

Acculturation and Academic Success of Latino Children of Immigrants

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ABSTRACT

Latino children of immigrants continue to fall behind non-Latinos students. Latino children of immigrants face additional obstacles that may hinder their ability to pursue higher education. The present study aimed to examine how a strong presence of Latino culture impacts an individual as they pursue higher education. The study examined how acculturation affects academic success for Latino children of immigrants. The current study included participants who were second-generation immigrants in their young adult years residing in Southern California. Participants completed surveys telephonically. Acculturation was measured with self-reports regarding the importance of ethnicity, language spoken during upbringing, connectedness to the United States, and language preference. Academic achievement was measured with self-reports regarding high school achievement and highest education level. Chi-square analyses revealed a significant relationship between feeling connected to the United States and language preference and highest education level. The results from the current study provide implications for future research and development of policies and programs that better support Latino children of immigrants.

INTRODUCTION

Significance of Study

- Between 2010 and 2014, Latinos tended to earn less than non-Latinos and are underrepresented among the higher income brackets.
- Latinos are also more likely to receive support from public assistance programs
- 59% of Latinos obtain less than a high school diploma, 25% of Latinos reported some college and 16% reported a bachelor's degree or
- Only 30% of Latino students met state standards in comparison to 59% of their Non-Latino peers

Purpose

- Examine how a strong presence of Latino culture impacts an individual as they pursue or not pursue higher education

Research Question

- How does acculturation affect academic success for children of immigrants?

Hypothesis

- This study hypothesizes that higher levels of acculturation are linked to higher levels of academic success among children of Latino immigrants

LITERATURE REVIEW

Risk Factors for Latino Students Seeking Higher Education

- **Lack of College Preparation:** Latino students often lack the social and cultural capital to aid them throughout college and attain a degree. Latino students are more likely to attend schools with fewer resources that promote college enrollment (Clayton et al., 2019). Parents cannot provide first-hand knowledge as they never attended college themselves. Schools with primarily Latino students tend to be overcrowded and employ less experienced teachers (Kim & Calzada, 2019).
- **Acculturative Stress:** Latino youth students will experience acculturative stress when they face incongruent cultural values and practices, language barriers, and discrimination (Santiago et al., 2014). This is associated with increased anxiety and depression. Consequently, interfering with academic functioning.
- **Environmental Barriers:** Latino students have been stereotyped as being unintelligent, uneducated, and unproductive, therefore hindering academic adjustment and persistence (Ojeda et al., 2012). Faculty of color is essential for Latino college students as connections with professors is positively related to academic performance Latino students (Baker, 2013).

Protective Factors for Latino Students Seeking Higher Education

- **Motivation:** Latino students had higher levels of intrinsic motivation. Latino students with strong family relationships, a positive home environment, and persistence had a higher intrinsic motivation that influenced their academic achievement (Trevino et al., 2013). Latino immigrant parents hold high expectations regarding educational attainment (Santiago et al., 2014).

- **Parental Monitoring:** A study revealed that parental support, monitoring, and academic support are related to positive academic achievement among that Latino adolescents (Henry et al., 2011). A study by Santiago and colleagues (2014) expressed that parental monitoring is linked to greater academic motivation and educational aspirations among the Latino population. Latina females demonstrate greater academic achievement than males as girls tend to be monitored at greater levels (Santiago et al., 2014).

- **Ethnic Community:** Students who locate and participate in cultural activities on their campus may build a strong connection with their university. Making connections with other minority students would reinforce academic excellence, help students navigate the college environment, and increase ethnic solidarity and pride (Baker, 2013).

METHODS

Research design

- This study uses secondary data analysis of the data collected by the Immigration and Intergenerational Mobility in Metropolitan Los Angeles (IMMLA) study carried out between 2002 and 2008
- The original study utilized a multi-stage and multi-method design. The study intended to understand the mobility paths and outcomes of young adult children of immigrants in Los Angeles.
- Only the initial survey responses gathered in 2004 will be used for this study.
- Data was collected through telephonic interviews. Interviews were 35 minutes long and screeners followed a specific questionnaire.
- The phone interviews provided basic demographic information and data about sociocultural orientation and mobility, economic mobility, geographic mobility, civic engagement, and politics

Sample

- The original study a total of 4655 participants, including children of immigrants from the metropolitan Los Angeles area, including the following five counties: Los Angeles, Orange, Ventura, Riverside, and San Bernardino
- The present study utilized a subsample of the original study. Participants that did not identify their ethnicity with a Latin American country background were excluded. The final sample consisted of 1808 participants.
- Of the sample, 51.2% were female, and 48.8% were men. The final sample of the present study only included individuals from the following ethnic background; Mexican (68.8%), Salvadoran/Guatemalan (20.8%), and Other Latin American Countries (10.4%)

Measures

Independent Variable: Acculturation

1. Importance of Ethnicity
2. Native Language
3. Connectedness to the United States
4. Language preference

Dependent Variable: Academic Achievement

1. High School Achievement
2. Highest Education Level

Sample Characteristics (n= 1,808)		
Characteristic	n	%
Gender		
Male	883	48.8
Female	925	51.2
Age in years	M = 28.31	SD = 5.99
Ethnicity		
Mexican	1244	68.8
Salvadoran/Guatemalan	376	20.8
Other Latin American	188	10.4
Generational Cohort		
1.5 Generation	542	30
Second Generation	865	47.8
Third+ Generation	401	22.2

RESULTS

High school Achievement

- A Spearman *rho* correlation coefficient was computed to examine the relationship between the importance of ethnicity and high school achievement levels. No statistically significant correlation was found.
- Based on a chi-square test, there was no significant relationship between language preference and high school achievement levels.
- A Mann-Whitney *U* test was used to examine the difference in high school achievement levels among participants who spoke a language other than English during upbringing and those who did not speak a language other English during their upbringing. There was not a significant difference.
- A Mann-Whitney *U* test was used to examine the difference in high school achievement levels among participants who felt connected to the United States and those who did not feel connected to the United States. There was not a significant difference.

Highest Education Level

- Based on a chi-square test, there was no significant relationship between importance of ethnicity and highest education level.
- Based on a chi-square test, there was no significant relationship between the language spoken during upbringing and highest education level
- A chi-square test was calculated comparing the frequency of feeling connected to the United States in highest education levels. A significant association was found, while a Phi statistic suggested a strong relationship.
- A chi-square test was calculated comparing the frequency of language preferences among participants who attended college. A significant association was found, while a Cramer's *V* statistic suggested a weak relationship.

DISCUSSION

Major Findings

- A relationship exists between language preference and the highest education level. Students who indicated that their preferred language was not English were less likely to participate in higher education.
- The study revealed that having a connection to the U.S is related to the highest education level. Students that noted that the U.S felt most like home were more likely to attend college.
- Significant findings were only found among young adults and whether they attended college. In contrast, there were no significant findings in high school achievement levels. This finding is consistent with previous research as the acculturative process is dependent on age. Therefore, it is unlikely that culture will impact adolescent students' academic achievement as their cultural identity has not been formulated.

Strengths and limitations

- The study consisted of primarily quantitative data and lacked qualitative information, utilizing close-ended questions instead of open-ended questions.
- The present study is that the original study did not gather information regarding environmental factors that may have affected participants' educational outcomes.
- The sample size of the study was large and, therefore, collected more significant amounts of data.
- The study included an equal distribution among gender.

Social Work Implications

- This study highlights the need for increased awareness of challenges that Latino children of immigrants encounter in the educational system.
- Policies must be implemented nationwide that will ensure children have access to free and low-cost pre-schooling.
- College campuses must be better prepared to serve students from all ethnic backgrounds.
- Research should be completed to assess the needs of Latino children of immigrants during their adolescent years.

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