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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ETHNICITY, ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT, AND PERCEPTION OF SCHOOL CULTURE OF MEXICAN AMERICAN AND PUERTO RICAN URBAN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

by

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DISSERTATION

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DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

1998

MAJOR: CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

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DEDICATION

To my late parents, Victoria Aida Betancourt and Pedro Barquet, for instilling in me a love for learning and the value of education. I also dedicate this study to my late husband, Brian Callaghan, for his love and support, and for being the wind beneath my wings. Finally, to my two beautiful children, Brian Peter and Diana Maria Callaghan, for their love, support, and inspiration.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Problem

Recent demographic trends show that U.S. schools are experiencing a significant increase in the number of minority students. The Hispanic population has grown faster than any other group since 1990 and is projected to become the largest U.S. minority group by the year 2009. In fact, the number of Hispanics increased 25.4% from 1990 to 1996, compared to 6.4% for the overall U.S. population. In 1996, Hispanics were estimated to total 28.3 million, constituting 10.7% of the United States population (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1996).

The Hispanic population is also the youngest of all major racial/ethnic groups in the United States. The median age for Hispanics was estimated to be 26.2 years in 1995, while for Whites and Blacks it was estimated to be 35.3 and 29.2 years, respectively. Between 1980 and 1995, the Hispanic child population has nearly doubled, rising from 5.3 to 10.2 million, an increase of 92.5%. Based on birthrate and immigration patterns, by the year 2020, it is projected that one of every four children in the United States will be Hispanic (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1996).

These projections have great implications for the United States when considering the socio-economic and educational status of Hispanics in this country. Poverty among Hispanic children remains high and trends show little improvement. In 1995, two fifths (40.0%) of Hispanic children lived below the poverty level, representing an increase of 133% since 1990 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1996).

The poverty rates for Hispanic families, and especially Hispanic families with children, also remain disproportionately high. In 1995, more than one-third

(33.2%) of Hispanic families with children under 18 lived in poverty in contrast with 12.9% of White families. Also, 46.6 percent of all children of poverty were in families with a female head of household and no husband present. This is of significance in the Hispanic population where families headed by females are more likely to be poor than in comparable Black and White families (U.S. Census Bureau, 1996).

According to the 1996 report Poverty in the United States by the Census Bureau, in 1995, more than one out of two (49.4%) Hispanic female-headed families were poor, while five out of eleven comparable Black (45.1%) and one out of four (26.6%) comparable White families were poor. Twenty seven percent of Hispanic families were below the poverty line in 1995, as compared to 26.4% for Black and 8.5 % of White families. The median family income for Hispanics was $20,306 as compared to a median family income of $31,853 for the general population (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1996).

Hispanics also have a smaller percentage of graduates than Whites or Blacks and they continue to drop out of school at disproportionate rates. The educational attainment of some Hispanic groups is alarmingly low, a factor that contributes to some of the hardships they face in other areas of their lives such as employment and income. Among Hispanic males who were age 25 or over in 1995, slightly more than half (52.9 percent) had completed high school compared to over four-fifths (83.0%) of White men and nearly three-fourths (73.4%) of Black men (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1996). Likewise, the percentages of Hispanic, White, and Black women high school graduates were 53.8%, 83.0%, and 74.1%, respectively.

In fact, there are vast differences among Hispanics in the areas of poverty and education. Puerto Rican families experience the highest poverty rate among Hispanic subgroups. In fact, in 1993, more than one-third of Puerto Rican

families (35.4%) were poor, compared to 27.6% of Mexican American families, 23.9% of Central and South American families, and 17.2 % of Cuban-American families. Although Hispanics generally have attained less education than the population in general, specific groups of Hispanics have fared better than others in this regard. Hispanics who trace their origins to Central and South America, as well as Cuba, tend to have more education than Puerto Ricans or Mexicans. For example, 64% of Central and South American Hispanics age 25 or over had four years of high school or more in 1990, as compared 6to 61% of Cuban Americans, 51% of Puerto Ricans and 45% of Mexican-Americans of the same age (Bureau of the Census, 1990).

One example of the achievement gap between Hispanics and their Black and White peers is evidenced in standardized tests such as the SAT. In 1991, the average SAT verbal score for Mexican Americans was 377, for Puerto Ricans 361 and for other Hispanics 382. The national average score, in comparison was 422. In the case of mathematics achievement, Mexican-Americans had an average SAT math score of 427, Puerto Ricans 406, and other Hispanics 431, while the national average was 474 (National Center for Educational Statistics, 1992).

Hispanics, in general, also tend to take less courses in academic subjects such as science and math. According to the U.S. Department of Education, among the 1987 high school graduates, Hispanics took 2.77 Carnegie units of math compared to 2.98 units taken by Whites, and 2.33 units of science compared to 2.64 of Whites. Hispanics took 2.40 units of physical education compared to the 1.94 units taken by Whites. Such concentration of minorities in non-academic courses has been hypothesized to be one of the factors leading to their academic underachievement (Oakes, 1990).

Even a cursory review of the statistics reported above reveal that the

growth in the Hispanic population poses serious social and educational concerns for the United States, in light of their high level of poverty and their disproportionately low educational attainment. Yet we know very little about these students and their parents. Educators at the local, state, and federal levels continue to look for ways to reverse this pattern without experiencing much success.

While it is very evident that an achievement gap exists, less known are the factors that are responsible for this gap, and more importantly, how these factors affect Hispanic students from different ethnic subgroups. Earlier attempts to understand why Hispanics have achieved at significantly lower rates than their White peers in the public schools of this country have not differentiated between the various Hispanic subgroups.

The term Hispanic has a political origin. It began to be used as an official term in 1968 when President Johnson, at the request of then Senator Joseph Montoya of New Mexico, declared National Hispanic Heritage Week to begin the week of September 15 and 16. Ever since, it has been used as an umbrella term to describe a large and diverse population.

Hispanics in the United States are bound by a common language and a common history of Spanish colonization. However, what is less known is that as a group they are also highly heterogeneous. Hispanics come from twenty different countries with different histories and ethnicites. Each group has its own relation to this country, and each tends to be concentrated in different geographic areas of the United States (Melville, 1988).

Hispanics come from different countries including Mexico, Cuba, Central and South American countries and Puerto Rico, a commonwealth of the United States. The citizenship status and reasons for immigration vary greatly for the different groups. For some, coming to this country was a matter of choice, for

others it was not. The unique history of each Hispanic group in this country must be understood in order to have a better appreciation of the socio-political and economic status of the various groups.

Many Mexican Americans have lived in this land since before the union was formed. Along with the Indians, Mexicans are natives to the Southwest. They were born of Indian mothers who were natives of the land and of Spanish fathers who explored the area long before the British came to the Americas. Most of what we call the Southwest was Spanish and then Mexican territory.

In the years between 1820 and 1850, the United States believed in its "Manifest Destiny" to annex the continent from ocean to ocean (Lamb, 1970). In 1845 the United States decided to take Texas as a state, which prompted the Mexican-American War. The United States won the war and in 1848 Mexico signed the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo which ceded over half of its national territory to the U.S.

The Mexicans living in the ceded territories were given the option to keep their Mexican citizenship and be given resident alien status, or to take U.S. citizenship. They were given a period of one year to decide what citizenship they wanted. If they did not formally decide within that time, by default they became U.S. citizens. These Mexicans did not immigrate, the border moved on them.

Many Mexicans became U.S. citizens after the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848, with the annexation of most of the southwest to the new nation. However, because of their physical characteristics, they are treated as immigrants by the members of the dominant culture (Lamb, 1970).

In the 1920's and 1940's Mexicans were brought to the United States by businesses to provide cheap labor in the fields and the factories (Lamb, 1970). This program was referred to as the "Bracero" program and lasted until 1965 when it was discontinued by Congress. Many of the Mexican immigrants came

to this country in search of a better life, just as those who came from all parts of Europe, but the Mexican immigrants were not as welcome as were their European counterparts (Lamb, 1970).

While the majority of today's Mexican Americans live in urban settings in this country, a significant number live in rural areas, and these are part of the migrant population which moves from the south to the north twice a year. The children in migrant families often leave school in the fall and come back in early spring to accommodate the economic needs of the family. This mobility causes educational discontinuity which often results in poor academic achievement, grade retention, and dropping out.

Whether urban or rural, poor Mexican Americans have also historically attended schools which lack the necessary resources to provide them with an excellent educational experience. Mexican American students have been victims of segregation and discrimination in the public schools due to their language, socio-economic status and cultural backgrounds (President's Advisory Commission on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans, 1996).

Puerto Ricans are also a unique group because of their historical, cultural, socio-political, and economic background. Before Christopher Columbus arrived in Puerto Rico in 1493, the island was inhabited by an indigenous population. This population died out from overwork, malnutrition and disease as a result of the Spanish colonization. The Spanish turned to African slaves to meet their labor needs.

In 1503 the Spanish Crown granted permission to import African slaves to the Americas. By the 17th century the population of Puerto Rico could be described as White, Black and mulatto. The culture of the island became a mesh of African and Spanish cultures. This blending is seen in the main religion practiced on the island which is a mixture of Catholicism and African religious

beliefs (Lopez, 1980).

The island remained under Spanish rule until 1898 when the United States gained control of Puerto Rico after its victory over Spain in the Spanish American War. The island was annexed as a territory and later became a commonwealth of the United States. In 1917 Puerto Ricans were granted U.S. citizenship and were free to enter and leave the U.S. mainland at will. This created a unique dilemma. As U.S. citizens, by birth, Puerto Ricans were not subject to immigration laws, but because of their linguistic and cultural differences were treated as immigrants. As Raquel Romberg points out:

> On the one hand, they are Americans and part of the American way of life. Yet since they speak another language, they are considered by the majority to be Puerto Ricans or second-rate Americans. But paradoxically, they are *Americanos* or second-rate Puerto Ricans to their island co-patriots (Romberg, 1996.)

Even though they are citizens, Puerto Ricans living on the island are not allowed to vote for the President. They have one representative in Congress who is allowed to speak, but who does not have a vote (Lopez, 1980).

Major migration began in the 1940's due to economic problems on the island and because industrial cities in the mainland appeared to offer better opportunities. Today, 2.7 million Puerto Ricans are living in the 50 states and more than 3.7 million live on the island. Puerto Ricans comprise the second largest group of Hispanics in this country (President's Advisory Commission on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans, 1996).

Upon their arrival on the mainland, Puerto Ricans faced cultural and racial discrimination. Most came to earn a better living, but the majority planned to return to the island. Their dream of a better life has not materialized, for they remain the poorest of all Hispanic groups (Lopez, 1980).

Mainland Puerto Ricans maintain strong ties with the island. The socio-

political and cultural struggle of Puerto Ricans to keep their identity is evidenced by their strong affiliation to their culture and the Spanish language. Schools in Puerto Rico use Spanish as the primary language of instruction. English as a second language classes are required of students in first through twelfth grade (President's Advisory Commission on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans, 1996).

It would be erroneous to think that all Puerto Ricans fit a given category. Like other Hispanics, individuals identify and relate to the home and mainstream cultures differently depending on characteristics and conditions such as their race, socio-economic status, geographic location, and the schools they attend.

In general, Hispanics run the gamut from being highly assimilated into the mainstream Anglo culture to being immersed in the particular Hispanic subculture of which they are a part. Their level of proficiency in Spanish and English also differs depending on variables such as place of birth, recency of immigration, language used at home, and where they reside in this country. Some Hispanics are English monolingual, others are Spanish monolingual, and many are bilingual in varying degrees.

The types of schools that Hispanics from various subgroups attend, and the programs in which they are enrolled also differ according to their socio-economic status and other previously mentioned characteristics. In Michigan, for instance, students who speak Spanish or who live in homes where Spanish is spoken are eligible for bilingual services, if they score below the 40th percentile in the California Achievement Test. The types of academic services and cultural support that they receive are markedly different depending on whether or not they are enrolled in the bilingual program at their local schools. The quality of those programs also varies greatly depending on the commitment of the districts and schools they attend.

In districts with bilingual programs, teachers who are Hispanic, bilingual, and

bicultural, are able to provide more linguistic and cultural support and affirmation than monolingual, monocultural teachers in mainstream classes. Also, in these programs teachers can provide more continuity between the home and the school experiences of children. As a result, parents and families are often more actively involved in schools which offer high quality bilingual programs (Carter and Chatfield, 1986).

Unfortunately, not much has been written regarding the lack of achievement among the various Hispanic subgroups. We do know, however, that minority students from groups that have a history of having been colonized or oppressed such as American Indians, African Americans, Mexican Americans, and Puerto Ricans, have consistently achieved at substantially lower levels in our public schools than middle class children of European descent (Banks, 1988; Ogbu, 1978).

Research comparing the various Hispanic populations is also very scant. As a result, educators know little about the different Hispanic subgroups living in this country and therefore tend to generalize their theories regarding their underachievement to the entire Hispanic population.

Statement of the Problem

Hispanic students continue to underachieve and drop out of public schools at higher rates than their counterparts. The lack of academic progress among Hispanic children, in general, begins during their preschool years and persists into higher education. We know that much of the fault for the underachievement of Hispanic children lies with our current educational system. Hispanics are under-represented in quality preschool programs, and since their preschool years they tend to do less well than their White peers in school-related skills (National Center for Education Statistics, 1996). Four year old Hispanic children, for example, were less able than their White counterparts to identify

basic colors, recognize the letters of the alphabet, count to 50, and write their first name (National Center for Education Statistics, 1995).

By middle school, Hispanic students already lag behind by two years in their math and reading achievement and four years in science. Grade retention among Latino students is also high and it has been associated with the high drop out rate. In fact, 40% of 16-24 year old Hispanics left school with less than a ninth grade education. This compares with 11% for Blacks and 13% for Whites (National Center for Education Statistics, 1993).

The relationship between social class, educational achievement, and productivity has been well established in the literature. Based on the U.S. Bureau of the Census (1996) it can be projected that Hispanic children will constitute 25% of the school population by the year 2030 and that these children will also continue to grow up in poor households. Such realities provide a challenge to policy makers and practitioners to aggressively seek solutions to the underachievement of Hispanic children in the public schools. Since education in the United States is intricately related to economic prosperity, the future of this nation is woven into the destiny of its Hispanic population.

The failure of schools to inspire and motivate Hispanic students to achieve is a reality that cannot be denied. Mainstream teachers have a distinct challenge to deal with the linguistic needs of these students and understand their distinct cultures in order to successfully motivate them to learn. Therefore, it is the interest of this researcher to see if different Hispanic subgroups vary in their level of achievement and in the way in which they interact with the culture of their schools.

Some literature exists on the effect of school culture on motivation and achievement (Maehr and Fyans, 1990). There is however, very little literature dealing with the diversity or ethnic variation within the Hispanic population (Fernandez, 1989) and even less on the relationship between these within-group

variations, students' perception of school culture, and their academic achievement. These variations might serve to explain patterns of motivation and achievement within the different Hispanic subgroups.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to determine if there is a significant difference in the relationship between ethnicity and the perception of school culture and achievement of Mexican American and Puerto Rican students from two urban high schools in southeastern Michigan.

Significance of the Study

The information obtained from this study will provide a greater understanding of the importance of the relationship between ethnic affiliation and the perception of school culture and academic achievement of the two largest Hispanic subgroups in the United States, i.e. Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans. The findings of this study will hopefully offer constructive suggestions for more effective services and practices in the educational processes targeted at Hispanic students from various ethnic backgrounds. Educational researchers will also benefit by better understanding some of the variations between Mexican American and Puerto Rican students.

Research Questions

There are several unanswered questions about the relationships between ethnic affiliation, the perception of school culture, and the academic achievement of Hispanic students from various subgroups. The specific questions that this study will answer are:

1. Is there a relationship in the perception of school culture of Mexican American and Puerto Rican students from the same socio-economic status?
2. Is there a relationship in the academic achievement of Mexican

Americans and Puerto Rican students from the same socio-economic status?

Hypotheses

1. There will be a statistically significant difference between Mexican American and Puerto Rican students' perceptions of school culture.

Null There will not be a statistically significant difference between Mexican American and Puerto Rican students' perceptions of school culture.

2. There will be a statistically significant difference between Mexican American and Puerto Rican students' achievement.

Null There will not be a statistically significant difference between Mexican American and Puerto Rican students' achievement.

Delimitation of the Study

This study focuses on 9th through 12th grade Mexican American and Puerto Rican students from two urban high schools in southeastern Michigan. The study was limited to these two groups because of the limited numbers of other Hispanic subgroups in the target schools. Also, due to the limited information available about Hispanic subgroups in this area of research, this study draws from the literature on minorities which deals mainly with African Americans and Hispanics in general.

Definition of Terms:

In order to add clarity to this study, the following terms used in the context of this paper have been defined.

Academic Achievement:

The academic achievement of the students in this study is defined as the overall high school grade point average on a 4 point scale. This information was collected by staff from the schools surveyed for this study using official school records.

<u>Accomplishment:</u>

This refers to the emphasis on excellence, trying new things, improving productivity, and pursuit of academic challenge (Maehr and Braskamp, 1985).

<u>Affiliation:</u>

The emphasis placed on interpersonal relationship, and the caring for and respecting of each person (Maehr and Braskamp, 1985).

<u>At-Risk:</u>

Students who possess one or more characteristics that research has shown may lead to an early departure from academic schooling. Examples of these characteristics are: belonging to an ethnic minority, limited English proficient, low socio-economic status, teen parenthood, low academic achievement, alienation from school environment, etc.

<u>Culture:</u>

Human culture - " A set of ideals, values, and standards of behavior; . . the common denominator that makes the actions of individuals intelligible to the group" (Haviland, p.17).

Organizational culture - "consists of many elements, but the primary element is the unique pattern of norms - standards or rules of conduct - to which members conform" (Burke, p. 9).

<u>Dominant Culture:</u>

The ideals, beliefs and behaviors that are valued and transmitted by the majority population.

<u>Drop-out:</u>

A student who leaves school prior to graduation from high school.

Ethnic:

Relating to community of physical and mental traits possessed by the members of a group as a product of their common heredity and cultural tradition (Webster, 1986).

Ethnicity:

Ethnic quality or affiliation (Webster, 1986)

Field Dependent:

A theory which asserts that some students respond more positively to the approval or praise of authority figures, such as teachers. These students are more motivated by personal recognition or acceptance (Ramirez and Castaneda, 1974).

Field Independent

A theory which contends that some students are less dependent on the approval of teachers and other adults for their motivation to learn (Ramirez & Castaneda, 1974).

Hispanic:

In this study, the term Hispanics is used to mean persons from Spanish-speaking backgrounds such as Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans, Cubans, Central and South Americans.

Learning Motivation:

This term refers to the personal investment that a student makes and which is demonstrated by the choices that s/he makes in reference to their schooling and education (Maehr, 1984; Maehr & Braskamp, 1986). Learning motivation is defined here by a four item scale used to measured it. These items which were loaded into one factor called motivation, were adapted from previous studies (Maehr and Fyans, 1990) and measured the following

motivational aspects: attributions of success and failure, perceived effort on schoolwork, time spent on homework, and academic aspirations. These items have been employed in a large number of studies appearing in the literature as well as in state-wide testing programs particularly in the state of Illinois and have been subjected to extensive item analysis (Fyans, 1983; Fyans & Stenzel, 1981; Maehr & Fyans, 1989; 1990; Maehr, 1989).

Locus of Control:

A theory which looks at how individuals perceive the relationship between their actions and the resulting consequences (Lefcourt, 1982).

Mexican American:

Students whose family of origin come from Mexico or from parts of the United States which were originally Mexican territory regardless of place of birth, recency of immigration or citizenship status.

Minority:

A group identifiable by its religious, political, racial, or ethnic characteristics that distinguish it from a larger group or society of which it forms a part (Webster, 1988).

Power:

The emphasis on interpersonal competition, socially comparative achievement, conflict not to be avoided, and the overt recognition of status and hierarchy (Maehr and Braskamp, 1985).

Puerto Rican:

Students whose family of origin come from Puerto Rico regardless of place of birth, or recency of immigration.

Recognition:

The emphasis on recognition for good work; such recognition may include social approval and extrinsic rewards; the instrumental nature rather than the intrinsic value of work is emphasized (Maehr and Braskamp, 1985).

School Culture:

School culture is defined as the "psychological environment" of the school (Maehr, 1989).

Socio-Economic Status:

The socio-economic status (SES) of the students questioned for this study was determined by whether or not they participated in the Free or Reduced Lunch Program (FRL).

Tracking:

Tracking is the practice of ability grouping or sorting of students into categories for the purpose of instruction (Oakes, 1985). This practice often results in the perpetuation of the categorization.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Ever since the Coleman report, a number of theories have focused on why certain minority groups in this country, such as African Americans, Mexican Americans, and Puerto Ricans, underachieve and drop out of the public education system in highly disproportionate numbers (Coleman, et al. 1966; Gottfredson, 1981; Kerckhoff and Campbell 1977; Ogbu, 1978). These students share a number of characteristics which place them at risk. Minority status, economically disadvantaged, low academic achievement, limited English proficiency, welfare recipient, low educational aspirations and alienation from the school environment are some of the indicators associated with being at risk of dropping out. The Bureau of Labor Statistics (1990) reports that 3.8 million young people 16 through 20 years of age are currently considered high school drop outs, and a disproportionate number of these students are students of color.

Cultural Differences

In their search for answers, researchers have looked at variables that account for the differences between the achievement of middle class Whites and minority students. For the most part, these studies have focused on the students to determine if factors such as home culture, language, and socio-economic status explain the differences in achievement between these groups.

Issues related to language and culture, as they relate to the education of language minority children, have been greatly politicized in recent years and are the subject of heated debate from California to Washington, DC. The debate has revolved around the controversy of whether the languages and cultures of minority students are deficient and need to be quickly replaced by the

mainstream culture and language in order to enable minority students to achieve success in school. In 1966 Heller wrote:

> The kind of socialization that the Mexican-American children generally receive at home is not conducive to the development of the capacities needed for advancement in a dynamic industrialized society. This type of upbringing creates stumbling blocks to future advancement by stressing values that hinder mobility _family ties, honor, masculinity, and living in the present _and by neglecting values that are conducive to it _achievement, independence, and deferred gratification (pp. 33-34).

Although this perspective is now widely discredited among researchers, it continues to be perpetuated by the policies and practices of the educational system in the United States. Hispanic children are often torn between the demands placed on them by the schools to become linguistically and culturally assimilated and their need to communicate with their families and conform to the norms, values, and beliefs of the home culture.

Other researchers point to this discontinuity in values and beliefs between the home and school cultures as a source of conflict for students, but they explain this as cultural differences not deficiencies (Delgado-Gaitan, 1993; Delgado-Gaitan & Tureba, 1991; Laosa, 1982). According to these authors, the Latino family's patterns of socialization stresses values such as family cohesion and interdependence while the schools put emphasis on individual effort and achievement. This discontinuity puts children in a disadvantaged position because in order to succeed they must adapt to norms and standards that are not congruent with their home culture. In fact, these differences can interfere with the process of adaptation and the academic achievement of students (California State Department of Education, 1986; Delgado-Gaitan & Trueba, 1991; Jacob & Jordan, 1987; Laosa, 1982).

Ogbu (1986) and Cummins (1986) go a step further by suggesting that it is precisely the types of interactions or power relations between the students and

teachers, their families and the schools, and the communities to which children belong and the larger society that are good predictors of the failure or success of schools in educating non-White children. Ogbu (1986) argues that this principle can be clearly understood by looking at the educational performance of caste-like groups in this country, i.e. American Indians, African Americans, Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans. He believes that these children do not do as well as other children in school because years of discrimination and oppression teach them that working hard in school is futile. He calls it the "low academic effort syndrome." Instead, they develop survival strategies to help them cope with the cultural demands and expectations that dominate most schools. These strategies become compromises between economic realities, spiritual needs, and cultural values.

All of these perspectives share the belief that the lack of educational attainment among Latinos and other minorities in the public schools of the United States is directly related to the discrepancies or discontinuities between the home and school cultures. Unfortunately, many of the recent attempts to improve, reform, or restructure schools are failing because little attention is being given to this critical issue (Cummins, 1986).

While researchers have traditionally looked at student variables such as home culture, language, and socio-economic status in their attempts to understand the academic underachievement of minority students, more recent research has focused on the level of congruency between the school and home cultures. Researchers have shown that schools that value and affirm the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of students are more successful in teaching them, than those that immerse students in mainstream classes without regard for their unique needs as learners (Cummins, 1986; Collier, 1996).

In their case study of the successful Lauderbach Community School in

California Carter and Chatfield (l986) write, "Senior citizens come and go from classrooms where they share their skills and expertise as tutors and teacher assistants . . . a process that is not a program apart from others but one that weaves in and out of all other programs at the school (pp. 214-15)." They contend that schools that take into consideration the cultural and linguistic needs of students and their families, when designing educational programs, reduce the level of anxiety that these children experience in school. The study of the relationship between the culture of the school and the motivation and achievement of minority students is an area which deserves more attention from educational researchers.

The intricate nature of culture and its usefulness in explaining human and organizational behaviors has made it a subject of much interest, discussion, and debate, especially among reformers and advocates for change. Human culture has been described as "a set of ideals, values, and standards of behavior; . . . the common denominator that makes the actions of individuals intelligible to the group" (Haviland, p.17).

Similarly, organizational culture "consists of many elements, but the primary element is the unique pattern of norms - standards or rules of conduct- to which members conform" (Burke, p.9). We also know that culture, and the values and patterns of behaviors that it promotes, is passed on from generation to generation primarily by the parents and the educational systems of a given society (Haviland, p.17). This process, often referred to as "enculturation," is a necessary means by which societies transmit the values, norms, standards of behaviors, rituals, and legacies that make it unique. Enculturation can, however, result in the suppression and devaluation of the individual, particularly if s/he comes from a cultural background different from that of the dominant cultural group. For a country, rich in cultural diversity as is the United States, this issue

has significant implications for educators.

The culture of American schools, in general, continues to both reflect and transmit the values, power relations, and behavioral norms of the groups for whom schools were originally intended - middle class students of European descent. In order to be more successful in educating minority students, schools must legitimize and affirm the cultures and heritages that they bring with them into the classrooms. This is done by integrating the history, contributions, values, styles, and perspectives of the cultural groups to which they belong (Banks, 1986). As educators, we must change from seeing these students as deficient to the more empowering position of seeing them as bringing valuable resources that must be woven into the teaching and learning experiences for the benefit of all (Freire, 1985; Cummins, 1986).

In an article about Hispanic cultures and cognitive styles, Carlos Diaz (1986) notes that most teachers use teaching styles that emphasize competitive learning and they assume that students are intrinsically motivated to learn. He argues, however, that in general, Hispanic students work and learn better in cooperative situations and they tend to be motivated by more extrinsic values, especially those associated with family. While some of the research findings regarding general cultural differences can be valid, more attention has to be given to the specific variations within ethnic groups regarding learning styles and sources of motivation.

Researchers theorized that it is the lack of congruency between the culture and language of the school and that of the home that disables Hispanic students (Cummins, 1986). The inclusion of the home language and culture in the learning environment of language minority students, they contend, can have a positive effect on the adaptation and school success of these students (Lambert, 1975; Diaz, 1986; and Cummins, 1986).

Linguistic Differences

For decades, issues related to the language of instruction have been the main focus of much of the debate and research regarding the education of Hispanics and other language minority students in this country (Cummins, 1986). However, the problem of educating Limited English Proficient (LEP) students is not a new one. This country has been shaped by immigrants from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, and schools have played a major role in the acculturation and assimilation processes. Historically, however, little attention has been given by researchers and practitioners alike to the special problems faced by immigrant children in the schools. It was believed that merely by being exposed to the language, in an immersion mode, students would naturally acquire the English language skills necessary to eventually perform well in school. The efforts of well intended educators to speed the process of learning English, without regard for the cognitive-academic development of students, often resulted in low academic attainments for these students (Wong-Fillmore and Valadez, 1986).

The language issue has had great implications for Hispanics in the educational system of this country. Like other linguistic minorities, Hispanics have been subjected for decades to discriminatory practices in schools. They have been placed in special education classes, punished for speaking the home language, and tracked in low level classes due to the inability of schools to deal with their home language.

As a result of a suit against the San Francisco public schools in 1970, a ruling was made to ensure the equal educational opportunities of Limited English Proficient (LEP) students. In 1974, the U.S. Supreme court ruled that:

> There is no equality of treatment merely by providing students with the same facilities, textbooks, teachers, and curriculum: for students who do

> not understand English are effectively foreclosed from any meaningful education.
>
> Basic English skills are at the very core of what these public schools teach. Imposition of a requirement that, before a child can effectively participate in the educational program, he must already have acquired those basic skills is to make a mockery of public education. We know that those who do not understand English are certain to find their classroom experiences wholly incomprehensible and in no way meaningful (U.S. Supreme Court, 414 U.S. 563).

No specific methodology was prescribed, however. Educators could choose the type of instructional program to educate LEP students. In a guide for school districts implementing bilingual programs, the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights (1975) wrote:

> Without a doubt, it is easier for children to learn in a language they already understand. Native language instruction capitalizes on children's previous knowledge and maximizes the possibility that children will develop healthy self concepts and positive attitudes toward learning. Cognitive, reading and expression skills can be developed naturally, without the handicap of having to learn a new language at the same time (p. 138).

In fact, the latest findings of a twelve year longitudinal study on school effectiveness for language minority students, supports the Ramirez, et al., (1991) findings that language support in the first language, when combined with good instructional practices and a supportive school culture, are key variables in the long-term academic success of language minority students (Collier 1995). More specifically, they have identified the three most significant predictors of academic success for these students:

> The first predictor is cognitively complex on-grade-level academic instruction through students' first language for as long as possible and cognitively complex on-grade-level academic instruction through the second language (English) for part of the school day... The second predictor is the use of current approaches to teaching the academic curriculum through two languages... [and the] third predictor is changes in the sociocultural context of schooling (Thomas and Collier, 1996, pp. 2-3).

Socio Economic Status

Hispanics are also over represented among the poor in our society. The U.S. Census Bureau (1995) reports that the unemployment rates among Hispanics were 50% higher than for non-Hispanics. In fact, 27% of Hispanic families lived in poverty in 1995, while the poverty rate for White families was 8.5%. Also, over one-third (33.2%) of Hispanic families with children under 18 were poor, compared to 12.9% of comparable White families in 1995. And while Hispanic children represented 11% of all children living in the United States, they constituted 21% of all children living in poverty.

In the 1960's a debate took place between those theorists who attributed the failure of minority and poor children to the deficiency of the culture of poverty in which they were socialized. This cultural deprivation paradigm was rejected and harshly criticized by researchers and theorists who insisted that poor and minority children have rich cultural and linguistic backgrounds when they enter school (Valentine, 1968; Baratz and Baratz, 1970).

Although some schools have been found to successfully teach all students regardless of ethnicity and socio-economic status, these schools are in the minority and attempts to replicate them have been for the most part unsuccessful. Many of these attempts have been oversimplified and constrained by activities that fail to recognize schools as intricate social organizations. In fact, it is precisely because of the difficulty in defining and analyzing these human dimensions of schools that researchers and practitioners have not been successful in replicating effective schools.

Maehr and Fyans (1990) tried to identify these dimensions when they looked at how motivation mediates the influences of "school culture" on the academic achievement of student. More specifically, they looked at how the

"psychological" environments of schools impact the motivation and achievement of students from different socio-cultural backgrounds at different grade levels. Two of Maehr's and Fyans' findings from these studies seem to be especially significant. First, "school culture" seems to have a greater effect on the motivation and attitudes towards the learning of non-White students than on their White peers. Second, different school environments seem to have different effects on students depending on their socio-cultural background (Maehr and Fyans, 1990).

Researchers should be encouraged to continue to determine which elements of school culture contribute to the success or failure of minority students (Carter,1986; Edmonds, 1986; Saranson, 1982; Brookover, 1979). Due to the highly heterogeneous nature of Hispanics, however, it is crucial to caution researchers to identify the different subgroups when studying Hispanic populations.

More recent theories on the issue of minority underachievement, have proposed a more complex paradigm (Ogbu, and Matute-Bianchi, 1986; Cummins, 1986). They contend that while students' characteristics such as socio-economic status and ethnicity are predictors of success in school, they do not determine the academic motivation and achievement of poor and minority students. These theories point to the effects of school culture on the learning motivation and academic achievement of students in general and students from minority and low socio-economic backgrounds in specific.

Following is a discussion of various theories on learning motivation, academic achievement and school culture, in general, as they relate to students from low socio-economic backgrounds and ethnic minorities. The literature which addresses these topics in relation to minority students does so primarily in relation to African Americans, Hispanics in general, and Mexican Americans in

specific. Fewer references are made about Puerto Ricans and literature contrasting Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans is practically non-existent.

Motivation

Since the 1966 Coleman report, there has been an on-going debate as to whether schools can "make a difference" in the learning motivation and academic achievement of students, particularly those from minority and low socio-economic backgrounds. At first, many researchers ignored school characteristics and concentrated upon heredity factors, socioeconomic status and cultural differences in their attempts to solve the dilemma of minority underachievement. Recently, they have begun to examine school-level characteristics to determine which elements of school culture contribute to the success or failure of minority students (Carter and Chatfield, 1986; Edmonds, 1986; Saranson, 1982; Brookover, 1979).

Maehr and Ames (1989) have looked at the "psychological environment" of schools and how it affects the motivation and achievement of students. These researchers have gone further to conceptualize the school environment in terms of stresses of certain learning goals. They found that different stresses had varying effects depending on ethnic group membership. In other words, that there is not one best school culture for all children irrespective of their ethnic affiliation.

Fyans and Maehr (1990) found that motivation mediates the influence of school culture on academic achievement, especially for minority students. Two of Maehr's and Fyans' findings from these studies seem to be especially significant. First, "school culture" seems to have a greater effect both positive and negative, on the motivation and attitudes towards learning of non-White students than on their White peers. Second, different school environments seem

to have different effects on students depending on their socio-cultural backgrounds.

Locus of control and its influence on learning motivation is a subject which has received much attention by researchers (Lefcourt, 1982). Theories of locus of control look at how individuals perceive the relationship between their actions and their consequences. Those who see consequences as a direct result of their actions are said to have internal locus of control while individuals who do not perceive the relationship between their actions and its consequences are said to have external locus of control. For example, students would complete the following statement differently: I did well on the test . . . because I studied hard (internal) or because I was lucky (external).

Maehr and Fyans (1990) also found that motivation mediates the influence of the "school culture" on achievement. In other words, students achieve to the degree that schools are successful in eliciting positive learning behaviors from students. And while they found that there was not one best school culture for all students, they determined that the motivation for achievement of minority students is especially susceptible to the "psychological environment" of the school. They contend that since students' are the reason why schools exist, any attempt to determine its impact on students attitudes towards learning and on their achievement must measure the perceptions of students of the school culture. In other words, the major influence on the students' attitudes and, ultimately, on their motivation and achievement is their own perceptions and attitudes towards the school culture.

Researchers have found a positive correlation between internality and academic achievement (Lefcourt, 1982). That is, students who believe that there is a direct correspondence between their behavior and the consequences experienced, tend to achieve higher than those who attribute consequences to

external forces such as fate, destiny, or luck. They go further to say that students from lower socio-economic groups tend to be more external in their locus of control than middle class students as a result of their socialization practices.

Student motivation is critical to the success and academic achievement of students in general. When we speak with teachers of students who are underachieving they consistently point to the lack of motivation among their students and of their frustration in not knowing how to increase the learning motivation of their students. Learning motivation is defined here by a four item scale used to measured it. These items which were loaded into one factor called motivation, were adapted from previous studies (Maehr and Fyans, 1990) and measured the following motivational aspects: attributions of success and failure, perceived effort on schoolwork, time spent on homework, and academic aspirations. These items have been employed in a large number of studies appearing in the literature as well as in state-wide testing programs particularly in the state of Illinois and have been subjected to extensive item analysis (Fyans, 1983; Fyans & Stenzel, 1981; Maehr & Fyans, 1989; 1990; Maehr, 1989).

When students are motivated they stay on task, they feel good about themselves, and they perform well in school (Pintrich, and Schunk, 1996). Conversely, when students are not motivated there is little benefit they can gain from attending school.

Unfortunately, researchers have not always agreed on the definition of motivation, how it affects learning, and how it can be increased. More recently, however, researchers have been focusing on students in hopes of identifying school conditions that affect the motivation of students.

The word motivation comes from the Latin verb *mover* which means *to move*. That aspect of motion or of going from one point (usually lower) to

another (usually higher) in a continuum is included in the term *motivation*. How that motion is set into action has been a source of continuous debate. Theories on motivation have attempted to explain it from various perspectives.

Systematic research on achievement motivation has been credited to David McClelland (1951). The major thrust of his research on motivation focused on individual differences. He described motivation as an unconscious emotive process that was acquired through early socialization experiences and that could be evaluated through fantasy measures. Allport (1955) and Roger (1951) both considered the role of selfhood a significant variable in motivational research. They felt that student level of aspiration in regards to a strong sense of self was a significant variable in achievement and motivation.

Weiner's (1972) research on motivation put in question these theories. He was interested on whether thoughts or attributions were significant critical variables contributing to motivational change. His theory proposed that those with high and low needs for achieving thought about success and failure differently. This new way of thinking transformed the focus of motivational research in the 70's. The specific situation and the meaning associated with that situation were seen as greater determinants of the level of motivation than individual differences and personality.

More recently, the emergence of purposes, intentions, and goals in discussions of achievement motivation have received much attention (Dweck, 1985). In current motivational research, the concept of goal can be used in two ways. It can be used to refer to a level of aspiration established by the performer or it can be a performance standard established by someone other than the performer. Although research indicates that goal setting is an effective method of increasing motivation the reasons are not yet fully understood.

The establishment of goals is an important component of motivation.

Goals serve to give a sense of direction to the activities, both mental and physical, that are undertaken by the individual who is motivated. The goals and the activities do not, however, need to be finalized. They evolve as the process of motivation and move along a continuum. Finally, motivation is not a one time event. Since motivation is a process it needs to be started, but also sustained. Setbacks and hurdles must be overcome to achieve that goal. This is where motivation becomes significant to the successful achievement of the established goal. Motivation can affect all of the aspects of learning (Schunk, 1991). The content of what is learned, the way in which it is learned, and the time and place when it is learned is all affected by motivation. In other words, the type of commitment of an individual to learn something is dependent on that individual's motivation. Being thorough, taking notes, studying carefully, asking questions to check for understanding, and testing of knowledge and understanding in various ways are behaviors associated with highly motivated individuals (Zimmerman & Martinez-Pons, 1992).

The opposite is true about students who are not motivated. These students do not show an interest in the material that is presented to them, and do not show curiosity or concern regarding their own understanding of the ideas presented to them. They often do not take notes and if they do, they are not complete or coherent. In general, these students are disconnected from the teaching and learning activities which are generated in the classroom.

While motivation has been found to influence learning outcomes, we also know that increased learning performance also influences motivation. Furthermore, students who are consistently motivated to learn tend to become intrinsically motivated. That is, they become engaged in the learning process for the sake of learning and not necessarily as a reaction to an extrinsic reward (Meece, 1991). This theory is of particular interest to researchers who are

interested in the motivation of students from various Hispanic subgroups because different cultures socialize children to be motivated in different ways.

Hence, the theories of locus of control and motivation are also of interest to this study. Researchers have looked at the relationship of locus of control and its influence on motivation and learning (Leftcourt, 1982). More specifically, they have looked at how individuals perceive the relationship between their actions and the resulting consequences. Those who believe that the consequences are a direct result of their actions are said to have internal locus of control. Conversely, those who do not believe that there is a significant relationship between their actions and given consequences are said to have external locus of control (Banks, 1988).

Research in this area has shown that students with internal locus of control tend to have higher achievement than those with external locus of control (Leftcourt, 1982). Moreover, they have found that socio-economic status and socialization are related to locus of control. Students from higher socio-economic backgrounds tend to have internal locus of control and therefore higher achievement than students from low socio-economic groups. Battle and Rotter's study supports the prevalent theory that locus of control has a stronger correlation to socio-economic status than to ethnicity or race (Battle and Rotter, 1963).

A study of the interactions of locus of control and field dependence theories associated with the academic achievement of students, showed that while field dependence was a more important factor in predicting the high achievers, when locus of control and field dependence were combined, locus of control was found to have a stronger correlation with achievement (Garner and Cole, 1986). The field dependence vs. field independence theory developed by Witkin (1950) in his spatial orientation study and later replicated by Ramirez and

Castaneda (1974), with Hispanics and other minorities, shed some light on this subject. In their book Cultural Democracy, Bicognitive Development, and Education, the authors discuss the theory of field independent and field sensitive styles of learning and the significance of addressing these styles, when teaching Mexican American students.

With regards to "incentive-motivational style," or the preference of a given individual to rewards or goals, Ramirez and Castaneda (1974) assert that field dependent students appear to respond more positively than those who are field independent to the approval or praise of authority figures, such as teachers. These students are more likely to be motivated by personal rewards such as support, recognition, or acceptance.

The theory of field dependence supports the findings of Maehr and Fyans (1990) which contend that school "culture", which is an outside force, plays a more significant role in the motivation and achievement of minority students than it did on their White counterparts. Therefore, they explain, variations in school environment will probably have different effects on students according to their ethnic affiliation (Maehr, 1989, and Maehr & Fyans, 1989).

Experienced teachers know that students are motivated when they are engaged in tasks that they feel are important or useful and when they feel confident that they can be successful in performing that task. There are theories of motivation, however, which must be addressed in any discussion of this topic.

More recently, Pintrich and Schunk (1996) described motivation as ". . . the process whereby goal-directed activity is instigated and sustained." They further agree that motivation "is a process rather than a product." (p.4) As such, they contend that motivation is not visible, but it can be inferred by behaviors such as: task selection, engagement, effort and student comments.

Various indicators have been identified with motivation. They are: 1)

choice tasks, 2) effort, 3) persistence, and 4) achievement. With regards to choice of task, Lepper, Greene, and Nisbett (1973) found, in an experiment dealing with preschool students who were given an incentive to draw a picture, that when observed at a subsequent time, these students chose to spend less time drawing than the other two groups whose behavior was not directed to the drawing of pictures. Choice can be a difficult index to measure motivation because students often do not have many choices in school (Brophy, 1983).

Students who are motivated learners are more likely to exert greater effort to achieve. Effort, whether physical (motor) or mental (cognitive) is an index of motivation (Corno & Mandinach, 1983). However, ability must be taken into consideration when using effort as an index of motivation, in other words, the more ability a student has, the less effort s/he has to expend to perform in a given task.

Self-efficacy was also found to be an index related to mental effort by Salomon (1984). The correlation between self-efficacy, mental effort and achievement was positive when learning from text. However, the correlation was negative when learning from TV.

In *Psychocybernetics*, (1994) Dr. Maxwell Maltz, offers a possible explanation by comparing the human brain to a computer that is goal seeking by design. The forebrain, he adds, sets a target and automatically triggers a success mechanism to achieve the goal. The brain receives the instruction in two ways: through self-talk or through verbal communication from another person.

Schunk (1991b) found a strong correlation between performance goals and motivation. He also found self-efficacy (the perceived ability to perform a task effectively) to be a contributing factor in enhancing motivation. By exploring self-efficacy, Schunk has helped in constructing a general theory of motivation.

Following the pattern of study by Dweck (1985), Ames identifies two types of goals that are present in educational settings and in parent and child interactions. They are referred to as *mastery goal* and *performance goal.* The first refers to learning for self improvement and the second focuses on comparison and competition within the learning environment (Ames and Archer, 1987).

Based on the findings of current studies (Ames & Archer, 1987) several theories on motivation have surfaced. One of those theories says that learning environments that stress performance goals are discouraging especially to students who lack confidence or have a low academic self-concept. Learning environments that emphasize mastery as a goal, tend to have a less discouraging effect on students. Maehr (1989) concludes in *Thoughts about Motivation* that external controls and extrinsic rewards tend to reduce motivation on the learner. This argument has great implications for educators everywhere since external incentives and rewards have become popular methods to change behavior among low motivated and underachieving students.

According to Maehr and his colleagues, schools are characterized by a "psychological environment" or "culture" which has a causal effect on the motivation and achievement of students. Dimensions of school "culture", such as power, recognition, and affiliation, were analyzed to see their effect on the motivation and achievement of different ethnic groups including Hispanics. Different groups responded differently to various kinds of school environments. The theory behind this research indicates that schools which are effective in eliciting the motivation of students focus on student achievement and that students, teachers, and administrators are purposeful in their behaviors (Good & Weinstein, 1986).

But despite the fact that there has been much interest in the relationship

of sociocultural factors associated with achievement related motives, most of this research has looked at White, middle-class students (Maehr, 1974a, 1974b; McClelland, 1961; Smith, 1969). There has been continued serious concern, however, about the lack of achievement motivation and poor academic performance among minority children in our public schools. This concern has brought about a number of studies which look at the relationship between sociocultural background and achievement motivation.

Maehr & Nicholls's (1980) contribution was to suggest that the study of this relationship must focus on the theory of attribution. They say that if the student believes that s/he succeeds because of her or his ability rather than the level of difficulty of the task or luck, s/he has a better chance to expect success if and when s/he puts forth effort in school related work. Conversely, Dweck (1975) has shown that the feeling of helplessness causes low performance in students. Maehr et al. (Fall 1983) studied "the role of social, cultural and personal factors in moderating achievement attribution and evaluation anxiety as they affect math performance in school." Almost 400 African Americans, Hispanics and Anglo students in grades four to eight were studied. The researchers found that Hispanic children demonstrated higher test anxiety than Black and Anglo students and were more likely to attribute failure to lack of ability as opposed to difficulty of the task or lack of luck.

In a subsequent study, Maehr and Braskamp (1989) explore two theories of motivation. One deals with the theory that there is no correlation between the socio-cultural background of students and the effect of school culture. The other theory tested is that one school culture is equally effective for all students. Maehr and Braskamp found little evidence to support either of these two theories in their 1989 study of 4th, 7th, and 11th graders enrolled in the Illinois public schools.

In looking at the effect of the psychological environments of the school referred to as "school culture" on the motivation and achievement of minority students, these researchers found that the "school culture" had a greater effect on the motivation of minority students than on White students (Maehr, 1989; and Maehr & Fyans, 1990.) They also found that different ethnic groups responded more positively to different kinds of environment. In other words, that one type of environment did not elicit the same type of response from the different racial/ethnic groups surveyed. Students from different ethnic groups, they concluded, have different preferences with regards to school environment. Thus, the researchers suggest that one type of school environment may not likely meet the needs of the various ethnic groups studied.

Maehr found that effective schools invested a lot of time and energy on procedures and activities that focus on mastery learning, student motivation and educational success. Maehr described a particular causal model that is psychometric in nature. The causal model suggests that student motivation is directly affected by an individual's state of mind. Maehr defined effective schools as schools in which students are actively engaged in learning. In these schools students are personally involved in their education and teachers are generally concerned. School administrators are also concerned about the total student population and their educational success.

Academic Achievement

The lack of academic achievement of minority students has been an area of increasing interest among scholars and researchers in their attempts to identify variables that contribute to the lack of educational progress among some minority students in the United States. One of the original theories on why minority and low socio-economic minorities underachieve and fail in our schools is the cultural deprivation theory. The researchers and theorists that support this

position contend that students from lower socio-economic status and ethnic/racial minority backgrounds do not achieve in school because they are limited by the socialization process which takes place within a culture of poverty (Reissman,1962; Bloom, Davis, and Hess, 1965). The homes and communities where these students live are assumed to be void of the complex and meaningful experiences that are considered prerequisite to success in school.

This theory was challenged during the late 60's and 70's by a number of researchers (Valentine, 1968, Baratz and Baratz, 1970). They argued that, while often different from the experiences of White middle class children, poor and minority students do have rich and valuable cultures, complex language patterns, styles of communication, and values that they bring to the learning experience (Smitherman, 1977; Hale-Benson, 1986).

They further contend that the failure of minority students is due to the lack of compatibility between the culture of the schools, which is predominantly middle class White, and the cultures of the minority students who attend those schools. In order to make these schools more affirming and nurturing for these students the schools must incorporate educational policies, programs, and practices that value the cultures, languages, learning and motivational styles of their diverse student populations (Ramirez and Castaneda, 1974; Shade, 1982; Hale-Benson, 1986; Cummins, 1986; Carter, 1986).

The social class theory is used often to account for intra-group variation with regards to achievement and motivation. Some of the most recent and controversial contributions in this area are those of Wilson (1978). He argued that race is no longer an important variable in the United States. Class, he argues, is currently a more significant factor particularly since the African American community in the United States has become socially stratified. According to Gordon, class has a significant influence on social behavior. He

asserts that people from the same social class tend to behave alike even if they are from different ethnic and racial backgrounds. In other words, poverty is more significant than race or ethnicity as a variable that affects academic achievement and school success.

After reviewing the related literature, Banks (1988) contends that the theory on the "persistence of ethnicity" is still of significance. In fact, the research in the areas of cognition and learning styles, family socialization, cognitive styles, and locus of control and motivation, point out that it is more likely that social class and ethnicity interact in complex ways to influence the academic achievement of racial/ethnic groups such as African Americans, Mexican Americans, and Puerto Ricans. Ethnicity and socio-economic status are thus seen not as determinants of motivation, achievement, and success but as variables that add to the probability for certain behaviors to occur (Kamii and Radin, 1971).

Some researchers contend that schools have cultures, and that it is through these cultures that minority students can be empowered or disabled by schools. While many studies have looked at the correlation of social class and academic achievement from the Coleman's perspective, others like Oakes (1985); Freire (1971), Rist (1970), Fishman (1976), and Ogbu (1978) address the same issue by looking at the role schools play in reinforcing the social stratification in the United States. Pablo Freire was one of the pioneers in this area.

Tracking, for example, results in an unfair and disproportionate placement of poor and minority students, Hispanic and Blacks, in low-ability and non-college-bound classes (Oakes, 1985). Oakes writes: "The end result is that poor and minority children are found far more often than others in the bottom tracks. And, once there, they are likely to suffer far more negative consequences of

schooling than are their more fortunate peers" (Oakes, 1985, p.40).

Proponents of ability grouping for purposes of instruction argue that tracking helps reduce the achievement gap between low- and high-achieving students by providing instruction that is geared to the students' ability levels. Homogeneous grouping, they argue, helps create a classroom climate that protects the low achievers from feeling inferior to their high achieving peers, and the high achiever from having to slow down to accommodate their low-performing classmates (Oakes, 1985).

Despite the fact that some of the literature in this area asserts that there are some benefits to grouping and tracking, a great body of research seems to show that the disadvantages of the tracking system far outweigh the advantages particularly for minority students (Oakes, 1985). In fact, tracking tends to separate students along socio-economic lines, separating rich from poor, Whites from non-Whites.

Rist (1970) conducted an observational study of one class of ghetto children from kindergarten through the second grade. He found that teachers placed the children in reading groups according to their socio-economic status. Rist also observed that teachers behaved differently towards the children based on their social class. Furthermore, they had different expectations of the children based on subjective criteria related to the children's background. He concludes by making a parallel between how the "caste" system in the classroom and the one in society function and noted that the expectations and the quality of the teaching and learning interaction students experienced in these early grades had a significant influence in their achievement.

Cummins (1986) addresses the notion of empowerment in discussing the achievement status of minority children. His premise is that aside from the linguistic and cultural issues that the schools must address when serving

language minority students, schools must do something about the status these students and their families enjoy within the school, in their communities, and in society at large. It is these power relations, he contends, that set parameters for these students, which serve as barriers to significant school related behaviors, such as: setting achievement goals, being motivated to learn, and achieving academically.

John Ogbu's (1974) ethnographic study of Chicanos and African Americans in Stockton, California proposes that these young people genuinely believe in the American ideology that education is a way to achieve social mobility and economic betterment. This belief, which was shared by students who were underachieving and dropping out, was in direct contrast with the consistent underachievement among Chicanos and African Americans.

Mickelson (January, 1990), looks at this issue in her article The Attitude-Achievement Paradox Among Black Adolescents . She argues that for all students there are two levels of attitudes regarding education. One is the abstract level which is rooted in the dominant democratic ideology and to which students can adhere regardless of their race, ethnicity, or socio-economic status. The other is the concrete level which is more specifically related to the everyday experiences of students, their families, and the communities to which they belong.

It is at this level that women, minorities, and members of the working class in general receive less returns from society for their educational attainments than White middle-class males. In other words, society rewards White males with higher wages, more promotions, and more opportunities for advancement than for minorities, women, and those from lower socio-economic status groups.

Ogbu argues in Minority Education and Caste: The American System in Cross Cultural Perspective (1978), that members of groups that have been

historically colonized or oppressed are aware that they face a job ceiling based on their social status. This feeling of being limited reduces the incentive for these students to put forth effort and achieve in school. Maehr's and Braskamp's (1986) theory points out that it is the personal rewards (what's in it for us) that makes us want to focus and achieve in a given task performance situation. This theory is consistent with Ogbu's argument that minority students know that they face discrimination in our society and therefore they are not motivated to learn.

School Culture

During the late 1960's and early 1970's some academics believed that schools "made little difference." This view was based on James Coleman's (1966) report on "Equality of Educational Opportunity" and from Christopher Jencks' (1972) work which offered some of the same data. Based on their studies, Coleman and Jencks concluded that despite spending more money in compensatory programs, minority achievement gains were negligible. Family background accounted for 50% of the variance between students, while school variables only accounted for 2% to 3%. Thus, they asserted, equalizing schooling would not produce significant social change. Coleman notes:

> For most minority groups, then, and most particularly the Negro, schools provide no opportunity at all for them to overcome this initial deficiency; in fact, they fall farther behind the white majority in the development of several skills which are critical to making a living and participating fully in modern society (p.20). He continues: The inequalities imposed on children by their home, neighborhood, and peer environment are carried along to become the inequalities with which they confront adult life at the end of school (p. 325).

The role of schools in allowing social mobility between the classes was put to question. The greatest variation in achievement, they claimed, was found within schools and not between schools. Therefore, they concluded, schools

had very little effect on the educational outcomes of minorities and the poor (Coleman et al., 1966; Jencks 1972). Their argument led others to conclude that schools were merely a reflection of society and that only through economic change could social change be achieved.

But much of the disagreement in the literature regarding the "effects" of schools comes from the different interpretations of the term "effects." In other words, what is measured and how it is measured. Like Coleman and Jencks, many researchers have looked at school "effects" in terms of the scholastic attainment of students using financial variables as predictors. The methodology used by Coleman assumed that by controlling for SES first, the achievement noted was related to family background and not to school effects.

These studies failed to measure other variables of schools such as its culture, the attitudes, values, and beliefs which help determine most aspects of the school experience for students. More recent studies have found that it is precisely those less examined characteristics of schools such as its culture that make a difference for minority students (Brookover et al. 1979; Rutter et al. 1979). In schools where these students experience high expectations, an academic supporting environment, and a sense of empowerment the chances for their academic success are greater.

Schools are not neutral organizations. They have unique "psychological environments" and are "effective to the degree to which they manage to elicit the best efforts of their staff and students" (Maehr, 1989).

In fact, schools can either help break the cycle of underachievement that minorities and the poor are trapped in, or they help perpetuate the stratification of our social classes (Freire, 1971; Ogbu, 1986; Cummins,1986). Researchers who have studied the social organization of schools have found that, in some schools, the administrators, teachers, and students share a set of values, have

commonly held beliefs, and behave in ways that are acceptable to the larger group with regards to the mission and goals of the organization (Saranson, 1982). According to Maehr & Ames (1989), it is these shared assumptions and behaviors which determine the type of "psychological" environment of the school—what they refer to as the "culture" of the school.

Giroux points out that schools are not mere facilities designed to transmit knowledge but they are cultural sites as well that "generate and embody support for particular forms of culture" (1987, p.176). In fact, he continues:

> It is not enough for teachers to merely dignify the grounds on which students learn to speak, imagine, and give meaning to their world. It is also crucial for teachers to understand how schools, as part of the wider dominant culture, often function to marginalize, disconfirm, and deligitimate the experience, histories and categories that students use in mediating their lives. This means understanding how texts, classroom relations, teacher talk, and other aspects of the formal and hidden curricula of schooling often function to actively silence students. The school experience must be understood as part of an interlocking web of power relations with the student being at the center. It is essential for teachers to critically examine the cultural backgrounds and social formations from which their students produce the categories they use to give meaning to the world. Students' readings of the world are inextricably related to wider social and cultural formations and categories (Giroux, 1987, p.177).

Thus, the claims made by Coleman (1966) and Jencks (1972) were challenged by a number of researchers who insisted that schools, in fact, "can make a difference" (Brookover, Beady, Flood, Schweitzer, and Wisenbaker, 1979). Schools, they said, can do much to elicit the motivation and achievement of students even when the students come from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. The school "effect" that these researchers looked at was significantly different than the effect that Coleman and Jencks referred to in their studies. These academicians pointed out that the academic underachievement and failure experienced by African American, Hispanics and

other minority students, is due, to a great extent, to the types of schools they attend. More specifically, that students respond to the expectations that their teachers have of them and the demands of the curriculum that is offered to them.

Pablo Freire, goes further by pointing out that schools are instruments of oppressive systems, because they serve to replicate the existing social classes. Students, he explains, are conditioned early on in their educational experiences to see themselves as leaders or followers, as oppressors or oppressed. The process of social class replication takes place as a result of both the content and process of education. Even in the teacher-student relationship, the students learn by being for the most part passive, by obeying and by being agreeable with the interpretations offered by the teacher about what is taught in class.

The reluctance or inability of schools to value and incorporate elements of the non-Anglo students' cultures in the process and content of education is at the heart of their failure to educate the racially and culturally different children of this country. These practices help perpetuate the growing ethnocentrism, racism, prejudice, and discrimination among our citizenry that pose a real threat to our society.

It seems logical, that since the teaching and learning acts involve our physical, emotional, social, psychological, and intellectual dimensions as human beings, every aspect of the school as a social organization impacts on the school motivation and academic achievement of students. Furthermore, as cultural beings we are influenced and motivated by those around us to the degree that we share common beliefs, values, and aspirations through a mutually understandable system of communication. This is why the role of schools as mediators of culture between the individual, the group, and the larger society has critical implications for educators.

In their study, Ramirez and Castaneda (1974) found that Mexican

American and Anglo-American children perform differently on cognitive tasks as well as on tasks reflecting incentive-motivational and human-relational styles. These findings can be explained by the conceptual framework of field sensitive/field independence. It was hypothesized that differences in cultural values are reflected in socialization practices, which in turn result in differences in cognitive style between Mexican American and Anglo-American children. That is, Mexican American children are relatively more field sensitive and Anglo-American children more field independent in cognitive style.

Field dependent students, they found, tend also to be "more influenced by, or more sensitive to, the human element in their environment" (p. 70). That is, they are more aware and sensitive to the social, physical, and psychological environments in which they learn.

These theories are consistent with more recent studies which have found that schools are characterized by a "psychological environment" or "culture" which has a causal effect on the motivation and achievement of students in general (Maehr et al. 1989). In "School Culture, Student Ethnicity and Motivation," Leslie Fyans and Martin L. Maehr (1990) note that recent research in the areas of motivation and achievement point to the psychological environment of the learning setting as a significant predictor of the motivation and achievement of students. This theory which has been tested with regards to classroom "culture", is believed to also apply as well to the "culture" of the school.

Maehr et al. looked at dimensions of school "culture" such as: power, recognition, and affiliation. Each dimension was analyzed to see their effect on the motivation and achievement of different ethnic groups including Hispanics. The research also looked at the causal relationship between school culture, student motivation and student achievement.

Bryk, Lee, & Holland (1993) build on effective schools research (Edmond, 1986) and studies of Catholic High Schools (e.g., Coleman, 1966) to make two related arguments: (1) the academic communal (social) organization of schools affects students' engagement and teacher commitment, and (2) the communal (social) organization of schools affects student engagement and teacher commitment. These effects are especially pronounced for adolescents (10-12th grade) from lower socioeconomic families. Bryk, Lee, & Holland (1993) argue that the academic and social organization of schools attenuates (or alternatively, accentuates) the relationship between student background and a number of school-related outcomes, including math achievement, classroom disorder, academic motivation, class cutting, absenteeisms and dropping out.

The academic organization that Bryk, et. al (1993) advocate is characteristic of many Catholic schools, though not limited to them. Many Catholic schools offer a restricted, core curriculum, emphasizing academic achievement and preparation for college. Public schools, on the other hand, tend to offer an extensive curriculum much of which is not academically oriented. Students from low socioeconomic backgrounds do better in Catholic schools even after controlling for background effects, because everyone has more or less the same academic experiences. In public schools, especially large public high schools, academic experience can vary more, with students from low socioeconomic homes or with poor academic histories getting fewer opportunities to learn academically-oriented materials.

The social organization that the previous researchers propose is communal, and once again more characteristic of Catholic than public schools. By communal, the authors mean schools that can be characterized as having shared values, shared activities (like but not limited to a core curriculum), and social relations that emphasize an "ethos of caring." (a) collegiality among adults

and (b) diffuse teacher roles. These characteristics serve both for public and Catholic high schools and have strong and positive effects on teachers' perceptions of efficacy, student beliefs about how much staff enjoy their work, staff morale, and reports of classroom discipline (order v. disorder). They also have modest and positive effects on student interests in academics and dropping out. The effects associated with teacher absenteeism and student absenteeism are smaller but noteworthy.

According to Maehr & Braskamp (1986), "school culture" defines the goal of the school and what is worth striving for. School culture is generally described as the values, assumptions, and beliefs that serve to establish the parameters of social and achievement related behaviors by members of the school community, i.e., students, teachers, parents, administrators, support staff, etc. The theory behind this research proposes that schools which are effective in eliciting the motivation of students, focus on student mastery of clearly established educational goals and objectives (Good & Weinstein, 1986).

But as previously noted, Maehr and Braskamp (1986) believe that the way in which a person responds to a given situation is determined by that person's orientation towards the achievement of that task. That orientation is in turn determined by what they call "personal incentives" or "goals." It is this theory of personal investment that Maehr et al. use to describe the relationship between motivational culture and organizational commitment or motivation (Maehr & Braskamp, 1986; Maehr, 1987).

Researchers have also looked at the effect of the "school culture" on minority student motivation and achievement with regards to the congruency, or lack of congruency between the culture of the school and that of the home . These academicians are interested in looking at the ways in which the schools deal with the home language, culture, and learning styles of the students within

the organizational culture of the school to predict their academic success or failure (Banks, 1986, Carter, 1986, Cummins, 1986).

According to these researchers, when the cognitive and motivational styles of the students are affirmed and nurtured by an academically challenging school, students tend to achieve higher regardless of race, ethnicity or socio-economic status. Hispanics and African American students have been found to achieve in schools, which are nurturing and which affirm them, both as individuals and as members of their cultural groups (Banks, 1986; Carter, 1986; Coleman, 1966; Cummins, 1986). In these schools, the students are the center of their educational experiences. The schools they attend acknowledge, value, and incorporate the cultures, languages, learning, and motivational styles of their diverse student population in their policies, programs, and services (Banks, 1986; Shade, 1982; Cummins, 1986; Carter, 1986).

The previous review of the literature on the learning motivation of students pointed that motivation is an unconscious emotive process acquired through socialization (McClelland, 1951). Also, that a strong sense of self (Allport, 1955; Roger, 1951); associating meaning with the learning experience (Wiener, 1972); setting goals (Dweck, 1985); and becoming engaged in the learning process for the sake of learning (Meece, 1991); are variables that researchers have found to influence motivation.

The research seems to point to variables which, although they reside within the individual, are influenced by the cultures of the home and of the school in the process of socialization. Since all aspects of learning are affected by motivation and motivation is so closely related to self concept, educators must take a closer look at the issue of culture in associating meaning with learning tasks and setting goals. Students whose cultures do not match that of the school, often feel alienated and devalued as they go through the educational

system in this country. These students, in turn, tend to be poorly motivated to learn and habitually underachieve as compared to their peers.

Writing about the historical role of schools in Western society, James Banks notes that assimilation was their major goal: "The students were expected to acquire the dominant culture of the school and society, but the school neither legitimized nor assimilated parts of the student's culture (1986, p.14). Students whose cultures do not match that of the school, often feel alienated and devalued as they go through the educational system in this country. These students, in turn, tend to be poorly motivated to learn and habitually underachieve as compared to their peers.

Maehr and Braskamp (1986) agree that an essential element of an effective school is the school culture. They suggested that the resulting climate or "psychological environment" of a school is a vital predictor of student motivation and achievement particularly for minority students. A challenging theory is further presented by Maehr (1990) in one of his studies by suggesting that there is not one best school culture for all students irrespective of their ethnic backgrounds.

If our aim as educators is to improve the quality of life for the citizens of our society, then we must change the culture of our school. We must humanize the process of education to make it more responsive to individual needs and more affirming of the intrinsic value of human diversity. The challenge for educators, interested in improving the academic achievement of Hispanic students, is to insist that researchers and educators begin to look at the diversity that exists within the Hispanic population.

As Banks (1988) points out "Diversity within ethnic groups has received insufficient attention within the social science literature and in the popular imagination" (p 453). It is time that we begin to look at the various Hispanic

subgroups to determine within group variations in order to make more valid conclusions and recommendations to educators and policy makers.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This chapter discusses the methodology used in this research project. It consists of the research design, a description of the population sampling included in the study and the procedures utilized in collecting and analyzing the data obtained from a questionnaire and a school climate inventory.

This study examines the differences and similarities between Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans of the same social class with regards to their perception of school climate and achievement. The researcher had originally looked at a data set developed by Maehr and his colleagues using high school students from the state of Illinois, in 1989, to determine if any findings could be drawn from the Hispanic sample in the data set.

The researcher disaggregated the data on Hispanics by socioeconomic status and found that there was a non-linear relationship between socioeconomic status and the dimensions of school climate. The relationships for White students were generally linear. Based on these findings the researcher believes that the heterogeneity of the Hispanic population in the sample caused the non-linear relationships. Therefore, this researcher decided to look at two subgroups within the Hispanic population to determine if in fact there are sociocultural differences among the two subgroups.

Research Design

The research procedure selected for this investigation was the t-test. This procedure was used in this research study because the researcher wanted to compare the means of the two groups of students in order to determine the level of significant difference.

Population Sample

The population of the sample in this study consists of two hundred and eleven high school students (9th through 12th grade) drawn from two urban high schools in Southeastern Michigan. The schools were selected because of their high concentration of Hispanic students. Based on the available school data, out of the total number of the subjects, one hundred and forty two (67%) were identified as eligible for free or reduced lunch. Sixty percent of the respondents were bilingual (English-Spanish).

One hundred and thirty eight identified themselves as Mexican, Mexican-American or Chicano/a. Sixty two identified themselves as Puerto Rican or Boricua. Others included: one Cuban, five Central Americans, one South American, and three other. One hundred and thirteen were male and ninety eight were female. The average years in the U.S. for the sample was 12 years with no significant difference between the two subgroups.

Research Instruments

The data set was collected by the researcher in two urban high schools in southeastern Michigan. Two instruments were used to collect student data.

Student Background Information. This was a twenty five item questionnaire developed by the researcher, entitled The Student Background Information Form. This questionnaire, contains twenty one items that asks personal information about the student and her/his family such as age, gender, income, education, and language usage. This part also includes four questions used to determine the learning motivation of students. A section which was completed by the staff at the schools asked for the students' grade point average, number of absences, and whether they participated in the free or reduced lunch program. The four questions dealing with motivation were part of the original instrument used by Maehr and Braskamp (1986) in several of their

studies (see Appendix C).

The Instructional Climate Inventory Form S (ICI-S). This instrument was developed by Maehr and his colleagues who, borrowing from their original work that looked at the relationship between organizational culture and organizational commitment. Maehr & Braskmap (1986) and Maehr (1987) have more recently applied their theory of personal investment to the school context. The School Climate Inventory (Form S) is designed to assess school climate from the student perspective. The inventory consists of 20 items which incorporates six dimensions. The dimensions of the school climate measured by the Instructional Climate Inventory are: (1) Accomplishment—the overall emphasis on academic excellence and achievement; (2) Power—the perception that education will make a difference; (3) Recognition—the emphasis on social recognition for academic achievement; (4) Affiliation—the perceived sense of trust and community among the teachers and students; (5) Commitment -- acceptance of and loyalty to the school; and (6) Strength of the climate -- how clear are the goals and purposes of the school. For the purpose of this study, however, all items in this questionnaire were used as one scale to determine the climate of the school (see Appendix C).

Reliability and Validity

In terms of reliability coefficients, there are two facets that need to be considered: Student Level Reliabilities and School Level Reliabilities. The former assesses the internal consistency of the instrument. Since the Strength of Culture domain is assessed by a single item, no assessment of internal consistency is possible by this approach. The reliability of the complete instrument is .90, however, values for the individual scales range from .66 for the Recognition scale to .82 for the Accomplishment and Commitment scales. These values suggest that School Climate Inventory has moderate reliability.

A second level of reliability is the School Level Reliability. The ICI-S is used to assess the accumulated perceptions of an entire grade or school. Individual scores are averaged to provide a single profile and the student level reliability are not the most appropriate. An analysis of the consistency of the ICI-S scores across students was made for all grade levels for which it was designed. Analysis of Variance on each score across students and schools provided the basic quantities from which intra-class correlation's coefficients could be calculated. Reliability estimates for the instrument's means scores were based on 25, 50, 75, and 100 students. Coefficients for 100 students ranged from .85 to .96.

Most of the effects associated with grade level were found to be statistically significant. Although further research with larger samples and more diverse samples of schools is required, it seems that the ICI-S conforms to theoretical expectations and identifies reliable differences in various dimensions of school climate.

Procedures

The Student Background Information Questionnaire and the Instructional Climate Inventory were administered to the subjects through regularly scheduled classes where a large number of Hispanic students were enrolled. Students were notified in writing about the time and place where they would complete the Student Background Information questionnaire and the Instructional Climate Inventory. When students arrived in the classroom, they were greeted by the researcher and a brief explanation was given to them regarding the purpose of the study. Directions for completing the questionnaire and inventory were explained and students were given time to ask questions about the process. Students were given approximately thirty minutes of class period to complete both instruments. The instruments were coded with the same number in order to

ensure that they matched and that the anonymity of the students were preserved.

School staff assisted with writing late passes and accommodating students before and after the instruments were administered. Staff was also instrumental in collecting specific data such as: attendance, grade point average, and participation in free or reduced lunch program. This information was accessed from the students' permanent school record.

CHAPTER IV

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

This chapter deals with the analysis of the data collected from both instruments which were administered to 211 high school urban students of Hispanic descent. In this research, the t-test was the procedure used to determine if there was a significant difference between the Mexican American and Puerto Rican students surveyed with regards to their perception of the school culture and their grade point average.

Analysis of Data Related to the Hypothesis

Results of the t-test comparing mean differences between Mexican American and Puerto Rican students on their perception of school culture, yielded an F value of 3.298 with an associated probability of .071 (see Table 1). This indicates that the variances of the two groups are not statistically different. This means that the separate variances of the two groups can be combined into one global variance. Neither the equal variance of t=.80 nor the unequal variance of .83 yielded a significant difference (see Table 1). Therefore, the researcher failed to reject the null hypothesis (p>.05) that states "There is no statistically significant difference in the perception of school culture by Mexican-American and Puerto Rican students from the same socio-economic status." This result implies that these two ethnic groups have similar perceptions of the school climate (see Table 1).

Similarly, results of the t-test comparing mean differences between Mexican American and Puerto Rican students on grade point average, yielded an F value of 4.246 with an associated probability of .041 (see Table 2). This indicates that the variances of the two groups are not statistically significantly different. This means that the separate variances of the two groups can also be combined into one global variance. Neither the equal variance of t=-.27 nor the

unequal variance of -.25 yielded a significant difference (see Table 2). Therefore, the researcher failed to reject the null hypothesis ($p>.05$) that states "There is no statistically significant difference in the academic achievement of Mexican American and Puerto Rican students from the same socio-economic status." Therefore, no statistically significant evidence was found to support the contention that Mexican American and Puerto Rican students from the same socio-economic status showed different academic performance (see Table 2).

Analysis of Data Not Related to the Hypotheses

It is of interest to note than when asked which language they used most often in their homes, students who answered "Spanish" had a higher perception of the school culture than those who answered "English". Those who answered "both" languages had the lowest perception of the school culture (Figure 1). Mexican Americans were more likely to select Spanish as the language used most often in their home (Figure 2). With regards to language preference, students who preferred speaking Spanish had a higher perception of the school culture than those who preferred speaking English, regardless of whether they were in ever in a bilingual program (Figure 3).

Students who answered positively to the question "Are you currently in a bilingual program?" also had a higher perception of the school culture and grade point average than those who answered negatively (Figures 4 and 5). Students who responded "Yes" to the question "Have you ever been in a bilingual program? had a higher perception of the school culture but a slightly lower grade point average" (Figures 6 and 7).

It is important to also note that students from both groups, Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans showed a higher grade point average (both self-reported and actual) and a higher perception of the school culture in school #2 than in school #1. Puerto Ricans showed a slightly higher performance, as

determined by their grade point average, than their Mexican American counterparts (Figures 8, 9, and 10).

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Chapter V discusses the results of the analysis of the data collected by means of two questionnaires (Appendix C) administered to 211 high school students of Hispanic descent. These instruments were used to obtain background information and to determine the perception of the school culture by students from both ethnic groups.

The purpose of this study was to determine if there is a significant difference in the relationship between ethnicity, the perception of school culture, and the achievement of Mexican American and Puerto Rican students. Based on t-test results of independent samples there is no significant difference in the academic achievement or the perception of school culture of students from these two ethnic groups.

The study design involved the development of the Student Background Information Questionnaire which asked students questions such as: Have you ever been in a bilingual program? Are you currently in a bilingual program? Which language(s) are used in your home? These questions were designed to more specifically determine the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of the students and the types of school programs in which they had been enrolled.

This researcher anticipated finding variations between the two Hispanic subgroups examined in the study. Although the name Hispanic is used for political and economic reasons in this country, the groups represented under this umbrella are varied in terms of culture, history, geographic location, socio-economic status, education, length of stay in the United States, etc.
Contrary to what was expected, there is no significant difference in the perception of school culture and grade point average of Mexican American and Puerto Rican students from the sample population studied. This could be a

significant finding that contributes to the body of research in this area. In other words, there are no variations with regards to the way Mexican American and Puerto Rican students perceive school and achieve as determined by their grade point average.

Another possible explanation could be that this finding was due to sampling error. It is possible that this sample was not representative of the populations compared in this study since the subjects were not randomly selected. A truly representative sample would be stratified on such variables as: age, years in the U.S., socio-economic status, educational levels of parents, recency of immigration, migrant status, and gender. A closer look at the characteristics of the sample indicates that the majority of the subjects came from low socio-economic status.

The ICI-S instrument used had only twenty items to cover the six dimensions of school culture. In fact, most of the dimensions included too few items to ensure obtaining high reliability and validity coefficients. This could have led to false results. Also, their median number of years in the United States was years.

The issues of language usage and language preference are intricately related to issues of self-image and the interaction of students with others in a school setting. The analysis of the data from this study, concluded that there is no significant difference in the perception of the school culture and grade point average of the Mexican American and Puerto Rican students in the sample. However, a closer look at the means of both groups showed variations which, as previously described, seemed to be more related to the specific culture of the school and to language usage and cultural identity.

Results of this research study can be generalized to ethnic subgroups which have similar ethnographic and attitudinal characteristics.

Future Research:

1. Select a larger state-wide random sample which is representative of the population under investigation.
2. Once selected, the sample needs to be stratified on socio-economic status, gender, age, recency of immigration, migrant status, bilingualism, years in the United States, and educational level of parents.
3. Design a study that requires both quantitative and qualitative data to get more in depth understanding of the issues being studied.
4. Use a different instrument that is more inclusive and has higher reliability and validity measures so as to ensure obtaining reliable and valid data.
5. Examine whether there is a difference in the levels of motivation of the two subgroups.
6. Examine whether there could be significant gender differences in the motivation, achievement and perception of school culture.

Recommendations:

1. Provide a challenging curriculum which leads to student achievement and empowerment (Freire, 1978, Cummins, 1986).
2. Encourage bilingualism and multicultural education (Carter, 1986, Banks, 1986).
3. Overcome the absenteeism problem found among this sample since it is a good predictor of low achievement.
4. Avoid grade retention by providing Accelerated Schools Model (Levin, 1995) and provide extended day and year experiences for students.

5. Continue to do research dealing with Hispanics from various subgroups and their academic achievement.

APPENDIX A

TABLES 1-2

TABLE 1

t-Test for Perception of School Culture

Group 1 - Mexican Americans
Group 2 - Puerto Ricans

VARIABLE	NUMBER OF CASES	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION	STANDARD ERROR
Group 1	138	73.6522	9.633	.820
Group 2	63	72.5238	8.534	1.075

t-Test for Equality of Means

Variances	t-Value	df	2-Tail Sig	SE of Diff
Equal	.80	199	.426	1.415
Unequal	.83	134.51	.406	1.352

TABLE 2

t-Test for Grade Point Average

Group 1 - Mexican Americans
Group 2 - Puerto Ricans

VARIABLE	NUMBER OF CASES	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION	STANDARD ERROR
Group 1	128	2.2131	.934	.083
Group 2	60	2.2565	1.153	.149

t-Test for Equality of Means

Variances	t-Value	df	2-Tail Sig	SE of Diff
Equal	-.27	186	.784	.158
Unequal	-.25	96.69	.799	.170

APPENDIX B

FIGURES 1-10

FIGURE 1

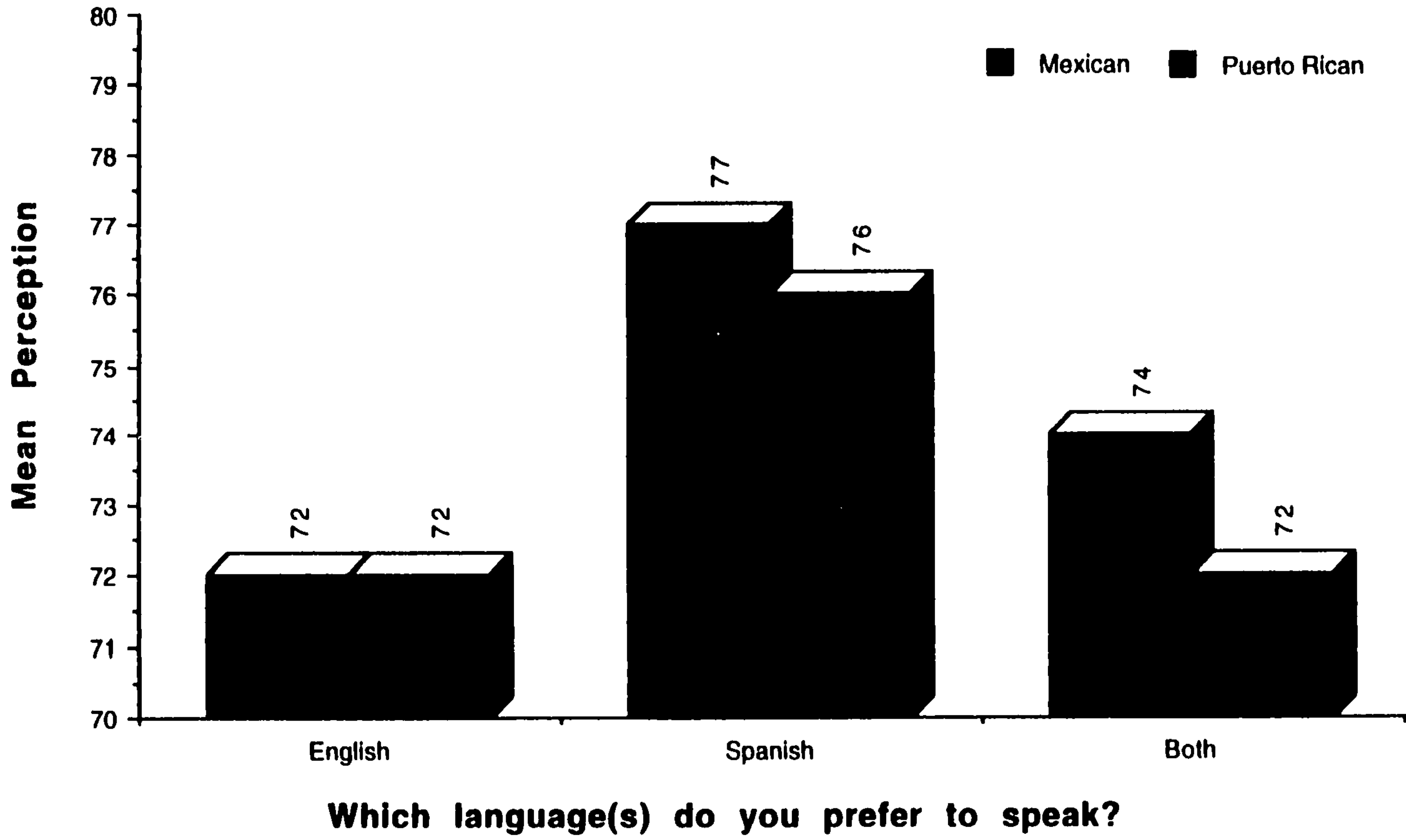


FIGURE 2

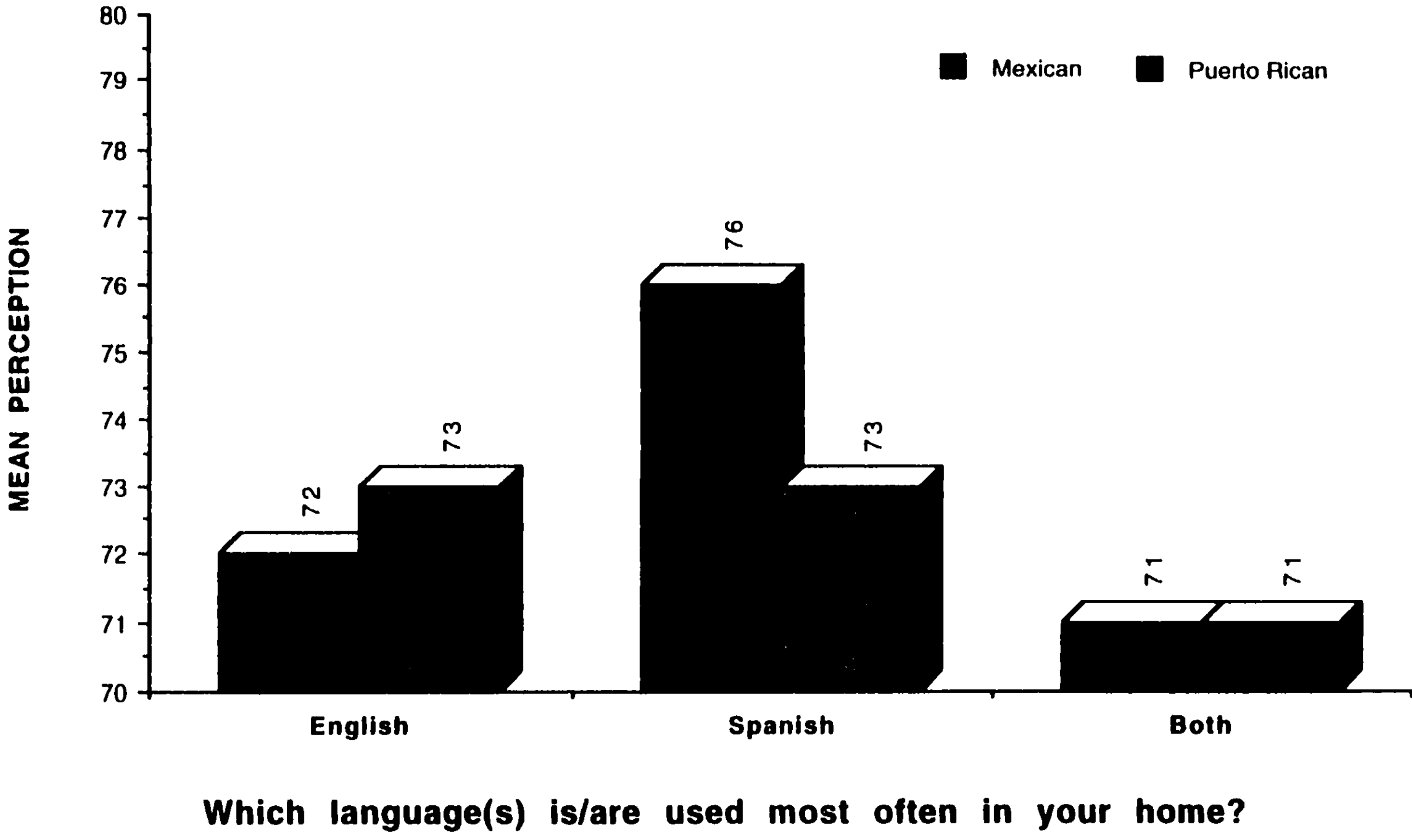
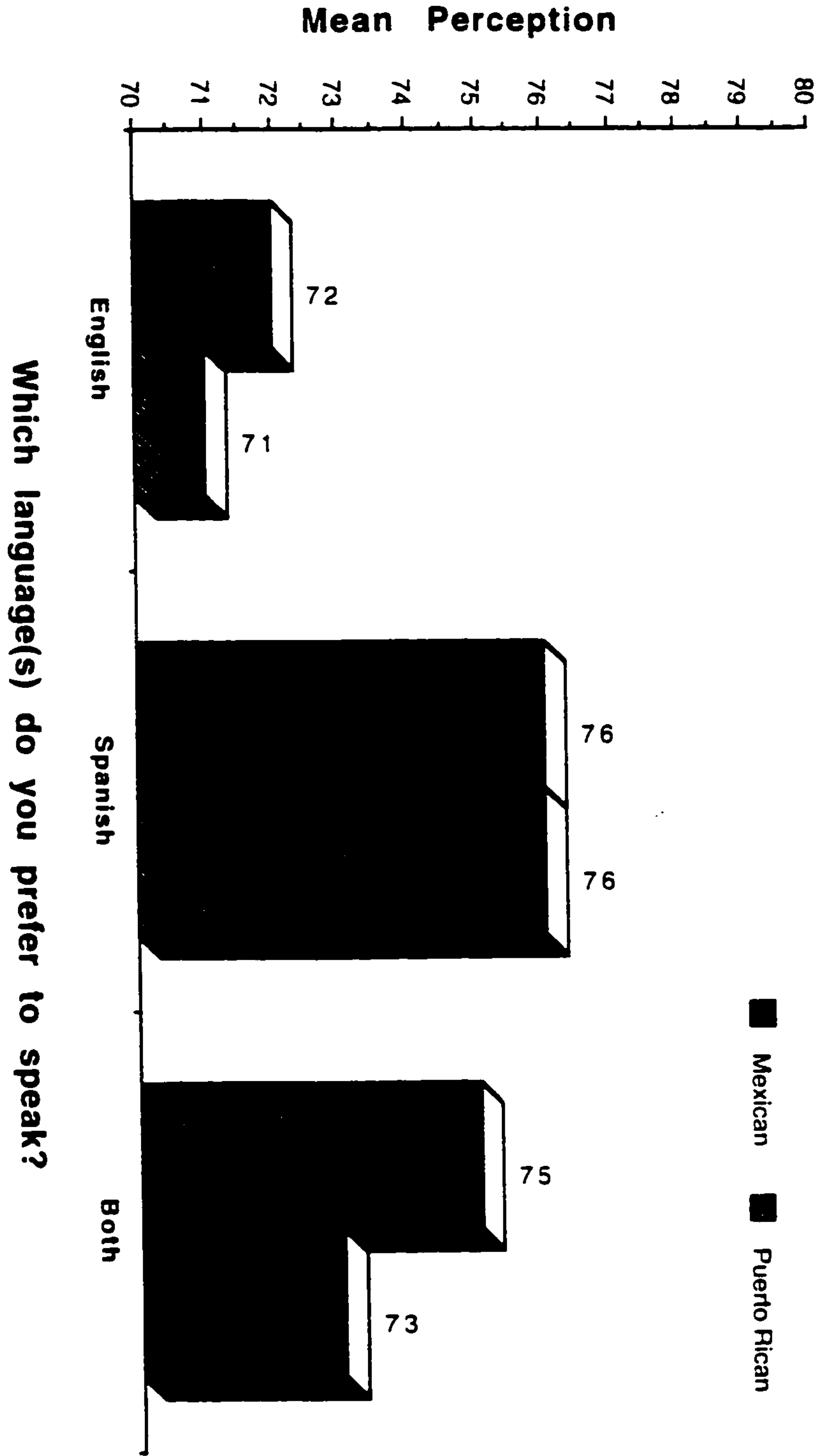


FIGURE 3



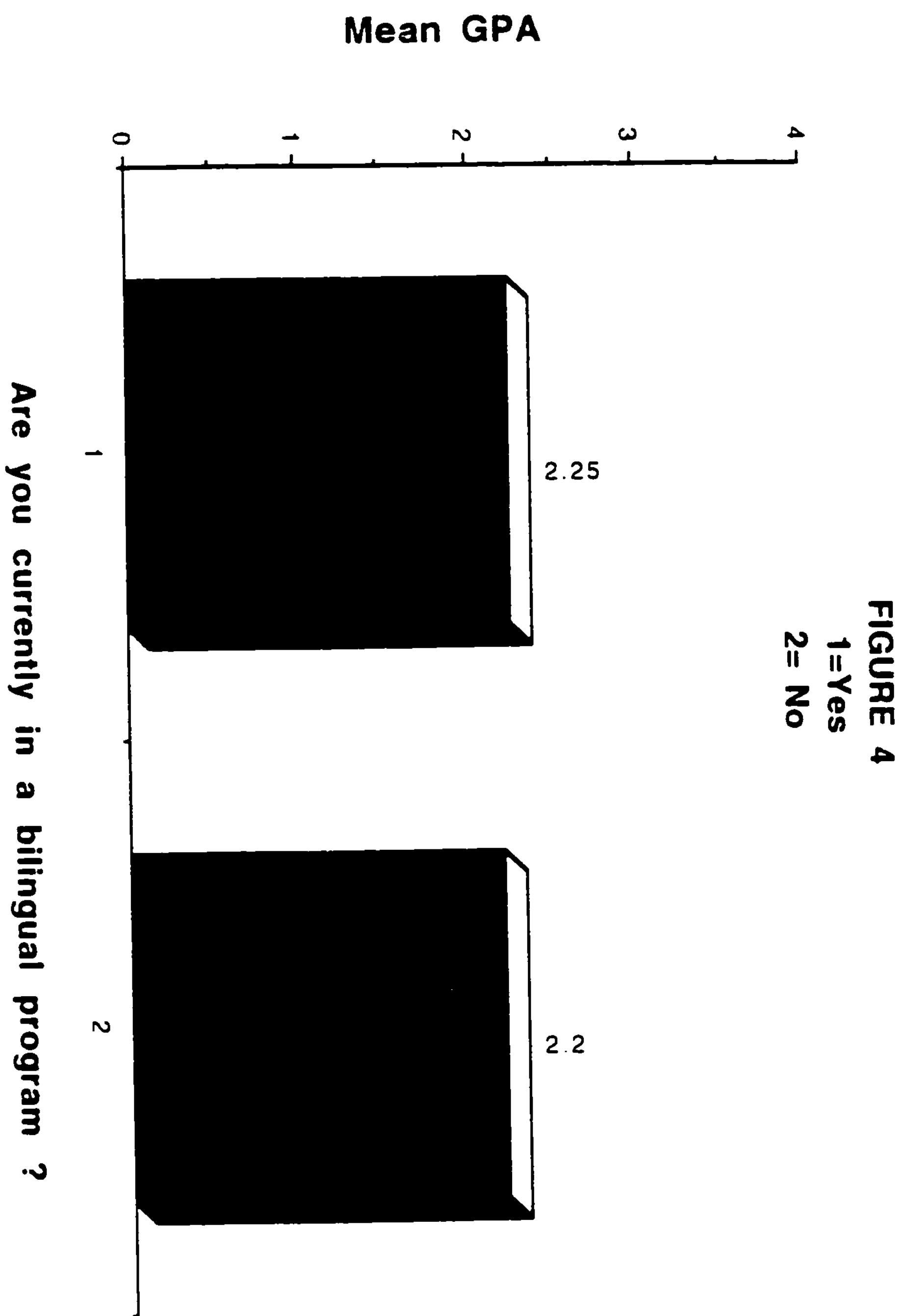


FIGURE 4
1=Yes
2= No
Mean GPA
0
1
2
3
4
2.25
2.2
1
2
Are you currently in a bilingual program ?

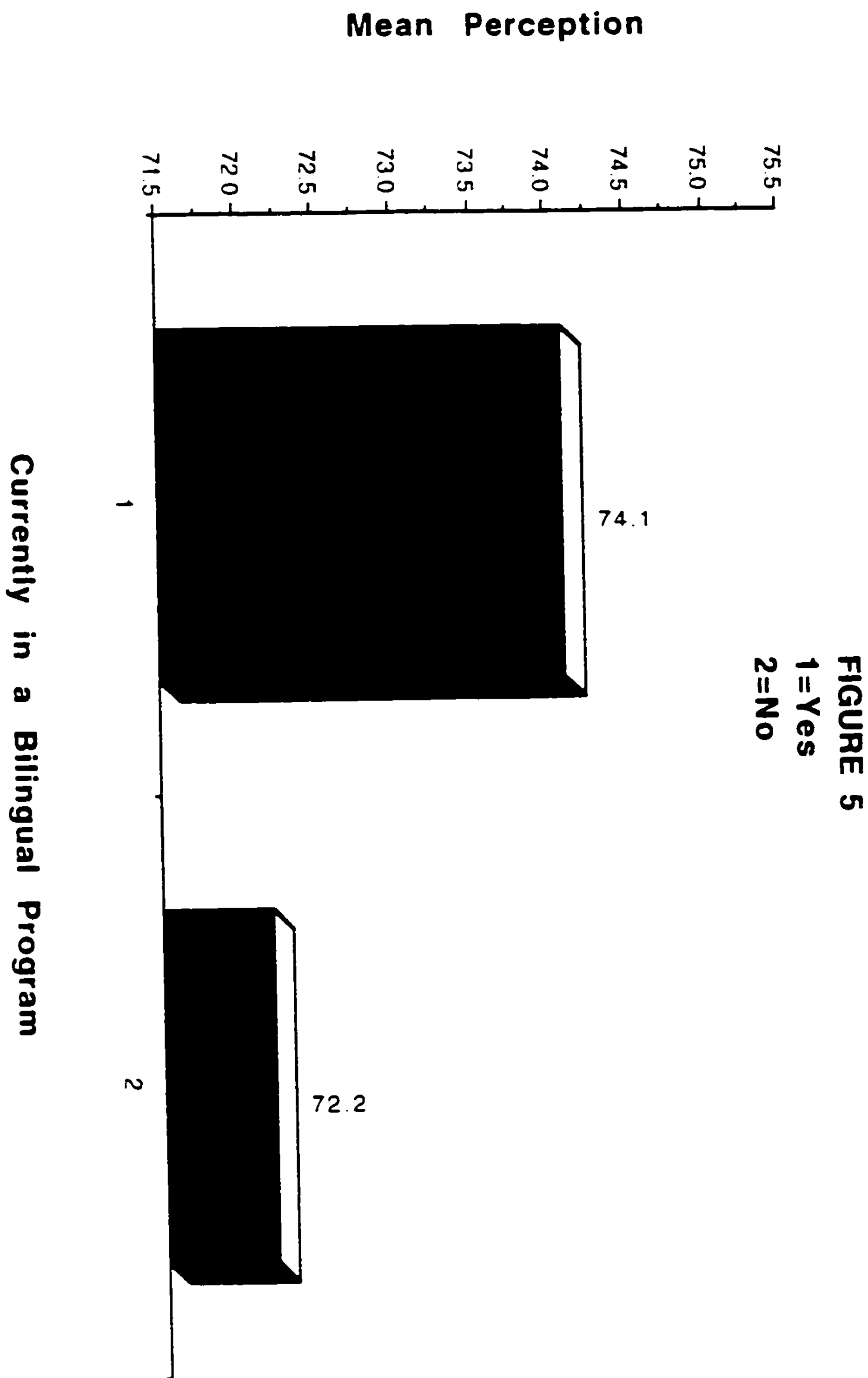


FIGURE 5
1=Yes
2=No
Mean Perception
71.5
72.0
72.5
73.0
73.5
74.0
74.5
75.0
75.5
74.1
72.2
1
2
Currently in a Bilingual Program

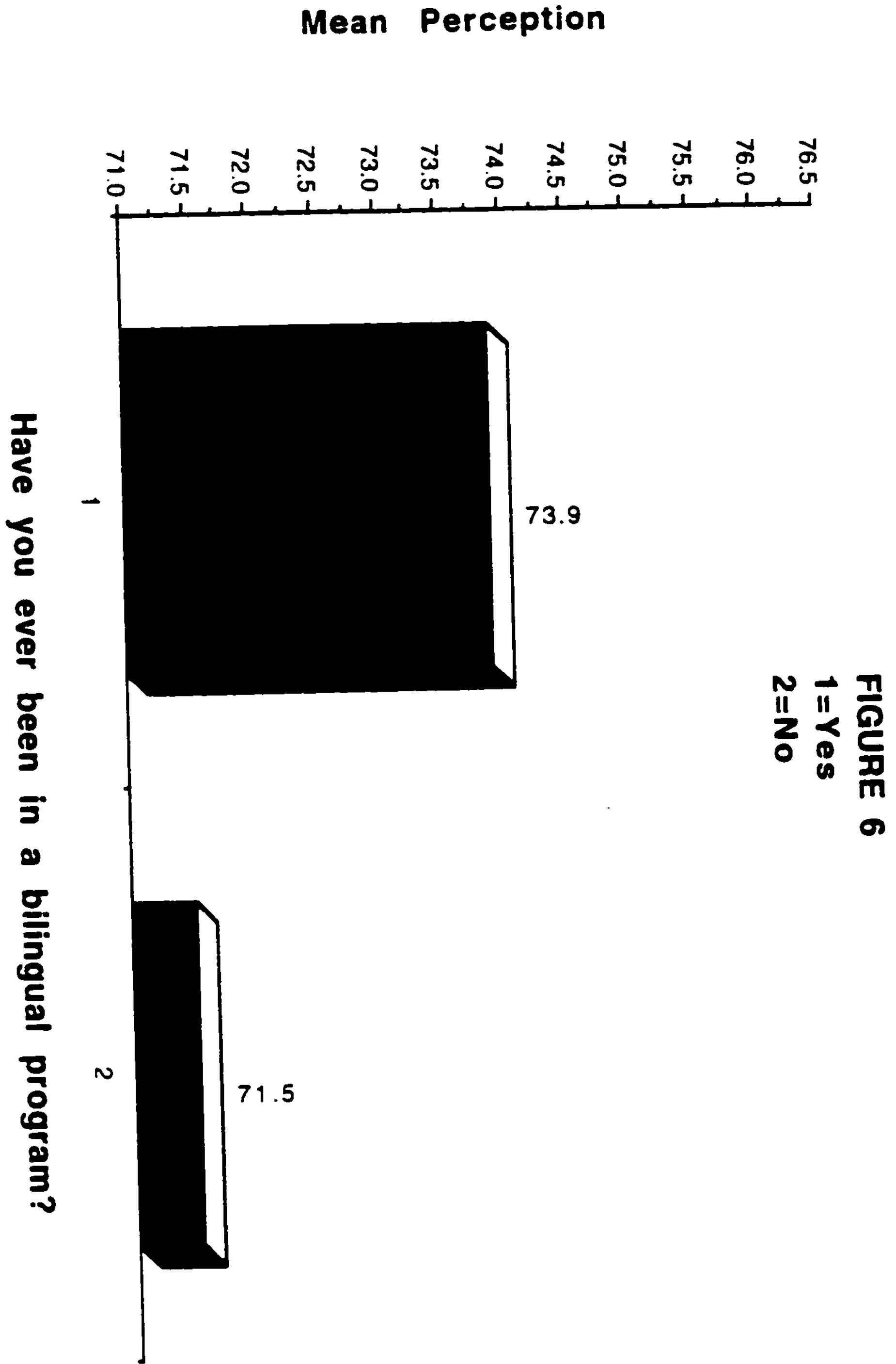


FIGURE 6
1=Yes
2=No
Mean Perception
71.0
71.5
72.0
72.5
73.0
73.5
74.0
74.5
75.0
75.5
76.0
76.5
73.9
71.5
1
2
Have you ever been in a bilingual program?

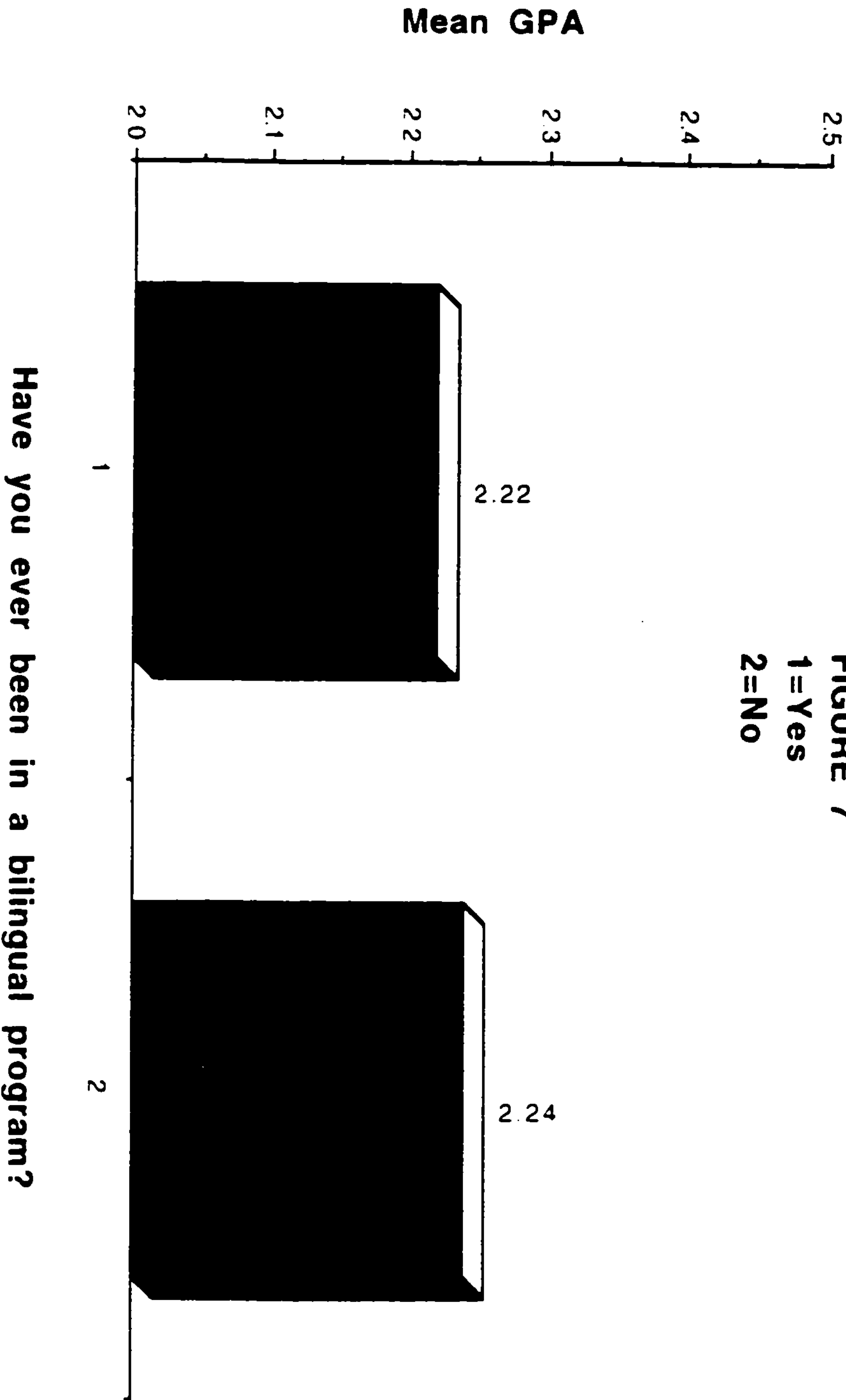


FIGURE 7

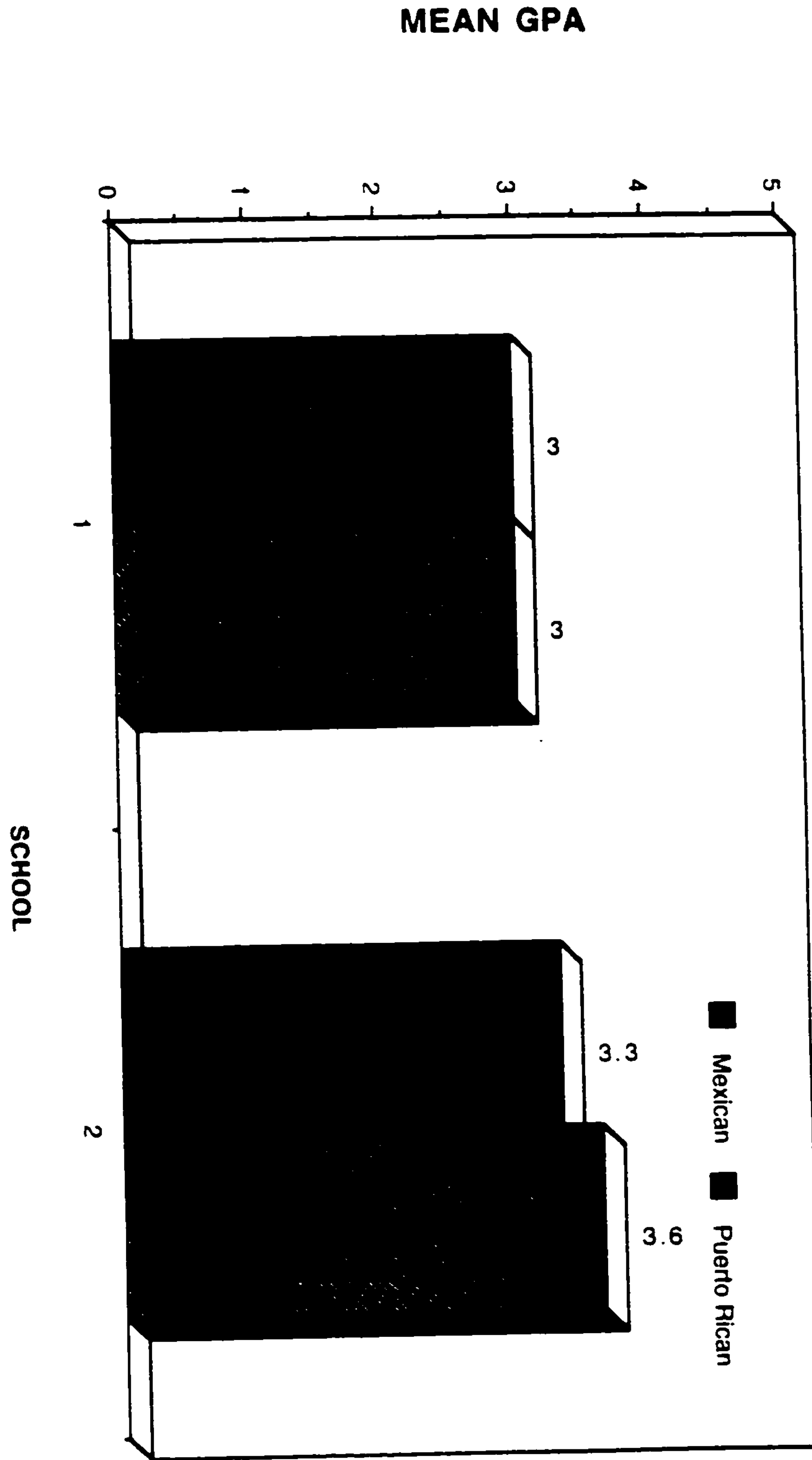


FIGURE 8
MEAN GPA
SCHOOL
Mexican
Puerto Rican
0
1
2
3
4
5
3
3
3.3
3.6

FIGURE 9

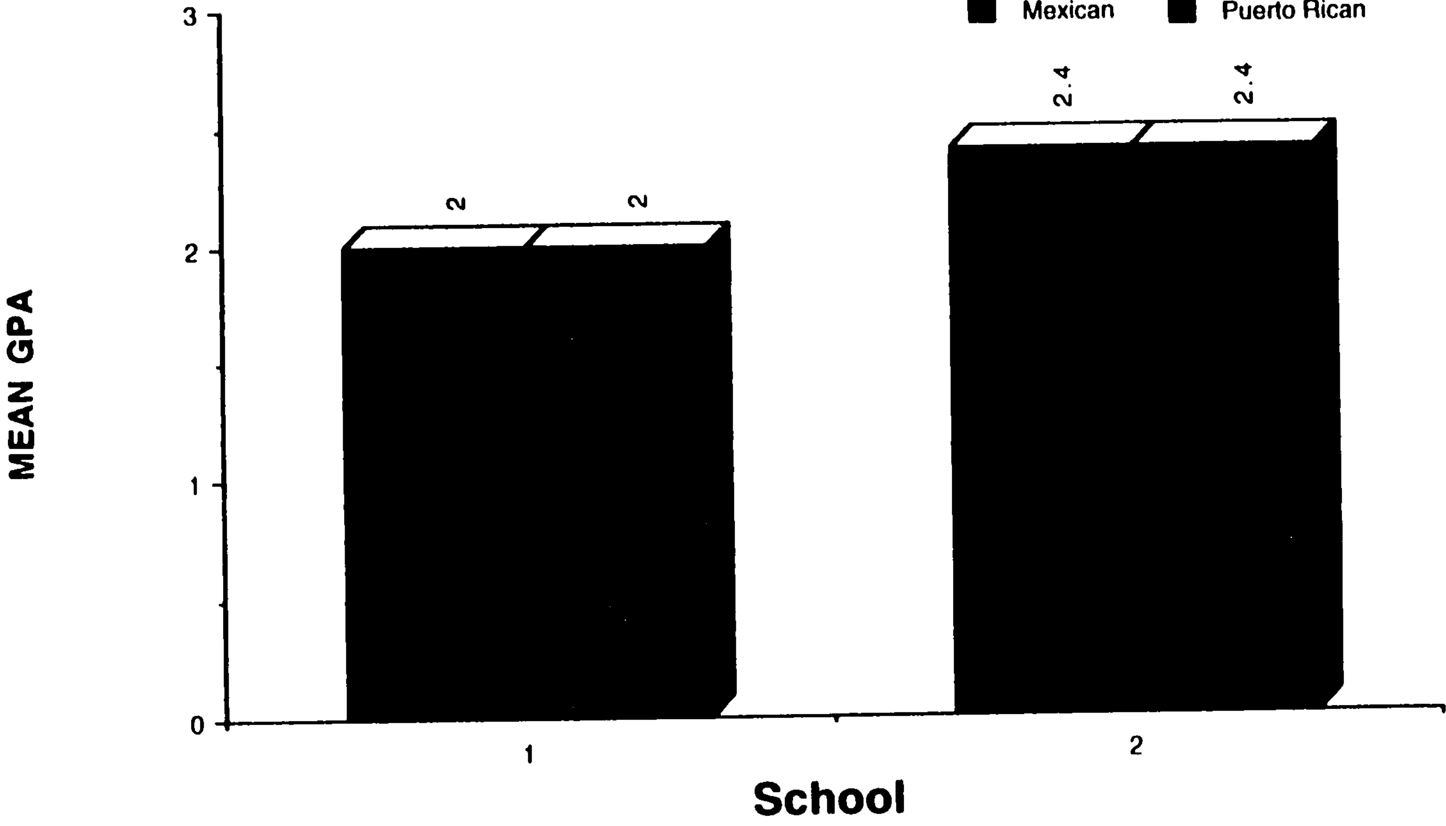
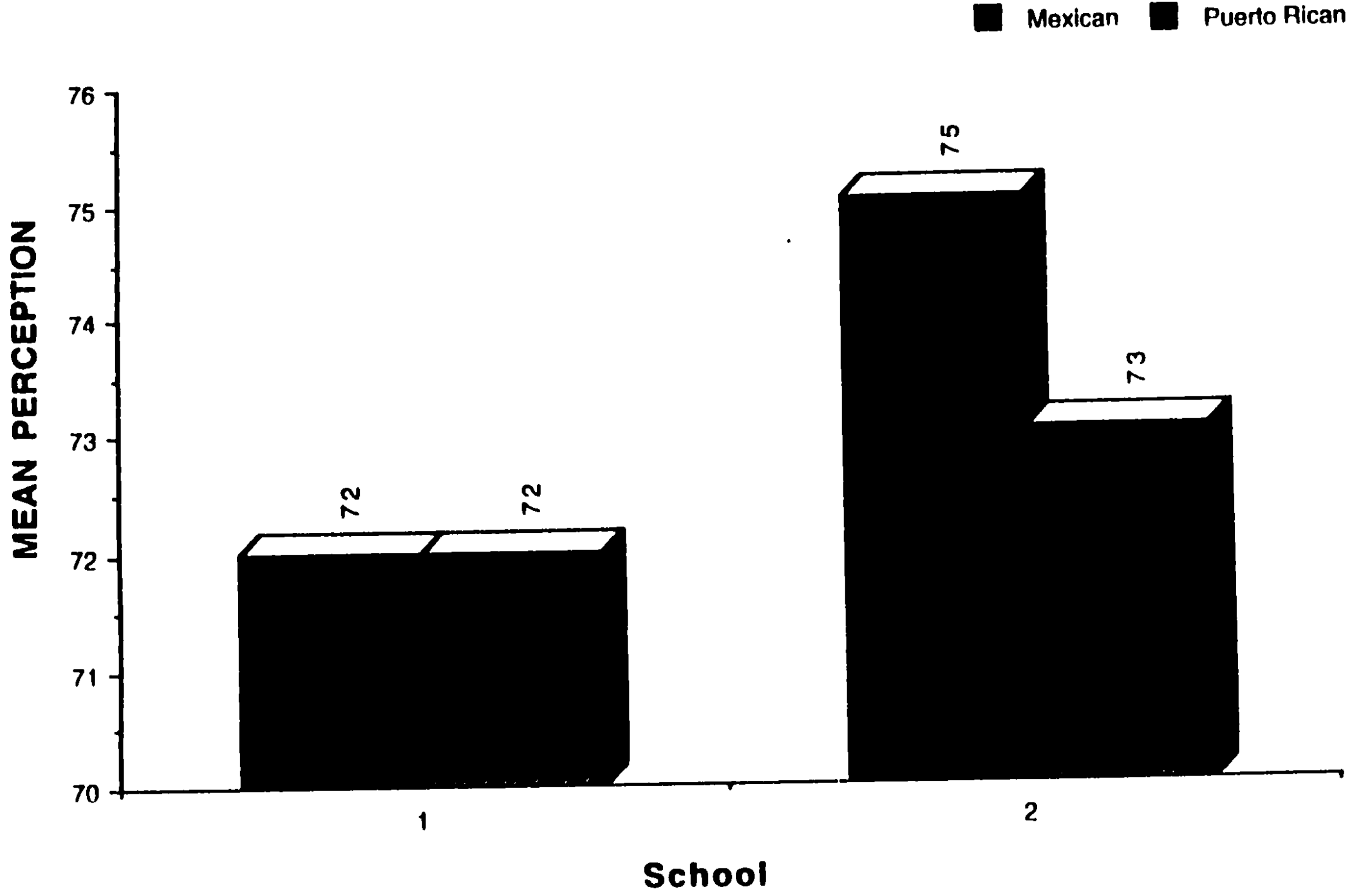


FIGURE 10



APPENDIX C

INSTRUMENTS

Student Background Information

Student's Name:_______________________School's Name:___________________

Student's I. D. :______________________District:______________________

Date: ______________________________ Form #:_____________________

Background Information

1. What is your sex? Male_________ Female_________ 1. _____
2. What is your date of birth? ____________________ 2. _____
3. Have you ever been in a bilingual program? Yes_____ No_____ 3. _____
4. If Yes, for how long? 4. _____
5. Are you currently in a bilingual program? Yes_____ No_____ 5. _____
6. To what Hispanic/Latino group do you belong? (Please circle) 6. _____

   Mexican (Mexican-American, Chicano/a) Central American

   Puerto Rican (Boricua) South American

   Cuban Other___________

7. How long have you lived in the United States? _____________ 7. _____
8. Which language(s) is/are used in your home? 8. _____

   English__________Spanish_________Both__________

9. Which language(s) is/are used most often in your home? 9. _____

   English_______ Spanish______ Both________

10. Which language(s) do you prefer to speak regardless of where you are? 10. _____

    English____Spanish______ Both__________

11. When I perform well on an assignment in school, it is because: 11. _____
    - a) the assignment was easy
    - b) I am smart
    - c) I am lucky
    - d) I work very hard
12. Compared to other students, how hard do you work on school work? 12. _____
    - a) I work much harder
    - b) I work harder
    - c) I work less
    - d) I work much less

13. On school nights, how many hours do you spend doing homework? 13.____
14. The course I plan to take in high school can be best described as: 14.____
    a) college preparatory
    b) business or commercial
    c) vocational/technical
    d) other or general
15. Overall, what is your grade point average in high school up to this point? 15.____
16. What is the approximate yearly income of your family? 16.____

    Between 5,000 —9,999 ________ Between 25,000—29,999________

    Between 10,000 —14,999 ________ Between 30,000—34,999________

    Between 15,000—19,999 ________ Between 35,000—49,999________

    Between 20,000—24,999 ________ Over 50,000_______

    Don't Know____________
17. With whom do you live? 17 ____

    Mother and father __________

    Mother only __________

    Father only __________

    Relative or guardian_

    Other __________ Please explain:______________
18. How many brothers and sisters live with you? 18.____
19. What is the highest level of education completed by your father or male guardian? 19.____
    a) did not attend high school
    b) went to high school but did not graduate
    c) graduated from high school but no further education
    d) vocational/technical school (plumbing, sheet metal, etc.)
    e) went to college but did not graduate from college
20. How much college education was completed by your father or male guardian? 20.
    a) no college education
    b) completed two years of college
    c) completed four years of college
    d) completed a Masters degree
    e) completed an advanced degree (lawyer, dentist, Ph.D., M.D., etc;)

21. What is the highest level of education completed by your mother or female guardian? 21.____

a) did not go to high school
b) went to high school but did not graduate
c) graduated from high school but no further education
d) vocational/technical school (plumbing, sheet metal, etc.)
e) went to college but did not graduate from college

22. How much college education was completed by your mother or female guardian? 22.____

a) no college education
b) completed two years of college
c) completed four years of college
d) completed a Masters degree
e) completed an advanced degree (lawyer, dentist, Ph.D., M.D., etc.)

DO NOT ANSWER THE FOLLOWING ITEMS

To be completed by school personnel.

23. G. P. A. 23. ___

24 Number of absences 24. ___

25. FRL Y_______N____ 25. ___

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR HELP.

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UMI

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FORM S

Instructional Climate Inventory

by

Larry A. Braskamp, Ph. D. and Martin L. Maehr, Ph. D.

DIRECTIONS

Use a pencil to mark this sheet. Make your marks heavy and dark, but keep inside the circles. Avoid making any stray marks. If you need to change an answer, erase the first one completely before you fill in the second. Try to keep this sheet neat at all times. Don't fold or bend it.

In the space for GRADE fill in the circles for your grade. For example, if you are in grade 10, fill in the "1" circle in the first column and the "0" circle in the second column. If you are in grade 5, fill in the "0" circle in the first column and the "5" circle in the second column. Fill in the IDENTIFICATION NUMBER only if told to do so by your teacher.

GRADE

0	0
1	1
2	2
3	3
4	4
5	5
6	6
7	7
8	8
9	9

IDENTIFICATION NUMBER

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6
7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7
8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8
9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9

Read the following sentences and decide how strongly you agree or disagree with each one. There are no right or wrong answers. Fill in the circle below the choice that best describes the way you really think and feel. For example, if you strongly agree with a sentence, fill in the circle under the STRONGLY AGREE column.

	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	UNCERTAIN	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
1. This school makes me like to learn.	O	O	O	O	O
2. Doing well at school gets the approval of my teachers.	O	O	O	O	O
3. Teachers and students here really trust one another.	O	O	O	O	O
4. At this school, the teachers tell the students what is expected of them.	O	O	O	O	O
5. I have a strong sense of loyalty to this school.	O	O	O	O	O
6. It's important to do well in this school.	O	O	O	O	O
7. Doing well at school will help my future education.	O	O	O	O	O
8. At this school it is very important to get good grades.	O	O	O	O	O
9. I take a lot of pride in my school work.	O	O	O	O	O
10. I'm proud I go to this school.	O	O	O	O	O
11. This school makes me like to study hard for good grades.	O	O	O	O	O
12. This school gives praise for good work.	O	O	O	O	O
13. Competition among students in this school is very high.	O	O	O	O	O
14. Every student in this school knows what it stands for	O	O	O	O	O
15. I do my best in this school.	O	O	O	O	O
16. In this school we hear about what the students do right, not their mistakes.	O	O	O	O	O
17. I feel like I belong in this school.	O	O	O	O	O
18. This school has many talented students and teachers.	O	O	O	O	O
19. Teachers at this school treat students with respect.	O	O	O	O	O
20. In this school, we can try new things.	O	O	O	O	O

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APPENDIX D

TRANSMITTAL LETTERS

September 29, 1997

Dr. Eddie Green
Interim Deputy Superintendent
Detroit Public Schools
5057 Woodward Ave.
Detroit, MI 48202

Dear Dr. Green:

Because of the number of Hispanic students attending Western and Southwestern High Schools, I have identified them as a potential site for collecting data for my doctoral dissertation. This letter is to request permission to administer the enclosed questionnaire to all Hispanic students in grades 10th through 12th during the fall semester of 1997.

The topic of my dissertation is: ***The Relationship of Socio-economic Status and Ethnicity and the Perception of School Culture, Motivation and Achievement of Mexican American and Puerto Rican High School Students from two Urban Schools.*** The information collected by the questionnaire will serve to learn more about the way Hispanic students from various national origins respond to the culture of their schools and the effect of this interaction on their learning motivation and academic achievement.

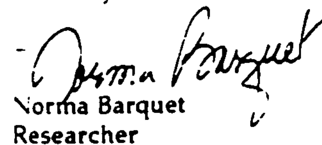
Students will need approximately 60 minutes to complete both the Student Background Information Questionnaire and The Instructional Climate Inventory. I will personally come to the school to administer them. Items 23-25 on the background questionnaire must be completed by a counselor or teacher since the accuracy of the information is critical to the study. There will be no further interruption of staff or students.

I am interested in looking at a cross section of the Hispanic population at your school. Therefore, it is important that as many students as possible participate. This is to ensure representation from the various subgroups, as well as grade, socio-economic status, and language proficiency levels.

The individual information acquired by this questionnaire will be kept confidential and the findings will be shared with you when they are available upon request. All ethical standards of research protocol will be followed and the students' anonymity will be preserved at all times.

If you need further information or have any concerns please feel free to contact me at work at (313) 763-9910.

Sincerely,



Norma Barquet
Researcher

September 29, 1997

Dear Parent,

As a part of the requirement for completing the Doctor of Education Degree in Bilingual Education and Administration at Wayne State University, I am writing my dissertation on: **The Relationship of Socio-economic Status and Ethnicity and the Perception of School Culture and Achievement of Mexican American and Puerto Rican High School Students from two Urban Schools.** Your daughter/son will be asked to complete a personal background questionnaire and an inventory having to do with her/his perception of the school climate.

This letter is to ask you for permission to include your daughter/son in this research project. The individual information acquired by this questionnaire will be kept confidential and the findings will be available to you upon request. All ethical standards of research protocol will be followed and the students' anonymity will be preserved at all times. If you need further information, please feel free to contact me at (313) 763-9910.

Sincerely,

Norma Barquet
Researcher

Please return this portion to the school with your son/daughter.

My daughter/son ______________________________ has permission to participate in the research study on: **The Relationship of Socio-economic Status and Ethnicity and the Perception of School Culture and Achievement of Mexican American and Puerto Rican High School Students from two Urban Schools,** conducted by Norma Barquet.

Parent Name: ______________________________________

Date: ______________________________________

Phone: ______________________________________

DETROIT PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Office of Research, Evaluation and Assessment
Division of Educational Services
5035 Woodward Avenue
Detroit, MI 48202

November 25, 1997

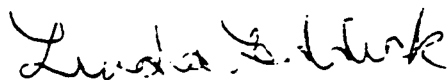
Mrs. Norma Barquet
18809 San Diego
Lathrup Village, MI 48076

Dear Mrs. Barquet:

Your study has been approved as shown: "The Relationship of Socio-economic Status and Ethnicity and the Perception of School Culture, Motivation and Achievement of Mexican American and Puerto Rican High School Students From Two Urban High Schools."

I wish you well in your studies.

Sincerely,



Linda Leddick, Ph.D.
Director

/pae

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ABSTRACT

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ETHNICITY, ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT, AND PERCEPTION OF SCHOOL CULTURE OF MEXICAN AMERICAN AND PUERTO RICAN URBAN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

by

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May 1998

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The purpose of the present study was to examine the relationships that exist between ethnicity and the perception of school culture and achievement among Mexican American and Puerto Rican students. The procedure included surveying 211 high school students in two urban public schools using the Student Background Questionnaire and the Instructional Climate Inventory.

The self-reported ethnic affiliation of students in the Student Background Questionnaire was used to determine their ethnicity. The socio-economic status of the subjects was determined by their participation in the free or reduced lunch program. The Instructional Climate Inventory was used as the scale to determine the perception of school climate among the subjects.

The research design used for this investigation was the t-test in order to determine the level of significant difference between the means of the two ethnic groups of students with regards to their perception of school climate and their academic achievement as determined by their grade point average.

The author found that there is no statistically significant difference in the perception of school culture by Mexican-American and Puerto Rican students

from the same socio-economic status. This result implies that these two ethnic groups have similar perceptions of the school climate.

The researcher also found that there is no statistically significant difference in the academic achievement of Mexican American and Puerto Rican students from the same socio-economic status. Therefore, no statistically significant evidence was found to support the contention that Mexican American and Puerto Rican students from the same socio-economic status had different academic achievement.

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