses

Ethnic Group. Before testing the hypotheses, the scales of the instrument were correlated with one another to determine whether MANOVA or ANOVA's should be used. Pearson product-moment correlations indicated that scales were not highly correlated with one another. Only two scales (Interest and Self-Concept) exhibited a correlation above .40. Thus, in order to test the hypothesis that minority respondents would differ from non-minority (White) respondents in their attitudes

toward education a series of one-way ANOVA's was conducted that compared respondent's ethnicity (Mexican, Puerto Rican, Black, and White) on each of the remaining nine attitudinal scales. Results of these analyses can be seen in Table 3. No statistically significant effects were found. The only scale that exhibited a trend towards significance was Scale 1 (Interesting) $F(3,135)=2.36, p<.075$. Similarly, when Hispanics (Mexicans and Puerto Ricans) were grouped together and compared with Blacks and Whites, no significant differences were found.

Because recent studies have suggested that Hispanics hold different educational attitudes than do non-Hispanics, another one-way ANOVA was conducted comparing Hispanics versus non-Hispanics (Black and White, together). Results indicate that the groups differed statistically on two scales (Table 4): Familiarity, $F(1,130)=5.44, p<.021$. and Traditional Gender Roles, $F(1,135)=5.14, p<.025$. These results indicate that Hispanics were less familiar with characteristics of the educational system and more likely to endorse traditional gender-roles than were non-Hispanics.

Finally, a series of one-way ANOVA'S was conducted

Table 3

Differences in Educational Attitudes in Four Ethnic Groups

Scale	Ethnicity				F	p
	White	Black	Puerto Rican	Mexican		
Interest	13.06	12.51	13.83	11.74	2.36	.07
Utility Value	8.50	8.50	8.32	8.00	.23	.87
Effort	11.78	11.88	12.65	11.36	1.02	.39
Cost of Failure	11.32	11.45	11.50	11.06	.14	.93
Self concept	15.09	15.24	16.92	15.68	1.69	.17
Familiarity	9.53	9.71	10.29	10.72	2.01	.11
Expectations	15.24	14.67	15.29	15.42	.61	.60
Traditional Values	10.41	10.14	11.36	11.42	1.75	.16
Attributions	15.26	15.51	15.96	14.39	1.92	.13

Table 4

Differences in Educational Attitudes - Hispanic vs. Others

Scale	Ethnicity		F	p
	Hispanic	Others		
Interest	12.55	12.77	.15	.69
Utility Value	8.16	8.50	.51	.47
Effort	11.93	11.83	.04	.83
Cost of Failure	11.24	11.39	.09	.77
Self concept	16.22	15.16	3.09	.08
Familiarity	10.54	9.63	5.44	.02*
Expectations	15.37	14.93	.92	.33
Traditional Values	11.39	10.26	5.14	.03*
Attributions	15.04	15.40	.63	.42

* $p < .05$

that compared Mexican respondents with Others (Puerto Rican, Black, and White), testing a premise found in recent literature (Buenning et al., 1987) that various Hispanic groups hold different values and attitudes from one another. The results indicated that three scales were statistically significant (Table 5): Interest, $F(1,137)=4.44$, $p<.037$; Familiarity, $F(1,130)=4.28$, $p<.041$; and Attribution, $F(1,131)=4.81$, $p<.030$. Mexicans tended to see school as more interesting and to attribute school success to talent or work rather than to luck, while stating they are less familiar with the educational system.

Thus, the preliminary test of the effects for ethnicity on educational attitudes suggested that overall the major hypotheses were not confirmed. For example, minorities did not find education less interesting or useful than Whites (Hypotheses I and II). Instead, Mexicans were more interested in education than were the remaining subjects. Whites did not report that education requires more effort than did minorities (Hypothesis III). Further, that minorities did not perceive a smaller cost in academic failure (Hypothesis IV) nor did they report having a lower academic self-concept (Hypothesis V).

Table 5

Differences in Educational Attitudes - Mexican vs. Others

Scale	Ethnicity		F	p
	Mexican	Others		
Interest	11.74	13.02	4.44	.04*
Utility Value	8.00	8.45	.60	.44
Effort	11.36	12.04	1.41	.23
Cost of Failure	11.06	11.42	.36	.55
Self concept	15.68	15.63	.01	.94
Familiarity	10.72	9.79	4.28	.04*
Expectations	15.42	15.02	.60	.43
Traditional Values	11.42	10.53	2.41	.12
Attributions	14.39	15.86	4.81	.03*

* $p < .05$

Significant results were obtained relating to Hypothesis VI, although not entirely in the manner predicted. Rather than minorities as a whole feeling less familiar with characteristics of the educational system, results suggest that Hispanics as a group were less familiar with the academic system, and that Mexicans were significantly less familiar with the educational system than the other groups together. Hypothesis VII (Whites have higher academic expectations) was not confirmed.

Hypothesis VIII (that Whites have less stereotypical views of sex roles relating to education) was confirmed in that Hispanics expressed more traditional values than did Blacks and Whites together, and Mexicans expressed significantly greater traditional values than the other groups together. Finally, Hypothesis IX (that minorities attributed academic success to luck rather than internal factors) was not confirmed by the results. Instead, Mexicans were more likely than all others to attribute success to factors such as ability and hard work. Hypothesis X was not tested since scale 10 was dropped from the instrument due to lack of internal consistency.

In sum, none of the 10 hypotheses was confirmed as

stated. Minorities were not more likely to hold different educational attitudes than non-minorities. Rather, Hispanics, as a group, were less familiar with the educational system and espoused more traditional values than did Blacks and Whites together. Mexicans were also less likely to attribute academic success to luck than were other groups.

Level of Education. The respondents' level of education was the first demographic variable to be examined in relation to the attitudinal scales. According to school groupings commonly employed in the United States, education was divided into three levels: 0 through 8 years of education, 9 through 11, and 12th grade graduate and above. Twelfth grade is used as a cutoff because it became apparent during the parent meetings that high school graduates perceived themselves differently than high school dropouts. Graduates reported having "completed" their education, while dropouts stated they had been derailed. Consequently, these observations suggested that mothers viewed themselves differently on the basis of having graduated high school. Results of a series of one-way ANOVA's (Table 5), comparing the three educational categories, indicate that five scales achieved levels of

significance: Self-Concept, $F(2,133)=7.59$, $p<.001$; Familiarity, $F(2,132)=7.28$, $p<.001$; Expectations, $F(2,129)=3.42$, $p<.036$; Traditional Gender Roles, $F(2,137)=3.43$, $p<.035$; and Attribution, $F(2,132)=6.02$, $p<.003$. In addition, Interest approached significance, $F(2,139)=2.70$, $p<.064$ (Table 6). Scheffe post hoc comparisons of the means indicated that in the first four scales (Self-concept, Familiarity, Expectations, and Traditional Gender Roles) the significant differences were between the 0 through 11 and the 12th and above category of education. In the last instance (Attribution) differences were between the group which completed grades 9 through 11 and the group which completed grade 12 and beyond.

Thus, the mother's level of education was highly predictive of educational attitudes. Respondents who had graduated from high school or beyond were significantly more likely to have a positive academic self-concept, feel more familiar with the educational system, have higher academic expectations for their children, and have less traditional gender role expectations than were respondents who had completed the eighth grade or less. Further, high school graduates were less likely to attribute academic success to luck

Table 6

Differences in Educational Attitudes by Level of Education

Scale	Level of Education			F	p
	0-8 years	9-11 years	12 years & beyond		
Interest	13.48	13.08	11.95	2.80	.06
Utility Value	7.53	8.63	8.34	1.27	.28
Effort	12.00	12.42	11.40	1.83	.16
Cost of Failure	12.13	10.94	11.40	1.42	.24
Self concept .001**	17.17 ^a	16.40 ^a	14.46 ^b	7.59	
Familiarity .001**	10.87 ^a	10.60 ^a	9.27 ^b	7.28	
Expectations	15.19 ^a	15.75 ^a	14.47 ^b	3.42	.04*
Traditional Values	11.84 ^a	11.10 ^a	10.11 ^b	3.43	.04*
Attributions .003**	14.76 ^a	16.20 ^b	14.59 ^a	6.02	

* p < .05

** p < .01

Note. Means identified by different letters are significantly different from each other beyond the .05 level by the Scheffe Range test.

than were respondents who had completed grades 9 through 11.

Time in the United States. The respondents' time in the United States was the next demographic variable examined. Time in the United States was divided into two groups, those in the U.S. less than 12 years and those in the U.S. more than 12 years. Previous studies have suggested that individuals who immigrate to this county before age 12 are more easily acculturated than those who immigrate after age 12 (Olmedo, Martinez, & Martinez, 1978). Unfortunately, the age at immigration was not examined in the present study. However, many of the mothers appeared to be in their mid-twenties. It was reasoned that using 12 years in the U.S. as a cut-off point would provide the best estimate of mothers who immigrated around age 12. Results of a series of one-way ANOVA's yielded two significant scales: Familiarity, $F(1,133)=5.00$, $p<.027$; and Attribution, $F(1,133)=4.29$, $p<.040$. Respondents who had been in the states for 12 years or less were less familiar with the educational system and were less likely to attribute success to luck. In addition, Scale 1 (Interest) approached significance $F(1,139)=3.70$, $p<.056$.

Urban vs. Rural Upbringing and Marital Status.

Whether a respondent was raised in an urban or rural area was another demographic variable compared against the attitudinal scales. A one-way ANOVA indicated two significant scales: Utility, $F(1,121)=4.40$, $p<.038$; and Attribution, $F(1,131)=3.90$, $p<.049$. Subjects raised in rural areas saw education as more useful and saw educational success as due to work or talent. Finally, Marital Status was compared against the nine educational scales. The five primary categories of marital status include: never married, married, living with partner, separated, and divorced. A one way ANOVA yielded no significant differences.

Correlational Analyses

The two demographic variables that were initially non-categorical, Level of Education and Time in the U.S., were compared to the attitudes scale using Pearson product-moment correlations to see if there had been a loss of statistical power due to the grouping of these variables (See Table 7). The results indicate that on the first variable, Length of Time, only the scale Traditional Gender Roles emerged as significant ($r = -.23$, $p<.006$; Note: In all Pearson correlations listed here, $d.f. = 1,151$). However, the scale Attribution

Table 7

Correlations between Educational Attitudes, Level of Education, and Time in the United States

Scale	Level of Education		Time in the U.S.	
	Correlation	p	Correlation	p
Interest	-.18	.037*	.11	.208
Utility Value	.09	.301	.04	.635
Effort	-.09	.287	-.10	.255
Cost of Failure	-.13	.147	-.04	.693
Self concept	-.34	.001***	-.07	.447
Familiarity	-.25	.003**	-.12	.153
Expectations	-.25	.003**	-.12	.153
Traditional Values	-.26	.002**	-.23	.006**
Attributions	-.07	.400	.17	.057

* p < .05

** p < .01

*** p < .001

approached significance ($r=.166$, $p<.057$). Thus, respondents were less likely to endorse traditional values as length of time in the U.S. increased.

With regard to Level of Education, the correlational analysis yielded four significant findings: Interest, ($r= -.17$, $p<.037$); Self-Concept, ($r= -.34$, $p<.000$); Familiarity, ($r= -.254$, $p<.003$); and Traditional Gender Roles ($r= -.25$, $p<.002$). These correlations can be viewed in Table 6. Overall, the higher the mother's educational level, the higher the interest in education, the more positive the academic self-concept, the greater the familiarity with education, and the lower the degree of traditional values. The fact that only four of the six significant ANOVA's analyses were found in correlations indicates that groupings enhanced rather than reduced statistical power.

Finally, a Pearson Product Moment Correlation was conducted between the two continuous demographic variables, Time in the U.S. and Level of Education. Results indicated that the variables are significantly correlated ($r=.52$, $p<.001$). As would be expected, the longer respondents had been in the U.S., the higher their level of education.

Analysis of Demographic Variables

As a second step in better understanding the sample, further ANOVA's were performed comparing differences between ethnic groups on time in the states and level of education. Significant main effects were found for ethnicity in both time in U.S. and level of education. Examining the time in the U.S., post-hoc Scheffe's indicate that Mexicans had been in the U.S. significantly shorter time than other ethnic groups ($p < .001$). Similarly, Mexicans had significantly less education than did other ethnic groups ($p < .001$).

Analysis of Covariance

Two additional sets of analyses were performed in order to explore the relative strengths of effects for ethnicity, level of education, and time in the U.S. on educational attitudes. The first set of analyses were a series of three-way ANOVA's that examined each of these demographic variables against the nine educational scales. The second set of analyses included a series of analyses of covariance that examined the effects of ethnicity on the nine educational scales when Level of Education, Time in the U.S., Urban/Rural Background were identified as covariants.

Three-Way ANOVA. A series of three-way ANOVA's were performed comparing Ethnicity, Level of Education, and Time in the U.S. with the nine educational scales. Significant main effects were found for four of the nine scales: Interest, $F(6,131)=3.55$, $p<.003$; Self-Concept, $F(6,125)=3.24$, $p<.005$; Familiarity, $F(6,124)=2.79$, $p<.014$; and Attribution, $F(6,123)=2.84$, $p<.013$; In each of these significant main effects, only the variable Level of Education yielded significant results: Interest, $F(2,6)=6.60$, $p<.002$; Self Concept, $F(2,125)=7.06$, $p<.001$; Familiarity, $F(2,124)=4.51$, $p<.013$; and Attribution, $F(2,123)=6.66$, $p<.002$. Ethnicity and Time in the U.S. did not yield significant results in any of the three one-way ANOVA's. Hence, the variable Level of Education appears to be a more potent indicator of attitudes toward education than Ethnicity and Time in the U.S. In addition, the four scales that yielded significant results were among the five scales that the initial Level of Education one-way ANOVA had yielded, providing corroborative evidence for the relative strength of the variable Level of Education.

Covariance. Two series of analyses of covariance were performed in an attempt to understand better the relationship of Time in the U.S. and Level of Education

with ethnicity. Since the grouping of Hispanics and Mexicans had yielded the only significant results when ethnicity was initially contrasted with the nine scales of education, it was decided to only examine these results within the context of analyses of Covariance. In both series of analyses there were no significant main effects for Hispanics or Mexicans when Level of Education, Urban/Rural Background, and Time in the U.S. were partialled out. Only the scale Interest approached significance when Mexicans were compared against the other ethnic groups: $F(1,72)=3.70, p<.058$. The results indicate that Ethnicity, specifically Hispanic and Mexican, are not significant indicators of educational attitudes when the variables Level of Education, Rural/Urban Background, and Time in the U.S. are removed.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

This study was an attempt to understand better the relationship between different ethnic groups and attitudes toward education. Based on research in the area of academic achievement, a questionnaire was devised that attempted to reflect various theories concerning educational attitudes. Although the majority of the hypothesis were not confirmed, several significant results provide an insight into the topic of educational attitudes of the urban poor. However, before discussing the possible implications of these findings, it is important to note the limitations of the study. A review of the limitations helps qualify the generalizability of the study.

Limitations of the Study

The first limitation of the study was the disappointingly low range of alpha's that was produced by the initial 10 educational scales. Traditionally, an alpha score of .70 has been the lowest level of acceptability when considering the internal reliability

of a scale. Two arguments were put forth that sought to explain the attenuated scores. First, the small number of items in each scale reduced the opportunity to delete non-powerful questionnaire items. Second, the low variability in response styles also decreased the alpha scores. In retrospect, the total number of scales should have been reduced in order to construct scales that contained more items. However, this was the first attempt to investigate these theories with an urban, minority population and it was unclear which scales would be the most productive. As a result, an attempt to include as many educational factors as possible, while still be sensitive to the overall length of the questionnaire, compromised the internal consistency of the instrument. Perhaps, the results of a pilot study might have addressed the issue at an earlier stage. Consequently, it is important to note that all findings should be interpreted with caution due to the significant limitations of the instrument.

The second limitation of the study concerns the characteristics of the sample. The sample is not matched in a number of respects, such as the number of respondents from each ethnic group, their level of education, and the amount of time they have lived in the

U.S. The sample was an attempt to document educational attitudes among the urban poor. Head Start guidelines require that families be 100% below poverty, which for a family of four is an annual salary of less than \$10,054. However, it appears that while the sample is similar in terms of economic status, it differs in other respects. These, however, are very like actual population differences.

The first area of difference was found in the ability to recruit certain ethnic groups. It is unclear whether this observation is generalizable, but attendance at the parent meetings was particularly poor at schools in White neighborhoods and significantly better at schools in Mexican neighborhoods. Attendance in Black and Puerto Rican neighborhoods was somewhere in between. The average attendance at the Mexican schools was eleven parents, while for Whites it was four parents. Hence, significantly more parent meetings were conducted in schools in White neighborhoods in order to obtain a suitable number of participants. In general, Mexican mothers appeared highly engaged in the parent meeting program. They appeared enthusiastic about the meetings, which appeared to serve an important social function in their community. On the other hand, White

mothers generally were not enthusiastic about the monthly parent meetings and appeared to view them as an inconvenience.

With regards to the sample differing along important demographic variables, such as amount of education and time in the U.S., the 1980 U.S. census provides support for the sample being representative of an urban, poor population (General Social and Economic Characteristics, 1980; Census of Population, 1983). The 1980 census reports that foreign-born, females of Hispanic origin who live in a major metropolitan area, trail both Black and White females in educational attainment. Hence, while the ethnic groups may differ in certain respects, the overall sample appears representative of a population of urban poor females.

Further, the sample was limited in that respondents were parents who enrolled their children in Head Start, rather than a strictly representative sample of parents of 3- and 4-year olds. The literature indicates children who are enrolled in Head Start show lower academic abilities than children who are in private preschools or do not attend preschool (Lee et al., 1988), yet there is no literature on how parents of Head Start children differ from other parents in terms of

educational abilities or attitudes. In addition, respondents were parents who attended Head Start meetings. It may be that these parents hold different educational attitudes than parents who enroll their children in Head Start but do not regularly attend parent meetings.

The third area of limitation involves a segment of the questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed so that White respondents would specify their ethnic background in order to investigate possible differences within the White population. However, the majority of the White respondents either did not complete the question, stated that they were "Born in the U.S.A.", or put down two or three ethnic groups, such as German-Polish. Consequently, this demographic factor was deleted from analysis. Future research in the area can address the issue of White subgroupings and their effects on educational attitudes.

Major Findings

The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between ethnicity and attitudes toward education. A questionnaire was developed based on Eccles' (1983) work in the area of academic achievement. Her comprehensive review identified 10 separate

attitudes that were associated with educational success.

This study attempted to determine whether certain ethnic groups (Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, Whites, and Blacks) differed with respect to these educational attitudes.

Over the years, academic achievement literature has documented the difference between minorities and non-minorities. Despite a number of interventions, minorities have not fared as well as their non-minority counterparts. Across a variety of measures and at several points in their academic careers, minorities have displayed significant lags in academic achievement (Anick et al., 1981; Ortiz, 1986). On the basis of this literature, it was hypothesized that minorities would hold less positive attitudes toward education than non-minorities.

Ethnic Group Differences. Broadly speaking, the hypothesis that minorities would differ from non-minorities in their attitudes toward education was not confirmed. By and large, minorities supported the same views as non-minorities with regards to educational attitudes. However, the initial series of analysis did suggest certain ethnic differences on three variables. In particular, Hispanics (Mexicans and Puerto Ricans

grouped together) reported feeling significantly less familiar with academic activities and more strongly endorsed traditional gender roles than Blacks and Whites.

When Hispanics reported not being familiar with academic activities, they endorsed a scale that included a number of behavioral indices. For example, Hispanics reported not owning a library card and not knowing how to arrange financial plans for their children's college.

On an intuitive level this appears to make sense, since the Hispanics in the study have been in the U.S, significantly less time than the Blacks and Whites. It appears that Hispanics have not had sufficient time to become acquainted with certain academic activities. During the Hispanic parent meetings, it became apparent that the thought of arranging financial plans for their child was particularly foreign and almost frightening, as many Hispanic mothers had never before considered this aspect of schooling. In contrast, how to pay for a child's education was a more familiar theme in the Black and White parent meetings.

The Hispanics' reported lack of familiarity with academic activities also suggests a unique cultural characteristic. Hispanics frequently view their time in

the U.S. as temporary. Many Hispanics come to the U.S. for economic and political benefits, but hope to return to their native country at a future date (Steinberg, Blinde, & Chan, 1984). As a result, the need to acculturate and become familiar with certain activities might not be as strong when time in the U.S. is seen as limited.

The other scale that Hispanics endorsed differently than Blacks and Whites was Traditional Gender Roles. This scale contains items in which Traditional Gender Roles interfere with academic success, such as a woman should be more concerned with marriage than a career, and a woman does not need as much education as a man. In the parent meetings, Hispanic women reported feeling conflicted on these issues. Whereas they recognized the need for education, they reported a strong pull for traditional family values. Black and White mothers, on the other hand, were adamant in the parent meetings about the priority of women's rights and the need to develop self-sufficiency through education.

As a result of these two scales, Familiarity and Traditional Gender Roles, Hispanics appeared to differ significantly from Blacks and Whites. The Hispanics'

intensive focus on family and conservative, traditional values, plus their possible ambivalence toward acculturating to the U.S. may suggest attitudes that might interfere with academic success.

Turning to Mexicans alone, previous work in the area of academic achievement has indicated that Hispanic groups may be different from one another and that the generic category of Hispanics may hide certain subgroup differences. As a result Mexicans were compared separately from Blacks, Whites and Puerto Ricans. Results again indicate that Mexicans report being less familiar with academic activities. In addition, Mexicans reported school being more interesting than the other three ethnic groups. For example, they reported never being bored in school and that they enjoyed doing homework. A possible explanation for this phenomena was the idealism and social desirability that the Mexicans mothers exhibited. As previously reported, their attendance at the parent meetings was significantly better than the other parents. Similarly, since the Mexicans were significantly less educated than the other ethnic groups it appeared that they still viewed schoolwork in very positive terms, while Blacks and White mothers viewed school in much more ambivalent

terms. It appears that the Mexicans, whose education was limited generally to the primary grades did not share the somewhat jaded realism of the other mothers who had gone significantly further in school. Finally, Mexicans attributed academic success more to internal factors, such as talent and work, than the other three ethnic groups.

Since Hispanics, and Mexicans in particular, had received less education than their White and Black counterparts, it was decided that further analyses was necessary to determine whether the aforementioned cultural effects were related to different levels of education. A series of analysis of covariance were conducted comparing Hispanics and Mexicans against the other ethnic groups across the educational scales while identifying the variables, Level of Education, Urban/Rural Background, and Time in the U.S., as covariates. The purpose was to remove the influence of these three possible confounding variables from the analysis in order to strengthen the argument that ethnic groups differ in educational attitudes. However, results of the covariance indicated no significant main effects for Hispanics and Mexicans once these factors had been removed. Contrary to the hypotheses proposed

in the study, the results suggested that Level of Education was a more potent predictor of positive educational attitudes than ethnic identity.

Level of Education. The variable, Level of Education, proved to be a telling characteristic for understanding educational attitudes. Generally speaking, the more education a mother had, the more strongly she endorsed positive educational attitudes. In all, Level of Education yielded significant results in five of the nine scales, with a trend toward significance in a sixth. Women who were high school graduates or above, reported having a more positive academic self-image, were more familiar with academic activities, had higher academic expectations for their children, endorsed less traditional gender roles, and attributed academic success to internal factors (Eccles, 1983).

With regards to academic self-concept, mothers in the highest educational category tended to endorse items that reflected a sense of competence and mastery (Eccles, 1983). For example, they reported feeling capable in helping their children with their homework, an area in which the less educated mothers felt less confident. Similarly, the affective tone of educated

mothers was more positive. They reported feeling good at school and being liked by the teachers. In contrast, in the parent meetings, it became apparent that some of the less educated mothers felt that school "just wasn't meant for them".

In terms of Academic Expectations, mothers in the highest educational category reported not only that they expected their children to go further in school, but they also reported being more confident in their ability to control their children when they grew older. It became apparent in the discussion groups that the ability to control children when they were older was associated with the mother's level of confidence in predicting their child's academic success. Less educated mothers were cautiously hopeful about their children's academic goals, seemingly fearful about their influence once their children became adolescents. In contrast, the more educated mothers exuded confidence and were adamant about the importance of their children reaching certain academic milestones, such as attending college.

Attribution of academic success was a scale that varied along different educational lines. The scale taps whether respondents see school success due more to

internal factors, such as hard work and talent, or controlled more by external factors such as luck (Eccles, 1983). Previously, the significant differences had been between the mothers in the first two educational categories and the mothers in the highest educational category. However, on this scale it was mothers who had gone to some high school, but who had not graduated, who were the most prone to see school success as being controlled by external factors. Anecdotally, these mothers frequently attributed dropping out to becoming pregnant which they perceived as "bad luck" and out of their control.

The other scales on which educational levels yielded significant or near significant results included Familiarity, Interest, and Traditional Gender Roles. Mothers in the highest educational category tended to be more acquainted with academic activities, display more of an intrinsic interest in academics, and endorse less traditional gender roles.

While the variable, Level of Education, was identified as a potent predictor of educational attitudes, other demographic variables were also explored. The demographic variable, Urban/Rural background, was the only factor that yielded a

significant result for the educational attitude, Utility, which taps whether a person views education as an integral means of achieving life goals (Eccles, 1983). For example, item eight states that, "A high school diploma helps you get ahead". The result suggests that mothers from rural backgrounds, who tended to be less educated, are more idealistic about the utility of school as a means of achieving life goals, than urban mothers who tended to be higher educated and, at the same time, less positive about education's usefulness. As this was the only demographic variable that yielded a significant result on this scale, it appears not to be related to level of education.

Time in the U.S. and Urban/Rural background were indicative of differences in educational attitudes, but not to the same degree as Level of Education. Analysis indicates that the variables Time in the U.S. and Urban/Rural are highly associated with Level of Education. That is to say, the longer one lived in the U.S. the more likely they were to come from a urban background and be higher educated. People from rural settings were less educated and lived in the U.S. less time. Hence, it appears that these additional variables,

while mildly predictive, are intertwined with Level of Education.

Implications of the Study

Results indicate that mother's educational level was a much more powerful predictor of educational attitudes than ethnic background. This finding disconfirmed the study's hypotheses. The results carry a number of implications, not only for future research, but also for academic intervention. The first implication relates to the body of literature that has attempted to identify cultural variables that interfere with academic achievement. The second implication deals with the importance of parental education as an academic intervention.

The results of this study questions the logic of the cultural argument in which characteristics unique to a particular culture are identified as being incompatible with academic success (Fernandez et al., 1989). For example, previous work in this area has identified Hispanics as being less competitive and more cooperative in school settings, thus negatively impacting on their academic achievement (Evans et al., 1973). Similarly, Blacks have been portrayed as having an external locus of control; which negatively affects

their academic success (Hendricks et al., 1984). Instead, this study suggests that many of these "cultural characteristics" are obviated by increased education. Instead of ethnic background, it appears that one's educational status is a more accurate indicator of educational attitudes.

It appears important to note that initial analysis in the present study also suggested a cultural effect. Preliminary analysis indicated that Hispanics were less familiar with school activities and more prone to endorse traditional gender roles. However, further analysis indicated that these effects were, in actuality, the result of differences in educational levels between the Hispanics and the Blacks and Whites. Perhaps in previous studies, cultural effects have cloaked educational effects.

It is difficult to compare the results of the present study to those in the literature because studies often exclude pertinent demographic data. One study which provides such information initially contradicts the current findings; according to Fernandez and Shu (1988), mother's level of education is not related to the dropout rate in Hispanics. A closer examination of the findings suggests that lower levels of maternal

education are associated with an increased dropout rate until the mother's education reaches the college graduate level. At this level the relationship begins to reverse and the dropout rate again increases. It is difficult to make inferences about the present study based on this data, as the educational level of mothers in the present study is considerably lower.

Based on the current findings, the importance of maternal level of education is again highlighted. It may currently appear that Hispanics are having the most difficult time of ethnic groups in terms of academic achievement (New York Times, 1989), but perhaps future generations of Hispanics, with the advantage of increased time in the U.S. and enhanced education, will begin to reduce the achievement differences.

The most important finding of this study was that mother's level of education was the most potent predictor of educational attitudes. What is suggested is that a "vicious circle" occurs with regards to education: mother's lack of education is related to negative academic attitudes, which may inhibit children's academic success. While the link between parental attitudes and children's behaviors is not completely clear, there is support in the literature

that there is a meaningful relationship (Miller, 1986). Evidence in the present study comes from the Familiarity scale where less educated parents report feeling less comfortable and participating less in academic activities, which are associated with academic success.

The study suggests the importance of assisting parents at all levels of a child's education. While Project Head Start assists parents at the pre-school level, additional programs could assist parents at other points in the academic process. In particular, if a mother has not completed a stage of education, it appears that she could benefit from assistance in guiding and encouraging her own children through that stage (O'Donnell, 1987).

Future Research

Future work in the area of academic achievement could focus on three related issues. First, attention could be given to improving the psychometric properties of the educational attitudes instrument. Second, the link between parent's educational attitudes and their children's school performance could be further investigated. For example, studies could examine the correlations among parents' attitudes, parents' behaviors, and children's academic achievement. Third,

interventions that break the "vicious cycle" of education could be introduced and evaluated. Hopefully, these lines of work would improve the status of minorities in the area of academic achievement.

Concerning the improvement of psychometric properties, the current instrument could be improved in several ways. Scales that proved not to be predictive of significant differences amongst any of the variables could be dropped from the questionnaire, such as the scales, Perceived Effort of Academics and The Cost of Failure. Similarly, scales that approached satisfactory levels of internal consistency could be bolstered by the addition of more scale items.

Regarding the relationship between parental attitudes and children's academic performance, future research could investigate the effects of educational attitudes on children's grades, or some other academic index (e.g. high school drop-out rates). Previous studies have demonstrated a strong relationship between variables such as Expectations and Familiarity with academic success (Seginer, 1983). However, it would be important to validate whether other educational attitudes could be associated with academic performance in the primary grades, as well.

Lastly, it seems important to apply the findings to academic policy. In particular, recent immigrants might be able to benefit from programs that taught them how to guide their children academically. This study suggests possible intervention areas, such as teaching parents how to influence their children once they become adolescents. Another area of intervention might involve pairing new immigrants with citizens of the same ethnic background to familiarize new residents with pertinent aspects of education in this country.

In sum, continued research could confirm the present findings, further delineate the role of parents in education, and help develop effective interventions.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study attempted to document differences in the attitudes of mothers of preschool children according to ethnic group. It was hypothesized that minorities would hold less positive attitudes towards education than would non-minorities. A comprehensive measure of educational attitudes was adapted for use with this population. Results of the study must be interpreted with caution, since internal consistency ratings of the subscales were below the desirable range.

In general, findings did not correspond with anticipated results. Early on, it appeared that there were differences according to ethnic groups. Interestingly, some of the findings did make sense from a cultural perspective. It appeared that Hispanics were less familiar with characteristics of the educational system, and held more traditional gender-related values than did other ethnic groups. Other findings were less supportive of the cultural position. For example, Mexicans found education more interesting than other groups, and were more likely to attribute academic success to factors such as hard work and ability.

Follow-up analyses suggested, however, that differences initially attributed to ethnic groups could be traced to differences in level of education. The significance of variables other than ethnicity highlights the importance of considering (or controlling for) a variety of demographic variables when studying potential cultural differences. The picture that emerged from these analyses was that mothers who had graduated from high school (or gone beyond) had a more positive academic self-image, were more familiar with academic activities, had higher academic expectations for their children, and reported holding less traditional gender

roles than did mothers who had left school before grade eleven. In addition, mothers who left school between grades nine and eleven attributed academic success to luck, in contrast to high school graduates, who attributed success to more internal and stable factors.

These findings indicate the importance of understanding the ways that mothers' level of education may underlie the manner in which they socialize their children toward education. At this point the links between these attitudes and actual behaviors is only implied (and supported by the work of Eccles and others). However, the results seem to suggest that there may be a cycle in which mothers with less education may hold attitudes which ultimately impede the educational achievement in their children. It may be that this cycle takes more than one generation to interrupt, which would explain the differential educational gains between Black and Hispanic children. Follow-up studies could clarify the relationship between these attitudes, parental behavior, and child outcome. Further, research could trace changes in parental attitudes toward education as children proceed through different educational levels. Ultimately, this research could provide background information which would support

efforts to guide disadvantaged parents in enhancing the educational achievement of their children.

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APPENDIX

Dear Parent:

Thank you for volunteering to participate in our research project.

Please know that all of the information we collect today is confidential. This means that it will be seen only by myself and other qualified researchers and will be used for research purposes only. Further, the information is anonymous. Your name will not appear on any of the data. Instead we are coding all of the information by number, not name. Finally, should you decide at any point to discontinue your participation in our project, for whatever reason, please feel free to do so. Though we do not expect that this will happen, we want you to know that you are free to leave the study at any point without incurring any kind of penalty.

Please feel free to ask any questions. Once again, thank you for participating in our project.

Sincerely,

Antonio R. Acuna

I have read the above and understand it.

Signature

Date

EDUCATIONAL ATTITUDES SCALE

PARENTS SURVEY

1. Relationship to Head Start Child:

- 01) mother
 02) father
 03) grandmother
 04) grandfather
 05) other relative
 06) babysitter

2. Is your child 07) male or 08) female?

3. Which of the following ethnic groups are you a member of?

- 09) White
 10) Hispanic, Puerto Rican
 (specify)
 11) Black
 12) Hispanic, mexican
 13) Asian American
 14) Hispanic, other
 15) Other

4. What is your current marital status?

- 16) never married 17) divorced
 18) married 19) widowed
 20) remarried 21) separated
 22) living with partner

5. What is the highest level of education you have received?

- 23) no formal education
 24) third grade
 25) sixth grade
 26) eighth grade
 27) tenth grade
 28) eleventh grade
 29) high school graduate
 30) some college
 31) some vocational school
 32) college graduate
 33) vocational school graduate

6. Were you raised in an 33) urban setting or a 34) rural setting?

7. How long has your family lived in the U.S.
_____? (35)

8. How long has your family lived in Chicago_____? (36)

Please listen as each statement is read aloud, and circle the answer which shows how much you agree with that statement.

1. Schoolwork was very interesting.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly	agree	no	disagree	strongly
agree		opinion		disagree

2. I enjoyed doing schoolwork at home in the evenings.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly	agree	no	disagree	strongly
agree		opinion		disagree
disagree				

3. I was bored in school.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly	agree	no	disagree	strongly
agree		opinion		disagree

4. I would lose interest in my studies after the first few days of school.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly	agree	no	disagree	strongly
agree		opinion		disagree

5. Work is more interesting than school.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly	agree	no	disagree	strongly
agree		opinion		disagree

6. I would enjoy taking classes now, just to learn new things.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly	agree	no	disagree	strongly
agree		opinion		disagree

7. You need to finish school to get a good job.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly	agree	no	disagree	strongly
agree		opinion		disagree

8. A high school diploma helps you get ahead.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly	agree	no	disagree	strongly
agree		opinion		disagree

9. I did not learn useful things in school.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly	agree	no	disagree	strongly
agree		opinion		disagree

10. High school graduates make more money than non-high school graduates.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly	agree	no	disagree	strongly
agree		opinion		disagree

11. School does not prepare you for later life.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly	agree	no	disagree	strongly
agree		opinion		disagree

12. Most homework is a total waste of time.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly	agree	no	disagree	strongly
agree		opinion		disagree

13. The schools give too much homework.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly	agree	no	disagree	strongly
agree		opinion		disagree

14. Although school is a lot of work, it is worth it.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly	agree	no	disagree	strongly
agree		opinion		disagree

15. To do well in school, my child has to try a lot.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly	agree	no	disagree	strongly
agree		opinion		disagree

16. I would send my kids to school even if I had to pay for it.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly	agree	no	disagree	strongly
agree		opinion		disagree

17. Hard work is an important part of learning.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly	agree	no	disagree	strongly
agree		opinion		disagree

18. It will not bother me if my child drops out of school.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly	agree	no	disagree	strongly
agree		opinion		disagree

19. There are many ways to be successful besides school.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly	agree	no	disagree	strongly
agree		opinion		disagree

20. Everybody in the family will be very disappointed if my child drops out of school.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly	agree	no	disagree	strongly
agree		opinion		disagree

21. Lack of education interfered with my success.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly	agree	no	disagree	strongly
agree		opinion		disagree

22. When I dropped out of school I felt ashamed.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly	agree	no	disagree	strongly
agree		opinion		disagree

23. I used to feel terrible each morning when I had to go to school.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly	agree	no	disagree	strongly
agree		opinion		disagree

24. I don't have the ability that school requires.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly	agree	no	disagree	strongly
agree		opinion		disagree

25. I'm scared that I don't know enough to help my child in school.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly	agree	no	disagree	strongly
agree		opinion		disagree

26. My teachers liked me.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly	agree	no	disagree	strongly
agree		opinion		disagree

27. I felt good when I was at school.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly	agree	no	disagree	strongly
agree		opinion		disagree

28. Often in school I didn't understand what the teacher was saying.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly	agree	no	disagree	strongly
agree		opinion		disagree

29. I know how to arrange financial plans for my child's college.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly	agree	no	disagree	strongly
agree		opinion		disagree

30. I know who to talk to if my child isn't getting along with the teacher.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly	agree	no	disagree	strongly
agree		opinion		disagree

31. I don't own a library card.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly	agree	no	disagree	strongly
agree		opinion		disagree

32. I read to my kids at least two time a week.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly	agree	no	disagree	strongly
agree		opinion		disagree

33. I don't understand my child's schoolwork.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly	agree	no	disagree	strongly
agree		opinion		disagree

34. I expect my child to finish high school.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly	agree	no	disagree	strongly
agree		opinion		disagree

35. I think my Head Start child will go to college.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly	agree	no	disagree	strongly
agree		opinion		disagree

36. My Head Start child is very intelligent.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly	agree	no	disagree	strongly
agree		opinion		disagree

37. My Head Start child will do well in school next year.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly	agree	no	disagree	strongly
agree		opinion		disagree

38. It's hard to control kids when they are older.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly	agree	no	disagree	strongly
agree		opinion		disagree

39. It's hard to predict how kids will do in school when they get older.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly	agree	no	disagree	strongly
agree		opinion		disagree

40. A woman should be more worried about marriage than about a career.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly	agree	no	disagree	strongly
agree		opinion		disagree

41. A woman doesn't need as much education as a man.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly	agree	no	disagree	strongly
agree		opinion		disagree

42. I would feel very lonely if my children went away to college.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly	agree	no	disagree	strongly
agree		opinion		disagree

43. A child's first priority is to his family, not his education.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly	agree	no	disagree	strongly
agree		opinion		disagree

44. Girls and boys must be prepared to support themselves as adults.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly	agree	no	disagree	strongly
agree		opinion		disagree

45. People who do well in school get lucky breaks.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly	agree	no	disagree	strongly
agree		opinion		disagree

46. Even smart kids do badly with poor teachers.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly	agree	no	disagree	strongly
agree		opinion		disagree

47. In the end brains, not luck, is what matters in school.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly	agree	no	disagree	strongly
agree		opinion		disagree

48. My child does better than others because he/she works harder.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly	agree	no	disagree	strongly
agree		opinion		disagree

49. Kids who work hard do well with any kind of teacher or school.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly	agree	no	disagree	strongly
agree		opinion		disagree

50. A child's success at school depends on how much the parents teach at home.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly	agree	no	disagree	strongly
agree		opinion		disagree

51. Teachers have the main responsibility for a child's education.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly agree	agree	no opinion	disagree	strongly disagree

52. It's better to be popular than smart.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly agree	agree	no opinion	disagree	strongly disagree

53. I would not let my child talk on the phone before finishing homework.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly agree	agree	no opinion	disagree	strongly disagree

54. Graduation is much more important than prom.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly agree	agree	no opinion	disagree	strongly disagree

55. My children spend more time studying than playing.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly agree	agree	no opinion	disagree	strongly disagree

56. Kids who study a lot have no friends.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly agree	agree	no opinion	disagree	strongly disagree

57. I used to skip school whenever there was something better to do.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly agree	agree	no opinion	disagree	strongly disagree

APPROVAL SHEET

The dissertation submitted by Antonio R. Acuna has been read and approved by the following committee:

Dr. John R. Shack, Director
Associate Professor, Psychology, Loyola

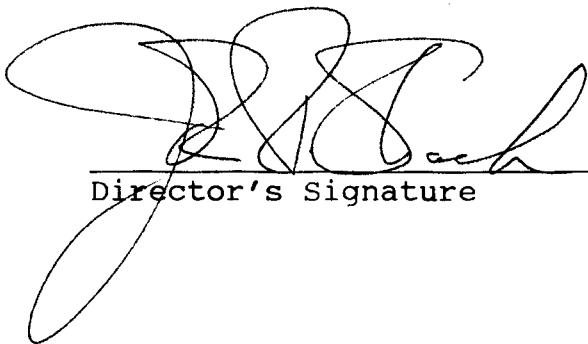
Dr. Joseph A. Durlak
Professor, Psychology, Loyola

Dr. Alan S. DeWolfe
Professor, Psychology, Loyola

The final copies have been examined by the director of the dissertation and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated and that the dissertation is now given final approval by the Committee with reference to content and form.

The dissertation is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

4/17/90
Date


Director's Signature