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Parent Involvement and Views of School Success: The Role of Parents' Latino and White American Cultural Orientations

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We examined ethnicity and cultural orientation as predictors of parents' views of and involvement in children's education, using data gathered from the Latino ($n = 74$) and non-Latino (17 White and 13 ethnic minority) parents of children in an elementary school's dual-language program. Parents completed a questionnaire that assessed Latino and White American cultural orientations, importance of children's academic and social success, and self- and significant other involvement in children's education. Results indicated that Latino (and other ethnic minority) parents valued academic and social success equally and more strongly than did Whites and that Whites valued social success more strongly than academic success. Latinos also reported greater involvement of significant others. These differences were largely accounted for by cultural orientations. Educational practices that take into account differences in cultural orientations and the involvement of significant others thus seem more likely to improve academic outcomes than do efforts intended to promote the valuing of education.

The educational needs of minority and, in particular, Latino students in the United States are of growing concern, at least partly because of the dramatic increase in the minority student population. According to the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (2002), nearly 40% of the children enrolled in U.S. public schools in 2000 were members of ethnic minority groups, many of them Latino and Latino immigrants. Latino students often experience less academic success than do their majority counterparts. Depending on how high-school dropout is defined, the rate for Latino students is two to three times higher than that of non-Latino Whites (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2006). A lack of parental involvement in education and appreciation of its importance are often cited as major reasons (Ramirez, 2003; Valencia & Black, 2002).

Our goal in the present research was to examine Latino and non-Latino parents' views of and involvement in their children's education, including the role of Latino and White American cultural orientations, in an effort to help educators collaborate more effectively with families from varying ethnic and cultural backgrounds. We gathered data from parents whose children were enrolled in an elementary school's dual-language program. The program seemed an ideal context in which to examine ethnicity and culture because it served equal numbers of native English and native Spanish speakers. We begin by briefly reviewing the research on parent involvement.

Parent Involvement in Children's Education

A great deal of research indicates that parents who are more involved in their children's education have children who are more socially and academically successful in school (Epstein, 2001; Epstein & Dauber, 1991; Hill & Craft, 2003; McWayne, Hampton, Fantuzzo, Cohen, & Sekino, 2004). Parent involvement is believed to promote children's academic achievement by increasing social capital and social control (Hill & Taylor, 2004). Parents who are more involved have more opportunities to learn from other parents and teachers about school procedures, ways to enhance their children's education at home, extracurricular opportunities, and ways to handle difficult situations (Lareau & Shumar, 1996), thereby increasing social capital. The exchange of information between parents and teachers may also enable parents and school personnel to develop consistent expectations for students, that is, better social control (Hill & Taylor, 2004).

In an effort to identify ways to promote parent involvement, researchers have examined factors that are associated with involvement. For example, Snow, Barnes, Chandler, Goodman, and Hemphill (1991) found that teacher-initiated contact with parents was associated with greater parent-initiated contact with schools and better academic performance of students. Particularly relevant to the present study, however, are findings indicating that ethnic minority (e.g., Lareau & Shumar, 1996; Lee & Bowen, 2006) and lower income and less well educated (e.g., Englund, Luckner, Whaley, & Egeland, 2004; Grolnick, Benjet, Kurowski, & Apostoleris, 1997; Lareau & Shumar, 1996; Ramirez, 2003) parents tend to be less involved in their children's education.

The reasons for lower involvement are varied. Some work suggests that parents are less involved because of a lack of time and flexibility in their schedules (Lareau & Shumar, 1996; McWayne et al., 2004). Other work indicates that low-income parents believe their role is to support teachers' educational decisions rather than to initiate activities or intervene in their children's education more directly (Lareau & Shumar, 1996). Some researchers, however, have noted that a common conclusion from studies demonstrating lower involvement of ethnic minority parents is that they value education less than do Whites (Fuligni, 2007; Goldenberg, Gallimore, Reese, & Garnier, 2001; Ramirez, 2003; Valencia & Black, 2002).

Few studies have directly examined Latino parents' views of education. The research thus far, however, indicates that Latino parents strongly value education and have high expectations for their children (Fuligni, 2007). Okagaki and Sternberg (1993) found, for example, that Mexican American and Mexican immigrant parents of elementary-school children valued social skills more strongly than did White parents, and White parents valued cognitive skills more strongly than social skills. Moreover, Mexican American and Mexican immigrant parents equally valued social and cognitive skills. Similarly, Goldenberg and colleagues (2001) reported that approximately 90% of the parents in their sample wanted their children to attend a university.

Nevertheless, the belief that Latinos do not value education remains widespread (Ramirez, 2003; Valencia & Black, 2002) perhaps because the evidence seems overwhelming. As already noted, a great deal of research indicates that ethnic minority and low-income parents are less involved in their children's education. Other work indicates that a lack of involvement is often interpreted as a lack of concern (e.g., Hill & Craft, 2003; Jones, 2003). Still other work indicates that teachers who are culturally different from parents are more likely to believe that parents are disinterested (Epstein & Dauber, 1991). In short, the poor outcomes of Latino students combined with the tendencies to judge them

more negatively (see Hill & Torres, 2010, for a review) and to interpret a lack of involvement as a lack of concern may lead many to conclude that Latino parents do not value education. In the present research, we directly compared Latino and non-Latino parents' involvement and views of education. We also considered two factors that may affect our understanding of ethnic group differences: a focus on parents that has perhaps come at the expense of understanding the roles that significant others play and the tendency to equate ethnicity with cultural orientation.

The Focus on Parent Involvement

Parent involvement has been defined in various ways, but most definitions emphasize participation in school functions and events and direct communication between parents and school personnel (Englund et al., 2004; López, 2001; McWayne et al., 2004). Thus, parent involvement has often been defined in terms of activities that are visible to school personnel and other parents. Epstein (2001) organized the variety of parent-involvement measures that have been used into six categories: parenting, learning at home, school-home communication, volunteering at school, involvement in school decision making, and community collaboration. Of these six categories, four involve direct interaction with the school and community.

We believe that the research and public emphasis on parent involvement has come at the expense of attention to the role that others may play in children's education. Indeed, some have argued that the emphasis on parent as opposed to others' involvement reflects a White American cultural belief that parents, but not siblings, extended family members, child-care providers, or neighbors, bear the responsibility for the well-being of children (Desimone, 1999).

Latino parents who cannot communicate well with English-speaking parents and teachers may *appear* to be less involved—even though they engage in a variety of less visible behaviors (see Hill & Torres, 2010, for a review). The lack of visibility may make it seem that Latino parents do not care. Indeed, Hill and Craft (2003) found that teachers believed that parents who volunteered at school valued education more than did other parents.

Ethnicity and Cultural Orientation

Studies of ethnic group differences are useful; only when ethnic group differences in, for example, academic achievement are identified is there a possibility to address them.¹ This focus is not without problems, however. Demonstrations of ethnic differences seem to imply that differences are *due to* ethnic group membership, which is a fixed categorical property of individuals (Fuligni, 2007; Rogoff & Angelillo, 2002). Relying on ethnicity to operationalize culture thus suggests that group characteristics (e.g., lower parent involvement in school activities) are manifestations of inherent or essential characteristics of people—characteristics that are perceived as relatively unlikely to change and that may therefore undermine efforts to improve parents' and students' experiences (cf. Fuligni, 2007; Mahalingam, 2007).

The focus on ethnicity also assumes that individual members of the same ethnic group participate equivalently in the culture with which the group is associated (Collier, Brice, & Oades-Sese, 2007; Rogoff & Angelillo, 2002). The assumption of equivalent participation may be particularly problematic when comparing immigrants with others in the dominant society inasmuch as cultural participation often varies as widely within groups as between (cf. Collier et al., 2007; Tsai, Chentsova-Dutton, & Wong,

2002). Indeed, ethnic groups are often considered to be mutually exclusive—people are either members of the group or not. This definition is akin to a unidimensional model of acculturation in which it is assumed that, for example, the more oriented one is to Latino culture, the less oriented one is to non-Latino White American culture. It also conflicts with recent work showing that people may be equally and even highly oriented to more than one culture (Abe-Kim, Okazaki, & Goto, 2001; Berry, 2007).

Note that the need to consider cultural orientation applies to members of the dominant culture as well. Indeed, despite a belief that members of dominant cultures undergo cultural changes in response to new immigrants, few studies have examined dominant group members' cultural orientations (Berry, 2007). To our knowledge, one of the most widely used measures of acculturation—that is, the Acculturation Rating Scale for Mexican Americans-II (ARMSA-II; Cuéllar, Arnold, & Maldonado, 1995)—has never been used to assess non-Latinos' acculturation. Given the dramatic growth of the Latino population, it seems reasonable to expect that many non-Latinos have come to endorse and/or participate in some aspects of Latino culture.

Overview of Present Research

We asked the parents of children enrolled in an elementary school dual-language program serving native English and native Spanish speakers to complete a questionnaire that assessed orientations to Latino and White (non-Latino) American cultures, importance of children's academic and social success in school, and their and others' involvement in their children's education. Measures of children's English and Spanish language fluency were obtained from school records. The parents who participated were primarily Latina immigrants; the non-Latinos included White and ethnic minority Americans approximately equally. We therefore compared Latinos to non-Latinos (i.e., combining non-Latino-White and ethnic minority Americans) and non-Latino-Whites to non-Latino ethnic minorities.

We expected to obtain evidence for the construct validity of our cultural orientation measures. In other words, we expected to find ethnic group differences in the strength of participants' orientation to Latino and (non-Latino) White American cultures and significant relationships between parents' cultural orientations and children's language fluency. We also expected that Latino parents would value their children's academic and social success as strongly would as non-Latino parents, but that Latinos would report greater involvement at home (vs. at school) and greater involvement of significant others (vs. themselves) in their children's education. Finally, we examined the relationships of cultural orientations to parents' beliefs about the importance of academic versus social success and parent versus other involvement. Evidence that a Latino orientation is associated with the valuing of social and academic success and with "other" involvement would provide more compelling evidence that a devaluing of education and a lack of involvement cannot account for the poor academic outcomes of Latino children.

METHOD

Dual-Language Program

The dual-language program from which participants were recruited was located in a public elementary school located in Omaha, Nebraska. Nebraska has seen one of the largest increases in the number of immigrant families—269% from 1990 through 2000 (The Urban Institute, 2006)—and the second-highest increase in the number of children of immigrants in prekindergarten to fifth grade (Gouveia &

Powell, 2007). Omaha saw a 186% increase in its Latino population from 1990 through 2000 as compared with a 6% increase in the White (non-Latino) population during the same period. In the school where the dual-language program was located, 75% of the children were Latino.

At the time of the study, the dual-language program served children in kindergarten through fourth grade. Half of the approximately 120 students were native English speakers; half were native Spanish speakers. Students were thus taught half the time in English and half the time in Spanish. Parents chose whether to enroll their children in the program, were asked to commit to the program for the duration of their children's schooling, and were asked to perform 20 volunteer hours during the school year. These parents could thus be characterized as involved. These factors likely restricted the variability among parents, making it more difficult to obtain the predicted effects. Support for our hypotheses would thus be particularly compelling.

Participants

A total of 104 parents and their children participated. Some parents had more than one child in the program. In such cases, parents were asked to complete a separate questionnaire for each child. The present study includes the data for one child per parent; we selected that child for whom we had the most complete data. Parents were paid \$10 for each questionnaire completed.

Nearly all (90%) of the parent participants were mothers. Seventy-one percent were Latino immigrants ($n = 74$)² most of whom (87.6%) were first-generation immigrants who had been in the United States an average of 9.14 years (standard deviation [*SD*] = 6.22). Most (80%) were from Mexico; other countries of origin included Guatemala, Honduras, Paraguay, and Puerto Rico. Nearly all Latino participants reported being married (94.6%); most (89.6%) reported that their spouses were also Latino. Of those who were not Latino (28.9%), 16.4% identified themselves as White ($n = 17$), and 12.5% reported belonging to other ethnic minority groups ($n = 13$). All but one White parent reported being married; their spouses were White (60%), Latino (26.7%), and Black (13.3%). Ten parents in the non-Latino ethnic minority group reported being married; the seven who responded indicated that their spouses were Black ($n = 3$), Latino ($n = 3$), and biracial ($n = 1$).

Of the child participants, 45.6% were male (34 Latinos, 14 non-Latinos), and 54.4% were female (40 Latinos and 15 non-Latinos). Children were fairly evenly distributed across grade levels with 21.4% in kindergarten (15 Latinos, 7 non-Latinos), 21.4% in Grade 1 (15 Latinos, 7 non-Latinos), 20.4% in Grade 2 (17 Latinos, 4 non-Latinos), 19.4% in Grade 3 (13 Latinos, 7 non-Latinos), and 17.4% in Grade 4 (14 Latinos, 5 non-Latinos).³ The vast majority of children (84.31%) received free or reduced-cost lunches. Thus, the socioeconomic status of the sample was relatively low.

Procedure

Participants were recruited via fliers that teachers sent home with the children. The fliers, which were printed in English on one side and Spanish on the other, invited parents to come to the school on one of three evenings to share their views on their involvement in their children's education, what they considered to be important in their children's education, and their experiences with Latino and U.S. cultures. The fliers indicated that the project was part of a study being conducted by researchers at the University of Nebraska at Omaha, that child care and snacks would be provided, and that parents would be paid \$10 for their participation.

The researchers (some of whom were bilingual) and child-care providers (graduate students in school psychology) greeted parents and their children in the school cafeteria. After parents had assembled and eaten, two researchers explained what participation in the research involved. Parents were asked to complete an English or Spanish version of an informed consent form, which was read aloud in English and Spanish. It was explained that the study involved granting access to children's school records and completing an English or Spanish version of a questionnaire. Two researchers read the questionnaire aloud (in English and Spanish), and parents responded on their individual copies of the questionnaire.

The questionnaire was developed in English, translated into Spanish, and then back-translated into English. Minor discrepancies were resolved through discussion among the co-authors. This procedure has been widely used in cross-cultural research to maximize the cultural equivalency of measures (Van de Vijver & Hambleton, 1996).

Measures

Views of Social and Academic Success. Nine items assessed how important it was to parents that their children be socially successful (e.g., show respect for teachers, follow directions, and play well with others), and seven items assessed how important it was that their children be academically successful (e.g., get good grades, learn math, and get the right answers). Participants responded to each item on a scale of 1 (*Not at all important*) to 5 (*Extremely important*). Cronbach's alphas for the social outcomes scale were .93, .93, and .81, for Latinos, Whites, and other minorities, respectively. For the academic outcomes scale, the corresponding alphas were .88, .72, and .76.

Parent and Other Involvement. Participants were first asked to indicate how often they engaged in each of 16 involvement behaviors, which were derived from the literature (e.g., Epstein, 2001) and our own knowledge of involvement. Ten of the items concerned behaviors that may be less visible (e.g., help your child with schoolwork and read with your child), and six items concerned behaviors at school (e.g., attend student-teacher conferences and talk to your child's teachers). Responses were provided on a scale of 1 (*Almost never*) to 5 (*Almost always*). Participants were then presented with the same list of 16 involvement behaviors again and asked to indicate how often others, such as friends, relatives, and neighbors, engaged in each behavior.

We averaged across the 10 items assessing involvement at home and the 6 items assessing involvement at school separately for parents and significant others. This averaging resulted in four separate scores. Cronbach's alphas, which were computed for the three ethnic groups separately, ranged from .76 to .91, with one exception: Among non-Latino ethnic minority parents, Cronbach's alpha for the measure of parent involvement at home was .59.

Cultural Orientation. Behavioral items from the ARSMA-II (Cuéllar, Arnold, & Maldonado, 1995) were adapted to assess parents' orientations to Latino and White American cultures. Adaptations included minor grammatical changes, substituting "Latino" for "Mexican American," and ensuring that the items were suitable for Latino and non-Latino participants.

Fifteen items assessed orientation to Latino culture, and 10 items assessed orientation to White American culture. For example, participants indicated the extent to which they thought in the Spanish (English) language, enjoyed movies in Spanish (English), had Latino (White American) friends, and identified as Latino (American). Response options ranged from 1 (*Almost never or Not at all*) to 5

(*Almost always or Very much*). Cronbach's alphas for the Latino orientation scores were .86, .91, and .97 for Latino, White, and other minority participants, respectively; for the White American orientation scores, the corresponding alphas were .92, .81, and .91.

Demographic Data. Parents identified their children by name, sex, date of birth, and grade in school so that parent responses could be matched to children's school records. Eligibility for free and reduced-cost lunches was subsequently determined, using school records.

Language Fluency. Measures of children's oral proficiency in English and Spanish were obtained from school records. These data consisted of children's raw scores on the oral Language Assessment Scale (LAS-O; Duncan & DeAvila, 1990) for children in second through fourth grades and the Pre-LAS for children in kindergarten. The LAS-O and pre-LAS assess children's speaking and listening skills with respect to phonemic, lexical, syntactical, and pragmatic language. LAS-O and pre-LAS scores allow year-to-year and between-language comparisons to assess improvement in as well as differences between English and Spanish proficiency.

RESULTS

We analyzed the data by using regression procedures described by Judd, McClelland, and Ryan (2009). Measures of cultural orientations, language fluency, views of social and academic success, and parent and other involvement were treated as continuous measures in all analyses. Ethnicity was a categorical variable; it was contrast coded to allow for focused tests of differences among Latinos, non-Latino Whites, and other non-Latino ethnic minority parents.⁴

Cultural Orientation Measures: Construct Validity and Unidimensional versus Bidimensional

Latino versus non-Latino orientation was regressed on the contrast-coded predictors that coded the Latino versus non-Latino and White versus other non-Latino differences. The test of the intercept, which tests the main effect of Latino versus non-Latino orientation was significant, $F(1, 101)=8.38, p = .005, \eta^2 = .07$, as were the slopes, which test the Cultural orientation \times Ethnicity interaction, $F(2, 101) = 76.83, p < .001, \eta^2 = .60$. The means (see Table 1) indicate that parents exhibited a stronger White than Latino orientation, overall. In addition, Latinos exhibited a stronger Latino (vs. White American) orientation, $F(1, 73)=162.82, p < .001, \eta^2 = .67$, whereas White and other ethnic minority parents exhibited a stronger White American (vs. Latino) orientation, $F(1, 16) = 130.87, p < .001, \eta^2 = .88$. The tendency to exhibit a stronger White American than Latino orientation was also significantly greater for non-Latino-White parents than for parents from other non-Latino ethnic groups, $F(1, 28) = 6.08, p = .02, \eta^2 = .15$. Thus, analyses of the cultural orientation measures revealed the expected ethnic group differences.

The correlations between the Latino and White American cultural orientation measures, which were $-.16, -.25$, and $-.84$ for Latino, White, and other ethnic minority parents, respectively, indicated that a higher Latino orientation was only weakly associated with a lower White American orientation for the Latino and non-Latino-White groups. In contrast, a higher Latino orientation was strongly associated with a lower White American orientation among other ethnic minority parents. Thus, although a unidimensional cultural orientation model would be appropriate for the latter group, a bidimensional model would be considerably more appropriate for both the Latino and non-Latino White groups. In

other words, knowing that participants were Latino or non-Latino-White indicated little about their orientation to the other culture.

Given the substantial relationship between the two measures for one group and the weak relationships for the other groups, we conducted subsequent analyses involving cultural orientation two ways: treating the two cultural orientation measures as separate continuous predictors and using a single measure, that is, a difference score, reflecting the extent to which parents exhibited a stronger Latino relative to non-Latino White American cultural orientation.

English and Spanish Language Fluency. We analyzed LAS scores, which were available for 62 children, to further examine the validity of our cultural orientation measures. Mean differences in children's language fluency were examined first, by separately regressing overall language fluency and the English–Spanish difference on the two predictors coding parent ethnicity. The relevant means are reported in Table 2. The analyses revealed main effects of parent ethnicity, $F(2, 59) = 3.69, p = .03, \eta^2 = .08$, and language, $F(1, 59) = 38.78, p < .001, \eta^2 = .39$, and a Parent ethnicity \times Language interaction, $F(2, 59) = 16.19, p < .001, \eta^2 = .33$. Children's scores were generally higher in English than in Spanish, and the children of Latino and other ethnic minority parents performed better overall (i.e., averaging across languages) than did the children of White parents. The interaction indicates that the children of White and other ethnic minority parents performed significantly better in English than in Spanish, $F(1, 17) = 20.46, p < .001, \eta^2 = .52$, whereas the children of Latino parents performed equally well in both languages, $F < 1$. The test of this focused interaction was significant, $F(1, 59) = 26.32, p < .001, \eta^2 = .30$. The English–Spanish difference was also greater for the children of White than for the children of non-Latino ethnic minority parents, $F(1, 59) = 6.05, p = .017, \eta^2 = .08$.⁵

Support for the validity of our parent cultural orientation measures comes from parallel analyses that included the Latino–White American culture orientation difference (centered) as an additional predictor. The main effect of language was again significant, $F(1, 58) = 11.04, p < .002, \eta^2 = .15$, but neither the effects of parent ethnicity nor the Language \times Parent ethnicity interactions were significant, $F_s < 1$. In addition, as expected, higher English than Spanish language fluency of the children depended on their parents' cultural orientations, $F(1, 58) = 28.70, p < .001, \eta^2 = .32$, such that it was more true of those children whose parents exhibited a stronger White American than Latino cultural orientation. This relationship did not depend on parent ethnicity, $p = .10$.⁶

Analyses in which Latino and White American cultural orientations were included as separate predictors further indicated that Latino cultural orientation predicted better language fluency overall (i.e., averaging across English and Spanish), $F(1, 57) = 12.17, p < .001, \eta^2 = .16$. A stronger Latino orientation also predicted better Spanish than English language fluency, $F(1, 57) = 15.86, p < .001, \eta^2 = .20$, whereas a stronger White American orientation predicted better English than Spanish fluency, $F(1, 57) = 5.05, p = .029, \eta^2 = .07$. The interactions between the two cultural orientation measures were not significant, $p_s > .30$. In sum, *parents'* cultural orientations accounted for ethnic group differences in *children's* language fluency.

Importance of Social and Academic Success in School

Judgments of how important parents perceived their children's social and academic success in school to be were analyzed as a function of success type (social vs. academic, within subjects) and parent ethnicity (Latino vs. White vs. Other ethnic minority, between subjects). The analysis yielded significant main

effects of parent ethnicity, $F(2, 100) = 5.38, p = .006, \eta^2 = .08$, and success type, $F(1, 100) = 17.62, p < .001, \eta^2 = .14$, and a parent ethnicity x success type interaction, $F(2, 100) = 19.76, p < .001, \eta^2 = .16$. The means (Table 3) indicate that Latino and other ethnic minority parents' judgments were generally higher than were non-Latino-White parents' judgments. In addition, overall, social success was considered more important than academic success. The interaction further indicates, however, that Latino and other ethnic minority parents judged social and academic success to be equally important, whereas White parents judged social success to be more important than academic success. Simple effects tests indicated that the social–academic difference was significant for White parents, $F(1, 16) = 19.93, p < .001, \eta^2 = .53$, but not for Latinos or other ethnic minorities, both $F_s < 1$.

The role of parent cultural orientation was again examined in two sets of analyses. For the first set, we conducted the same analysis as mentioned earlier in text, this time including the Latino–White American culture orientation difference (centered) as an additional continuous predictor. The analysis yielded the same main effect of success type and interaction between success type and parent ethnicity as we reported earlier. The main effect of parent ethnicity, however, was no longer significant, $F < 1$. In addition, the cultural orientation difference predicted the importance of academic and social success, $F(1, 99) = 4.31, p = .04, \eta^2 = .03$, such that a stronger Latino relative to White American orientation was associated with judging overall school success (i.e., averaging across social vs. academic) to be more important. This relationship did not depend on parent ethnicity, $F < 1$.

The second set of analyses, which included Latino and non-Latino cultural orientation as separate predictors, indicated that a Latino cultural orientation was associated with judging overall school success (again, averaging across social vs. academic) to be more important, $F(1, 98) = 4.28, p = .04, \eta^2 = .02$. The effects of non-Latino cultural orientation were not significant, $ps > .30$. The interactions testing whether the relationship between Latino orientation and judgments of school success depended on parents' orientation to White American culture were not significant, $ps > .16$.

Parents' and Significant Others' Involvement

Contrary to expectations, involvement at home versus at school did not differ as a function of ethnicity, $p = .78$. Indeed, the only significant effect involving this variable was the main effect, $F(1, 99) = 189.39, p < .001, \eta^2 = .65$, indicating greater involvement at home. We therefore averaged across the home and school involvement ratings for parents and significant others separately and used regression procedures to conduct a 2 (parent vs. significant other, within subjects) \times 3 (Latino vs. White vs. Other ethnicity, between subjects) analysis of variance.

The analysis revealed a main effect of parent versus other involvement, $F(1, 101) = 86.18, p < .001, \eta^2 = .46$, which depended on ethnicity, $F(2, 101) = 5.70, p = .004, \eta^2 = .08$. As the means in Table 4 indicate, parents reported that they were more involved in their children's education than were significant others. The interaction indicates, however, that this difference was greatest for White parents and smallest for Latino parents. Indeed, as expected, significant others were more involved in Latino than in non-Latino White children's education, $F(1, 89) = 4.54, p = .04$.

The analysis that included the Latino–White American culture orientation difference (centered) yielded the main effect of parent versus significant other involvement, $F(1, 100) = 41.39, p < .001, \eta^2 = .29$. Its interaction with parent ethnicity, however, was no longer significant, $F < 1$. Instead, the parent versus significant other involvement difference depended on cultural orientation, $F(1, 100) = 4.41, p = .038, \eta^2 =$

.03, such that a greater Latino relative to White American orientation predicted a smaller difference between the involvement of parents and significant others. This relationship did not depend on parent ethnicity, $p = .10$.⁷

The analyses that included Latino and White American orientation scores as separate predictors indicated that Latino, $F(1, 98) = 3.99, p = .049, \eta^2 = .03$, and White, $F(1, 98) = 10.15, p = .002, \eta^2 = .08$, orientations independently predicted greater overall involvement. More important, however, a White American orientation predicted greater parent versus other involvement, $F(1, 98) = 7.93, p = .006, \eta^2 = .07$, controlling for a Latino cultural orientation, and this relationship was marginally weaker for parents who had a higher Latino orientation, $F(1, 97) = 3.53, p = .06, \eta^2 = .03$.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of the present research was to examine Latino and non-Latino parents' views of their children's school success and the nature of their involvement in their children's education. We also sought to examine whether Latino and non-Latino White American cultural orientations were associated with these differences. Parents whose children were enrolled in an elementary school's dual-language program completed questionnaires that assessed beliefs about the importance of social and academic school success, their own and others' (e.g., family members, friends, and neighbors) involvement in their children's education, and their orientations to Latino and White American cultures.

The results indicated that Latino parents valued their children's academic and social success in school equally, which is consistent with other work (Okagaki & Sternberg, 1993) examining Mexican immigrant and Mexican-American parents. The present results further indicated that Latinos valued both academic and social success more than did non-Latino White parents and that White parents valued social success more strongly than academic success. Thus, not only was the belief that Latinos value academic success less strongly than others, including Whites, not supported, but the data revealed evidence for the reverse. Perhaps more importantly, parents who had a stronger Latino orientation valued academic and social success more strongly than did parents who had a stronger White American orientation.

The results concerning involvement in children's education were partially consistent with expectations. Not surprisingly, parents reported greater involvement outside of school, but this was no more true of Latino parents than of others. Although parents also reported that they were more involved in their children's education than were significant others, as expected, this difference was smallest for Latino parents and greatest for non-Latino White parents. In addition, parents who exhibited a stronger White American versus Latino cultural orientation reported that they were more involved in their children's education than were others.

Other results more directly support the validity of our cultural orientation measures. Latino parents scored higher on the Latino than on the White American cultural orientation measure, whereas the reverse was true of non-Latino parents. A stronger White American than Latino orientation was also significantly greater for White than for non-Latino ethnic minority parents. Perhaps most importantly, *parents'* cultural orientations predicted *children's* English and Spanish fluency; stronger Latino orientations were associated with better Spanish fluency and stronger White American orientations were associated with better English fluency.

The present results also underscore the importance of recognizing that people may have more than one cultural orientation. Parents' orientation to Latino culture indicated little about their orientation toward White American culture. The possibility that Latinos may be highly oriented to White American culture (and that non-Latinos may be highly oriented to Latino culture) is impossible to examine when research is limited to demonstrating ethnic group differences (Desimone, 1999; Tsai et al., 2002).

Implications for School Psychologists

The present findings suggest that focusing on a lack of parent involvement in children's education as a primary cause of lower achievement among Latino children is misguided (cf. Hill & Torres, 2010). Whether Latinos can be characterized as less involved than others appears to depend on the way in which involvement is defined (Desimone, 1999; Grolnick et al., 1997; Lee & Bowen, 2006).

Although we found no evidence of ethnic differences in home versus school involvement, Latino parents reported greater involvement of significant others. Involvement may thus need to be conceptualized more broadly to include the roles of family and other community members (cf. Drummond & Stipek, 2004; Epstein, 2001; Hill & Torres, 2010). Indeed, a broader conceptualization may be necessary in both research and practice. When significant others are involved in a child's education, involving them in interventions designed to improve that child's academic performance would seem to be more effective (Clare & García, 2007). Significant others may also serve as natural mentors, promoting better academic performance among the children they mentor (e.g., Sánchez, Esparza, & Colón, 2008).

Efforts to increase awareness that parents vary in the ways they are involved in and encourage their children's academic efforts may also be needed (cf. Nahari, Martines, & Marquez, 2007), including an awareness that ways of being involved may depend on parents' cultural orientations— orientations that may or may not coincide with their ethnic group memberships. Such efforts may be as important for school psychologists as for teachers and researchers. Consider the role of school psychologists in special education placements. To the extent that Latino parents are perceived more negatively because they fail to conform to dominant cultural norms, their children may more often be placed in special education. Indeed, ethnically and linguistically diverse students have been shown to be disproportionately represented in special education and placed in more restrictive educational environments within special education than are White students (Rhodes, Ochoa, & Ortiz, 2005). Thus, school psychologists need to be "adequately prepared to assess culturally and linguistically diverse pupils for special education" (Rhodes et al., 2005, p. 39; see also Nahari et al., 2007).

Focusing on parent (as opposed to other) involvement may also be misguided to the extent that efforts to increase involvement are based on an assumption that the problem lies with parents who are deficient and in need of change (cf. Clare & García, 2007; Epstein & Dauber, 1991; Lightfoot, 2004; Ramirez, 2003). It seems clear that Latinos value education as much as other ethnic groups and may be just as involved, albeit in different ways. Focusing on a lack of parent involvement may serve to divert attention from the kinds of policies, attitudes, and services (e.g., language instruction) that may require change on the part of the schools and the larger communities in which they are located (Epstein & Dauber, 1991).

A related issue concerns the essentializing of ethnic group differences in which the lack of activities that educators and school psychologists consider indicative of parent involvement and concern is implicitly thought to be a deficiency that is rooted in the ethnic group itself. Changing focus from ethnic group

differences to cultural orientations may not only help to weaken the tendency to essentialize group differences, but may also help to identify ways to foster the kinds of relationships between school personnel and parents that will improve student outcomes. School personnel who believe that negative characteristics reflect the inherent traits of individual group members may be less likely to consider how their own ways of doing things may adversely affect children's academic outcomes.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

The present research is, of course, not without limitations. The data are correlational and thus do not allow causal conclusions. The number of non-Latino parents was relatively small, so any lack of effect (i.e., a lack of an ethnic group difference in home vs. school involvement and the nonsignificant interactions) may be a result of low statistical power. Furthermore, as is usually the case, it is unclear whether the findings would generalize to other parents or other settings. The issue of generalization may be especially problematic given that our participants were the parents of children in a dual-language program and were required to maintain a minimal level of involvement. The effects were consistent with expectations and with existing work conducted in other settings, however (e.g., Okagaki & Sternberg, 1993). Furthermore, although the involvement requirement may have contributed to the failure to find differences in school versus home involvement, it is unlikely to have accounted for the greater involvement of others in Latino children's education. The involvement requirement would more likely have resulted in an overall increase in parent involvement and smaller differences between ethnic groups, making it more difficult to detect the effects of interest. Ultimately, of course, it remains for additional research to determine whether the present results replicate in other settings.

An additional limitation concerns the assessment of involvement, which was restricted to parent reports of the extent to which they and others were involved in their children's education. Additional research using potentially less subjective measures (e.g., estimates of the frequency of, or amount of time spent engaging in, involvement behaviors, actual participation in parent-teacher conferences) may yield different conclusions. Again, it remains for future research to determine whether our findings replicate when other measures are used.

The present research suggests other possibilities for future research as well. One possibility is to examine the consequences of endorsing more specific values, beliefs, or ways of doing things (i.e., as opposed to general cultural orientations) that may be associated with ethnic group membership. Latinos have generally been characterized as more strongly endorsing familism (Cuéllar, Arnold, & González, 1995), and this characterization is consistent with the present finding of greater "other" involvement in children's education. Other cultural values or practices that may influence children's academic outcomes include fatalism (although this may be uncharacteristic of immigrants who have moved to a new country in pursuit of better opportunities) and cooperative versus competitive orientations (e.g., Aronson & Patnoe, 1997).

Another possibility is to examine the values and ideologies that school personnel endorse, including the consequences for classroom management, problem identification, judgments of parents and children, and ways of interacting with parents and children from diverse backgrounds (Clare & García, 2007). Those who adopt multidimensional views of culture or whose orientations are consistent (or at least not inconsistent) with those of parents and students—whether they belong to the same ethnic group or not—may be more effective in promoting involvement and improving children's academic outcomes.

Finally, in this nonexhaustive list of possibilities, is to identify ways to promote orientations to other cultures and respect for differences. Multicultural approaches (Nahari et al., 2007; Ryan, Hunt, Weible, Peterson, & Casas, 2007) that emphasize cultural diversity as well as a common group identity (Gaertner et al., 2008) seem to be especially promising ways of promoting orientations to other cultures, the involvement of culturally different parents and community members, and, ultimately, the academic and social success of both ethnic minority and majority group children.

Notes

¹ We do not distinguish between race and ethnicity; we adopt the view that both are largely social constructions. We prefer “ethnicity” as it more clearly refers to cultural differences, whereas “race” focuses on the power relationships among groups (Markus, 2008).

² Although 74 parents were Latino, only approximately 60 of the students were native Spanish speakers.

³ Preliminary analyses revealed no evidence of gender differences, all p s > .12. Unless otherwise noted, analyses in which child’s grade level (and thus to a large extent age) was controlled yielded the same conclusions as those that are subsequently reported.

⁴ We examined normal quantile–quantile plots of the residuals from each regression model, outlier indices (e.g., Rstudent and Cook’s D), and differences between condition variances to identify possible violations of normality and homogeneity of variance assumptions (Judd et al., 2009), which may be especially problematic when sample sizes are small. When it appeared that a violation occurred, we conducted analyses of transformed variables. These additional analyses yielded conclusions that are consistent with those we report.

⁵ The analysis in which child’s grade level was controlled indicated that children in higher grades had higher scores, $F(1, 55) = 29.11, p < .001, \eta^2 = .33$.

⁶ The analysis in which child’s grade level was controlled revealed a Parent ethnicity \times Cultural orientation interaction, $F(1, 55) = 3.99, p = .024, \eta^2 = .05$. Among non-Latino parents, a greater Latino versus White American cultural orientation was associated with higher language fluency scores whereas, for Latino parents, this relationship was weaker and in the opposite direction.

⁷ The analysis in which child’s grade level was controlled indicated that the tendency for parents to be more involved than others was greater for children in the lower grades, $F(1, 90) = 4.05, p = .047, \eta^2 = .03$.

Table 1
Culture Orientation Scores as a Function of Parent Ethnicity

Parent Ethnicity	Culture Orientation			
	Latino		White American	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Latino	4.46	.50	2.69	.98
White	2.20	.73	4.60	.41
Other	2.98	1.36	3.85	1.10

Table 2
Mean English and Spanish Fluency Scores

Parent Ethnicity	<i>n</i>	Language			
		English		Spanish	
		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Latino	44	72.43	17.36	70.86	16.67
White	9	81.78	9.08	34.94	17.44
Other	9	77.17	16.67	56.33	28.70

Table 3
Mean Ratings of the Importance of Social and Academic Success in School

Parent Ethnicity	Type of Success			
	Social		Academic	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Latino	4.61	0.46	4.61	0.45
White	4.48	0.44	4.06	0.47
Other	4.66	0.30	4.62	0.36

Table 4
Mean Ratings of Parent and Other Involvement at Home and at School

Type of Involvement	Parent Ethnicity		
	Latino	White	Other
Parent			
At home	4.36 (0.45)	4.40 (0.49)	4.56 (0.30)
At school	3.13 (0.66)	3.50 (0.75)	3.36 (0.91)
<i>M</i>	3.75	3.95	3.96
Other			
At home	3.70 (0.90)	3.26 (0.84)	3.61 (0.81)
At school	2.49 (0.92)	2.06 (0.69)	2.50 (1.02)
<i>M</i>	3.11	2.66	3.06

Note. *SD* values are in parentheses.

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