

Effects of Cultural Orientation on the Perception of Conflict Between Relationship and Education Goals for Mexican American College Students

Yolanda Flores Niemann
Washington State University

Andrea Romero
Stanford Center for Research in Disease Prevention,
Stanford Medical School

Consuelo Arbona
University of Houston

Cultural factors internal to the ethnic group may exacerbate external and economic barriers to the pursuit of higher education for Mexican American students. In particular, cultural variables related to traditional, relationship-oriented behaviors and expectations may be perceived to conflict with educational pursuits. The present study examined the relationship between components of cultural orientation and attitudes and values that may create tension between relationship and educational goals for Mexican American men and women. Results of a survey that assessed cultural orientation and marriage and gender role attitudes of Mexican Americans (female, N = 356; male, N = 200) indicated that the ethnic-loyalty component of cultural orientation most consistently predicted adherence to beliefs that may lead to the perception of conflict between relationship and educational goals. Discussion centers on the role of ethnic loyalty as a risk factor for Mexican American men's and women's decisions to pursue and complete higher education.

Mexican Americans are the largest undereducated group in the United States (Chapa & Valencia, 1993), with only 3.7% of women and 6.1% of men

AUTHORS' NOTE: We are indebted to Carmen Flores, who was an integral member of the team that collected the data on which this paper is based. Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Yolanda Flores Niemann, Department of Comparative American Cultures, Washington State University, Pullman, WA 99164-4010; phone: 509-335-4792; e-mail: yniemann@wsu.edu.



Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences, Vol. 22 No. 1, February 2000 46-63
© 2000 Sage Publications, Inc.

graduating from college (Ortiz, 1995). Factors external to the ethnic group that underlie this relatively low educational achievement include feelings of isolation in college (González, 1988), language barriers (Donato, Menchaca, & Valencia, 1991), negative faculty expectations (Cones, Noonan, & Janha, 1983; Reyes & Halcon, 1988), negative campus climate (Tracey & Sedlacek, 1985), acculturative stress (Saldaña, 1995), and structural inequities both in and out of the institution, including socioeconomic factors (Del Castillo, Frederickson, McKenna, & Ortiz, 1988).

Cultural factors internal to the Mexican American community may exacerbate these largely external obstacles to higher education. For instance, behavior patterns inconsistent with traditional cultural gender roles and attitudes may lead to perceptions of conflict between relationship and education goals. Evidence indicates that this conflict seems to be related, in part, to an interaction of three values and beliefs: (a) a preference for endogamy (the existing double-bind literature upon which this study was grounded is based on an assumption of heterosexual orientation); (b) a belief that, due to traditional gender roles, higher education is a threat to endogamy; and (c) a belief that higher education may lead to alienation from ethnic communities (Gándara, 1995; Ginorio, Gutiérrez, Cauce, & Acosta, 1995; González, 1988). González (1988) referred to this conflict as the "double bind."

These beliefs about traditional gender roles and the pursuit of higher education may be affected by students' levels of distinct dimensions of cultural orientation, which include cultural knowledge, behaviors, values, and social interaction preferences. The purpose of the present study is to examine how components of cultural orientation predict adherence to beliefs that may be associated with this perceived relationship/educational goal conflict.

Keefe and Padilla (1987) specify three primary components of a cultural orientation model: cultural awareness (CA), ethnic social orientation (ESO), and ethnic loyalty (EL). Each of the cultural orientation components relates to personal and social preferences, ethnic identity, and/or attitudes toward cultural traditions, and thus has implications for relationship and education values for Mexican Americans. The components of cultural orientation are considered aspects of acculturation. However, most acculturation measures primarily yield information relative to language preference and usage, and assume a linear model of cultural displacement (Keefe & Padilla, 1987). This deficit in the state of acculturation measures was detailed by some of the most well-known acculturation researchers (e.g., John Berry, Nolan Zane, Amado Padilla, and Joseph Trimble) in a December 1998 San Francisco conference on the topic of acculturation. In contrast, Keefe and Padilla's (1987) cultural orientation model takes a multidimensional approach, with the possibility of change occurring in each dimension at a different rate. For instance, the

model allows for the possibility that people may maintain their ethnic identity, yet not speak any Spanish. Examining the relationship between components of cultural orientation and education-related attitudes may therefore yield more predictive, context-specific attitudinal and behavioral information than simple, unilinear acculturation measures.

Cultural Awareness

CA reflects the individual's cultural knowledge, such as language, history, traditions, and cultural heroes, and is considered the more general component of cultural change. Because they have a heritage deeply rooted in Mexican culture (Keefe & Padilla, 1987), Mexican Americans with high levels of CA may be very cognizant of traditional gender roles and behaviors. For Mexican American women, traditional gender roles are associated with prioritizing marriage and family life. Many women see these roles as biased and unchangeable (Pizarro, 1997), and they generally internalize the expectation to nurture and maintain family unity and connections (Vásquez, 1994).

Women believe that messages to pursue education are not strong for them. They report that their brothers have greater freedom to pursue education than themselves (Chacón, Cohen, & Strover, 1986; Del Castillo & Torres, 1988), that higher education for them is not as valued or useful as it is for men (Chacón et al., 1986; Gándara, 1995; Zambrana, Dorrington, & Bell, 1997), and that it may be seen as "unnecessary, superfluous, or even wasteful" (Mirán de & Enríquez, 1979, p. 134). Women who strongly adhere to traditional roles are less likely to attend college (Cardoza, 1991) and more likely than others to be home oriented and less likely to defer marriage and child-bearing (Buriel & Saénz, 1980; Cardoza, 1991; Gándara, 1995; McKenna & Ortiz, 1988; Zambrana et al., 1997).

Additionally, college-bound women engage in typically masculine behaviors, such as competitiveness, which are often necessary for college success (Buriel & Saénz, 1980) but inconsistent with traditional gender role values. Feelings of alienation from home communities may be exacerbated when Mexican Americans perceive differences in value orientation from those of their family members (Suarez, Fowers, Garwood, & Szapocnik, 1997). A sense of belonging with home and family is especially critical to these students whose culture emphasizes traditional gender role values (González & Padilla, 1997). Therefore, nonadherence to traditional roles, including going to college, may increase women's sense of alienation from their families.

For the man, however, education is valued as a mechanism for improving himself so that he can have a better job, make more money (Mirán de & Enríquez, 1979), and be economically responsible for his family. Although

men receive more positive messages about attending college than women, they may still experience conflict between educational and relationship goals. Men are traditionally expected to assist in the financial support of their families of origin (Casas, Wagenheim, Banchero, & Mendoza-Romero, 1995; Vega, 1995). Pursuing education may delay this expected support, which may in turn create a conflict, especially for men from families of lower socioeconomic status (SES) who might expect to contribute the most support to their families.

In these ways, family obligations and traditional behaviors that are deeply embedded in the culture may lead to feelings of conflict between the family of origin's expectations and school requirements for men and women (Cohen, Chacón, Camerena, González, & Strover, 1983; Ginorio et al., 1995). As a result, Mexican American men's and women's levels of cultural awareness may be predictive of their perceptions of the threat of alienation from their ethnic communities that could result from the pursuit of higher education.

Ethnic Social Orientation

High levels of ESO, a measure of in-group socializing that is related to both CA and EL, may also predict the perception of a relationship/education goal conflict. ESO decreases between the first and second generation and appears to level out fairly early, so that even third and fourth generations tend to associate with their own ethnic group (Keefe & Padilla, 1987). Such affiliation preferences extend to endogamy, or the preference to marry within the ethnic group. Like members of other racial/ethnic groups, Mexican Americans historically tend to marry within their own ethnic group (Becerra, 1988). However, this endogamous preference may be problematic if males' and females' gender role expectations regarding family are in conflict (González, 1988).

Although acceptance of gender role shifts and expectations have been documented (Arbona, 1991; González, 1988; Keefe & Padilla, 1987), men's expectations of their wives' roles are changing more slowly than those of their spouses (Williams, 1988). Men are more likely to retain traditional gender-role behaviors, whereas women are more likely to accept new nontraditional roles (Baca-Zinn, 1979; Hawley & Evens, 1982). As such, educated women may threaten the traditionally male authority and the higher status of men who retain the concept of traditional gender roles (Vigil, 1988). This argument is consistent with other work that indicates that men seem to be threatened by "thinking women," and that once a Mexican American woman returns home from the university setting, men may not perceive her seriously as a marriage partner (Ortiz, 1988). Thus, women may perceive that they

must choose between gaining an education and remaining potential marriage partners for men in their ethnic communities (Baca-Zinn, 1980; Gándara, 1995; González, 1988; Soto, 1983), a perception that may underlie psychological distress for women pursuing higher education (González, 1988).

In addition, for both men and women, the pursuit of higher education may threaten endogamy if they prefer to marry someone who has also pursued higher education. Due to the low numbers of Mexican Americans with college degrees, the reality for Mexican Americans may be that it is unlikely that they will marry someone within their ethnic group who has a college education. Therefore, ESO may be expected to predict perception of education as a barrier to endogamy.

Ethnic Loyalty

EL is a measure of the preference for one's cultural orientation and is defined primarily by the individual's ethnic pride and heightened perception of discrimination against Mexican people in the United States (Keefe & Padilla, 1987). Qualities associated with EL are "the symbolic reality . . . which individuals create concerning their ethnicity" (Keefe & Padilla, 1987, p. 48). As such, EL is the most psychological component of cultural orientation and is expected to be the most predictive.

Individuals who score high on EL are likely to be very sensitive to outgroup discrimination and negative perception of their ethnic group. They may also be especially aware of and sensitive to stereotypes about their group, including pervasive stereotypes related to low academic achievement (Niemann, in press; Niemann, Jennings, Rozell, Baxter, & Sullivan, 1994). Because EL measures ethnic pride and perceived personal and group discrimination, Mexican Americans high in this component of cultural orientation may believe that they will be perceived as elitists by community members if they pursue college. Because persons high in EL are sensitive to outgroup discrimination, they may be also aware that by spending a significant amount of time in a predominately White academic environment, they may be perceived as joining those who are seen to have racist and discriminatory views toward Mexican Americans. This belief may be particularly grounded in Mexican Americans' historical exclusion from higher education institutions.

To the extent that women perceive going to college as a threat to their future community involvement and acceptance, they may perceive conflict between relationship and educational goals. There is already some documentation that educated women believe they will be ostracized and perceived as elitists in their ethnic communities (González, 1988; Hawley & Evens,

1982). Men and women may also believe that they will be perceived as elitists by virtue of being one of the few community members to attend college. This belief may be especially true for women, because for them education is not as valued as it is for men. On the other hand, for men, pursuit of higher education may be interpreted as consistent with fighting discrimination and advancing their ethnic group, roles that are consistent with traditional values of male leadership and authority. Their educational pursuits may therefore be seen as more consistent with traditional roles than they are for women. However, Mexican American men and women high in EL may both feel threatened by possible alienation from their highly valued community alliances (Mirán­de & Enríquez, 1979).

Summary

Adherence to cultural values inherent in the components of cultural orientation may predict perception of negative consequences of pursuing a college education. The consequences are largely related to relationship goals. Although the components of cultural orientation are not entirely distinct from one another, examination of how they uniquely contribute to a perception of conflict between relationship and education goals will add to our knowledge about Mexican Americans' experiences and beliefs related to college. This knowledge may then be applied in areas of college recruitment and retention.

Method

Procedure

A total of 546 students (356 females, 200 males) of Mexican descent from universities and community colleges in the Texas Valley and Houston areas participated in this survey study. Survey packets were distributed to intact classrooms by Mexican American researchers and then collected during a 1-hour classroom period. All respondents received extra class credit for participation; there was no identifying information in the packet. Respondents were simply asked to complete the questionnaires. They were told that to further ensure anonymity, they were to stack completed survey packets on a desk. When all respondents had completed their surveys, the stacks of packets were collected as a group. The survey packet contained the endogamy preference/perceived alienation and elitism questionnaire, the Keefe and Padilla (1987) cultural orientation scale, an SES measure, and a demographic questionnaire.

Survey Instruments

Endogamy Preference and Perceived Alienation and Elitism Questionnaire. The 14 items that assessed respondents' attitudes regarding preference for endogamy and higher education were adapted from González's (1988) work on the double bind for the educated Chicana. Her original 6-item questionnaire was expanded and revised so that each item was asked in reference to both genders, and items referring to education as a barrier to marriage were added. Preference for endogamy (labeled "Endogamy") was assessed with the item, "It is important for a woman/man of Mexican descent to marry within her/his own ethnic group."

The threat of elitism and alienation (labeled "Alienation") for women was assessed with two items: "Men of Mexican descent distrust women of Mexican descent with college degrees" (identical items were not asked for both men and women in this category because this item for men was regrettably left out of the instrument); and "Mexican and Mexican American women with college degrees are viewed as elitists by less-educated members of their ethnic group." Threat of elitism and alienation for men was assessed with the item, "Mexican and Mexican American men with college degrees are viewed as elitists by less-educated members of their ethnic group."

Education as a barrier to endogamy (labeled "Barrier") was assessed with the following three items: "Mexican and Mexican American women/men prefer to date people without college degrees"; "Mexican and Mexican American women/men prefer to marry people without college degrees"; and "College-educated women/men of Mexican descent have an easier time finding someone to marry than women/men of Mexican descent who dropped out of school" (latter item was reverse scored).

Item responses ranged from 1 to 4 and were coded so that higher scores indicated agreement. Items were written in a manner that assumed heterosexual standards of the subjects. That is, items related to partner choices for gays and lesbians were not included.

Cultural Orientation. The Cultural Orientation scale developed by Keefe and Padilla (1987) was used to measure unique aspects of cultural orientation. The original scale consisted of 136 items and three scales and six subscales that tapped culturally related self-report behaviors and attitudes or preferences. The three scales and their respective subscales are (a) Cultural Awareness (respondent's cultural heritage, spouse's cultural heritage, parents' cultural heritage, language preference); (b) Ethnic Loyalty (ethnic pride and affiliation and perceived discrimination); and (c) Ethnic Social Orienta-

tion. Two items related to language of the questionnaire and language of interviews were eliminated because all questionnaires were in English and no interviews were conducted. The subscale, spouse's cultural heritage, was not used in the analyses because over 70% of the participants were single.

Keefe and Padilla (1987) reported internal consistency reliabilities for the scale and subscale ranging from .76 to .97. Using confirmatory factor analyses, Arbona, Flores, and Novy (1995) found a good fit for the factor model of Keefe and Padilla's cultural orientation scales with the same South Texas subsample of participants employed in this study. Internal consistency coefficients of the subscales for this sample ranged from .69 to .89.

Socioeconomic Status. SES was assessed with the Hollingshead and Redlich (1958) measure. This measure combines educational level and occupational status of the respondent's parents for a composite SES score and thus provides a score for family-of-origin SES. This measure is appropriate because our respondents were college students, most of whom had not yet established their own households.

Results

Participants

Demographic composition of respondents was as follows: $N = 346$ female (63.4%), 200 male (36.6%); ages 18-25 years: $N = 316$ (58.5%), 26-35 years: $N = 134$ (24.8%), 35 years and older: $N = 90$ (16.7%); high SES: $N = 33$ (8.5%), middle SES: $N = 76$ (19.5%); middle-lower SES: $N = 135$ (34.7%), low SES: $N = 145$ (37.3%). Approximately 70% of respondents were single. See Table 1 for respondent demographics by gender.

Regression Analyses on Cultural Orientation Components

Multiple linear regression analyses were conducted separately for men and women respondents with each measure of endogamy/alienation/barrier as the dependent, or criterion, variable. The independent, or predictor, variables used in the regression models were CA, ESO, and EL. These regression analyses allowed examination of the percentage of variance accounted for by the three predictors together, represented by the squared multiple correlation (R^2). Analyses also indicated the statistical significance of the variance, given the power of the sample. These analyses also yielded regression

Table 1. Sample Characteristics by Gender

	Male		Female	
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
Total	200	36.6	346	63.4
Age				
18-25	132	66.3	184	54
26-35	43	21.6	91	26.7
35 and older	24	12.1	66	19.4
Socioeconomic status				
High	10	6.6	22	9.3
Middle	26	17.2	50	21.1
Middle-lower	52	34.4	83	35.0
Low	63	41.7	82	34.6

coefficients (β = standardized beta weight), which indicated the statistical significance, strength, and direction of the predictive variables.

Regression Results for Endogamy Preference

For female respondents, the model produced statistical significance for predicting endogamy preference for women, $R^2 = .03, p < .04$, and for men, $R^2 = .03, p < .03$, indicating that 3% of the variance in attitudes toward endogamy were predicted by EL, CA, and ESO as a group. Standardized beta weights indicated that EL was the only variable in the model that significantly accounted for unique variance for endogamy attitudes relative to women ($\beta = .15, p < .05$), and to men ($\beta = .17, p < .01$). The positive direction of the beta weight indicated that women who scored higher on EL were more likely to agree that woman and men should marry within the same cultural group.

For male respondents, the model also produced statistically significant results for endogamy preference for women, $R^2 = .17, p < .0001$, and for men, $R^2 = .08, p < .003$. Beta weights indicated that EL was positively and significantly associated with males' attitudes of preference for endogamy for women ($\beta = .33, p < .001$), and for men ($\beta = .28, p < .01$). In other words, when compared to CA and ESO, EL uniquely accounted for the variance in the attitude that male respondents who scored higher on EL were more likely to agree that men and women should marry within the same cultural group. These results mirror those found for women.

As expected, for male and female respondents, results indicated that high adherence to EL values predicted the belief that endogamy is important for men and women. This attitude sets the foundation for the perception of a double bind if respondents also perceive alienation and barriers to endogamy as a result of pursuing higher education.

Regression Results for Perceived Alienation

For female respondents, perceived alienation was statistically significantly predicted by the model for women, $R^2 = .07, p < .0001$, and for men, $R^2 = .05, p < .004$. Beta weights indicated that EL accounted for most of the unique variance in predicting the perception that women of Mexican descent ($\beta = .29, p < .0001$) and men ($\beta = .22, p < .05$) who are college educated are seen as elitists. Beta weights also indicated a unique, but negatively related contribution of ESO in the model for women ($\beta = -.17, p < .05$) indicating that women who socialized more within their ethnic group (high ESO) were more likely to disagree that women of Mexican descent with college degrees were seen as elitists. This makes sense because women currently socializing with their ethnic group may not imagine a time when they may be perceived as elitists and alienated from their group.

For male respondents, perceived alienation for women was also significantly predicted by the model, $R^2 = .10, p < .0006$. In this case, the variance was significantly shared by all three components with beta weights as follows: For CA ($\beta = -.26, p < .01$), for ESO ($\beta = .29, p < .01$), and for EL ($\beta = .19, p < .05$). Alienation for men was also significantly predicted by the model, $R^2 = .09, p < .0008$, with significant beta weights for ESO ($\beta = .25, p < .01$), and EL ($\beta = .21, p < .01$). Negative beta weights for CA indicated that higher levels of cultural awareness predicted less agreement with the idea that women and men of Mexican descent with college degrees were perceived as elitists. EL results were opposite. As with women respondents, however, higher scores on EL predicted the perception that Mexican American women and men who are college educated are seen as elitists. Unlike women respondents, men who scored high on ESO also agreed that Mexican American women and men with college degrees were seen as elitists.

These data indicate that, in particular, EL plays an important role in men's and women's beliefs that by pursuing education they may be perceived as elitists, which may alienate them from their ethnic communities. These results imply that among college students, Mexican Americans high in EL believe that by pursuing higher education, they may be leaving their entire

ethnic communities, psychologically as well as physically, and thus increasing their sense of alienation (González, 1988).

Regression Results for Barrier to Endogamy

For female respondents, education as a barrier to endogamy for men only was significantly predicted by the model, $R^2 = .03$, $p < .02$. A statistically significant beta weight indicated that EL contributed uniquely to the belief that education is a barrier to endogamy for men ($\beta = .20$, $p < .05$).

However, the components of cultural orientation, as a model, did not predict females' attitudes that education was a barrier to endogamy for women. This finding was not anticipated and seems rather perplexing. Because in Mexican American culture men are often considered the heads of households, it seemed logical that women and men would perceive education for men not as a barrier to endogamy but as an asset (Casas et al., 1995; Miránde & Enríquez, 1979; Vega, 1995). One explanation for this finding is that women may believe that educated men prefer to marry someone who also has achieved higher education. However, only about 6% of the ethnic group population have college degrees (McLemore & Romo, 1998), and most persons who pursue a 4-year degree attend a predominantly White university. Therefore, women may also be acutely aware that it is improbable that men will find an educated in-group member to marry. More disturbing is that these results may indicate that women respondents do not believe they will achieve higher education to the same extent as men and, thus, will not be potential partners for educated men.

For male respondents, education as a barrier to endogamy for women or men was not significantly predicted by the model, indicating that as a group, the cultural orientation components did not significantly predict men's adherence to the attitude that education is a barrier to endogamy for men or women. These results indicate that women perceive that education is a barrier to endogamy more strongly than do men.

General Results of Regression Analyses

Results indicated that the overall variance explained by the regression models was low to moderate ($R^2 = 3\% - 17\%$), yet statistically significant. Statistically significant low R^2 (below 10%) generally reveal that predictor variables contribute a small amount to an explanation of the criterion variables or that the relations are nonlinear (Lewis-Beck, 1980). Nevertheless, when a low R^2 is statistically significant, it must be assumed that the probability of

that occurring by chance alone is small (Pedhazur, 1982), especially when also coupled with statistically significant standardized regression coefficients (β) (Pedhazur, 1982). In the present case, it is likely that the statistical significance was driven by the consistently strong contribution of one or more of the cultural orientation components to attitudes predictive of a relationship/education goal conflict. This strong contribution was reflected in the statistically significant regression coefficients for individual components (primarily EL), which represent unique variance and strength of individual predictive variables (Diekhoff, 1996; Tabachnick & Fidell, 1989). Standardized regression coefficients (β) are most useful when comparing relative contributions of each predictor in relation to the overall effect, so interpretation of these data is appropriate for this study. In spite of the low R^2 , then, these results allowed for examination of patterns accounting for the unique, predictive variance in the statistically significant models. Note, however, that statistically significant R^2 and β do not indicate a causal relationship, but rather indicate that a significant relationship exists between variables. Therefore, for an issue as complex as determining which factors may be related to Mexican Americans' higher education pursuits, examining the contributions of even the smallest statistically significant amounts of variance is valuable.

Socioeconomic Status

Although the focus of this research was on cultural orientation, examination of the effect of SES on education and relationship attitudes was also conducted. This inclusion was important because Mexican Americans from low-SES families may experience conflict between educational and relationship goals as they feel obligated to help alleviate and/or improve their family's financial situation. Additionally, people from a low-SES family may be more likely than people from higher SES families to perceive that education is a barrier to endogamy for both men and women. That is, there is a direct correlation between level of education and economic upward mobility, and Mexican Americans are among the lowest levels of professional status and incomes and at the highest levels of unemployment and poverty (Cardoza, 1991; Casas and Ponterotto, 1984; Saracho, 1989; Vásquez, 1982, 1984). Therefore, Mexican Americans do not have much opportunity to observe highly educated persons marrying persons within their ethnic communities. It could therefore be the case that low-SES persons do not see themselves having access to persons with degrees, and thus, the poorest people may believe that they can partner easier without a college education.

Analyses of variance for SES. One-way ANOVAs for SES produced significant results for education as a barrier to endogamy for women, $F(2, 365) = 5.45, p < .005$, and for men, $F(2, 365) = 4.21, p < .02$. Post hoc Tukey HSD tests indicated that individuals of low SES agreed significantly more than individuals of middle or higher SES that education is a barrier to endogamy for women and for men. SES did not significantly predict endogamy preference for women or men, or perceived alienation and elitism for women or men. These results indicated that Mexican Americans from low-SES groups were more likely than those from higher SES groups to perceive that education is a barrier to endogamy for both men and women. These findings may reveal perceptions of the way things are and not necessarily preferences.

Discussion

The relationship between selected components of cultural orientation—EL, ESO, CA—and adherence to beliefs that may lead to attitudes reflective of perceptions of conflict between education and relationship goals for Mexican American men and women was examined. In the presence of CA and ESO, only EL consistently and uniquely predicted adherence to these attitudes. These results indicate that Mexican American men and women high in EL may be at risk for perceiving social costs of pursuing higher education. The impact of EL, as seen in this study, is consistent with Keefe and Padilla's (1987) argument that EL is more reflective of ethnic identity and as such is a more psychologically oriented variable than either CA or ESO. That is, ESO seems to be related to who people are associating with and is therefore strongly related to the environment in which one is residing at the moment. CA is related to knowledge of cultural heritage and may be taught. EL, on the other hand, seems to be an aspect of the self, independent of CA or ESO. As such, it seems reasonable that EL is the cultural orientation component most predictive of attitudes. Indeed, after a slight decrease between first and second generations, levels of EL remain virtually constant across generations (Keefe & Padilla, 1987).

The impact of EL in predicting the attitudes, beliefs, and values that can lead to the perception of education/relationship conflict is important to understand. As Keefe and Padilla (1987) found, different typologies of Mexican Americans, which they termed *Mexican ethnics*, *cultural blends*, and *Americans . . . set apart*, all have relatively high levels of EL. Even those who feel "in-between" cultures maintain kin-based ethnic networks and consciousness of their own ethnicity. Also, those who have physically moved out of their barrios indicate that "they have not left their ethnic communities, as

they maintain a personal network of ethnic social ties based mostly on kinship” (p. 187). These ties that for Mexican Americans seem to go hand in hand with ethnic identity may underlie the perceived conflict between education and relationship goals as Mexican American men and women consider possible social costs to attending college.

The impact of EL as a risk factor may be particularly felt by members of low-SES communities who perceive that education is a barrier to endogamy for both men and women more than do members of higher SES groups. As discussed earlier, this result may be indicative of the reality of lower SES communities. Members of lower SES groups are less likely than their higher SES counterparts to be well acquainted with persons with college degrees. Formally educated persons may not even reside in their communities, and as such, their reality is that marriageable persons do not have degrees. Therefore, Mexican Americans pursuing higher education may experience educational/relationship goal conflict if they believe that they are educating themselves out of finding a marriage partner. This finding is important because Mexican Americans are overrepresented among the lower SES groups. This belief may therefore exacerbate conflict that arises when Mexican Americans high in EL feel obligated to help alleviate and/or improve their family’s financial situation in lieu of pursuing college.

This awareness of the role of EL in beliefs about negative consequences of educational pursuits is important to high school counselors and teachers as they speak to students about pursuing college. This awareness is also important to college personnel engaged in the recruitment and retention of Mexican American students. These personnel may learn to frame educational pursuits as methods by which students can fight discrimination, enhance ethnic pride, and assist their communities when they return with their college degrees. This framing may facilitate students’ positive use of EL values in their decision to pursue and complete college degrees. However, counselors must be cautioned not to interpret these results as indicative that Mexican Americans do not value a college education. Rather, they must realize that students’ social ecologies play a large role in constructing perceptions of normative behavior and reality (Gándara, 1995; Laosa & Henderson, 1991; Niemann & Secord, 1995). That is, the majority of Mexican Americans do not have a college education and do tend to marry in-group members (Becerra, 1988). It makes sense, then, that perceptions of potential negative consequences of education may contribute to Mexican Americans’ high drop-out rates throughout undergraduate and graduate school, and to their decisions about whether to attend college at all. Therefore, although the results found here indicate that adherence to some beliefs and values may lead to the perception of con-

flict between relationship and education goals, it is important to note that these beliefs may represent acknowledgment of the status quo, and not preference per se.

Future research that examines potential education/relationship goal conflict of persons with varying educational backgrounds will contribute importantly to this literature. A particular strength of the present study is that the sample was representative of college students, who are most likely to be affected by issues related to the double bind. However, including adolescents in middle school and high school, as well as adult community members who did not attend college, will shed more light on prevailing attitudes and beliefs about the perception of community members who do attend college. Additionally, conducting this research in geographic areas in which people of Mexican descent are sparsely represented and with a more balanced SES sample may also yield diverse attitudes toward endogamy and perceptions of conflict. It will also be important for future research to examine whether sexual orientation affects beliefs and perceptions related to this conflict. It seems likely that additional issues may emerge for the gay and lesbian members of the Mexican American community, especially those issues related to the fear of alienation. Future research will also be facilitated by the development and testing of a measure of double bind attitudes. In the present study, the extension of González's (1988) items to include men and women was a step in this direction.

References

- Arbona, C. (1991, May). *Career counseling research and Hispanics: A review of the literature*. Paper presented at American Educational Research Association, New Orleans.
- Arbona, C., Flores, C. L., & Novy, D. M. (1995). Cultural awareness and ethnic loyalty: Dimensions of cultural variability among Mexican American college students. *Journal of Counseling and Development, 73*, 610-614.
- Baca-Zinn, M. (1979). Mexican American family research: Conceptual distortions and alternative directions. *Journal of Ethnic Studies, 7*(3), 59-71.
- Baca-Zinn, M. (1980). Employment and education of women: The interplay of modernity and ethnicity in eight families. *Harvard Educational Review, 50*(1), 47-62.
- Becerra, R. M. (1988). The Mexican American family. In C. H. Mindel, R. W. Habenstein, & R. Wright (Eds.), *Ethnic families in America* (pp. 153-171). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Buriel R., & Saénz, E. (1980). Psycho-cultural characteristics of college-bound and non-college bound Women. *Journal of Social Psychology, 110*, 245-251.
- Cardoza, D. (1991). College attendance and persistence among Hispanic women: An examination of some contributing factors. *Sex Roles, 21*(3/4), 133-147.
- Casas, J. M., & Ponterotto, J. G. (1984). Profiling an invisible minority in higher education: The Chicana. *Personnel and Guidance Journal, 62*(6), 349-353.

- Casas, J. M., Wagenheim, B. R., Banchero, R., & Mendoza-Romero, J. (1995). Hispanic masculinity: Myth or psychological schema meriting clinical consideration. In A. M. Padilla (Ed.), *Hispanic psychology* (pp. 231-244). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Chacón, M. A., Cohen, E. G., & Strover, S. (1986). Mexican Americans: Barriers to progress in higher education. In M. A. Olivas (Ed.), *Latino college students* (pp. 296-324). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Chapa, J., & Valencia, R. R. (1993). Latino population growth, demographic characteristics and educational stagnation: An examination of recent trends. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences, 15*(2), 165-187.
- Cohen, E. G., Chacón, M. A., Camarena, M. M., González, J. T., & Strover, S. (1983). Women in California postsecondary education. *La Red/The Net, Winter*(65).
- Cones, J. H., Noonan, J. F. & Janha, D. (1983). Exploring racial assumptions with faculty. In J. H. Cones, J. F. Noonan, & D. Janha (Eds.), *New directions for teaching and learning: Teaching minority students* (Vol. 16, pp. 73-81). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Del Castillo, A. R., Frederickson, J., McKenna, T., & Ortiz, F. I. (1988). An assessment of the status of the education of Hispanic American women. In T. McKenna & F. I. Ortiz (Eds.), *The broken web: The educational experience of Hispanic American women* (pp. 3-24). Claremont, CA: Tomás Rivera Center and Floricanto Press.
- Del Castillo, A. R., & Torres, M. (1988). The interdependency of educational institutions and cultural norms: The Hispana Experience. In T. McKenna & F. I. Ortiz (Eds.), *The broken web: The educational experience of Hispanic American women*. Claremont, CA: Tomás Rivera Center and Floricanto Press.
- Diekhoff, G. M. (1996). *Basic statistics for the social and behavioral sciences*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Donato, R., Menchaca, M., & Valencia, R. R. (1991). Segregation, desegregation, and integration of Chicano students: Problems and prospects. In R. R. Valencia (Ed.), *Chicano school failure and success* (pp. 27-63). New York: Falmer Press.
- Gándara, P. (1995). *Over the ivy walls: The educational mobility of low-income men*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Ginorio, A. B., Gutiérrez, L., Cauce, A. M., & Acosta, M. (1995). Psychological issues for Latinas. In H. Landrine (Ed.), *Bringing cultural diversity to feminist psychology*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- González, J. T. (1988). Dilemmas of the high achieving women: The double bind factor in male and female relationships. *Sex Roles, 18*, 367-379.
- González, R., & Padilla, A. M. (1997). The academic resilience of Mexican American high school students. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences, 19*(3), 301-317.
- Hawley, P., & Evens, B. (1982). Work and sex role attitudes in relation to education and other characteristics. *Vocational Guidance Quarterly, 101-108*.
- Hollingshead, A. B., & Redlich, F. C. (1958). *Social class and mental illness*. New York: Wiley.
- Keefe, S., & Padilla, A. (1987). *Chicano ethnicity*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.
- Laosa, L. M. & Henderson, R. W. (1991). Cognitive socialization and competence: The academic development of men. In R. R. Valencia (Ed.), *Chicano school failure and success: Research and policy agendas for the 1990's* (pp. 164-200). New York: Falmer.
- Lewis-Beck, M. S. (1980). *Applied regression*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- McKenna, S., & Ortiz, F. (Eds.). (1988). *The broken web: The educational experience of Hispanic American women*. Claremont, CA: Tomás Rivera Center and Floricanto Press.
- McLemore, S. D., & Romo, H. D. (1998). *Racial and ethnic relations in America* (5th ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

- Mirán­de, A., & Enríquez, E. (1979). *La Chicana*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Niemann, Y. F. (in press). Stereotypes about Mexican Americans: Implications for counseling. *The Counseling Psychologist*.
- Niemann, Y. F., Jennings, L., Rozelle, R. M., Baxter, J. C., & Sullivan, E. (1994). Use of free responses and cluster analysis to determine stereotypes of eight groups. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 20(4), 379-390.
- Niemann, Y. F., & Secord, P. F. (1995). The social ecology of stereotyping. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behavior*, 25(1), 1-14.
- Ortiz, F. I. (1988). Hispanic American women in higher education: A consideration of the socialization process. *Atzlan*, 17(2), 125-152.
- Ortiz, V. (1995). The diversity of Latino families. In R. E. Zambrana (Ed.), *Understanding Latino families*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Pedhazur, E. J. (1982). *Multiple regression in behavioral research*. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.
- Pizarro, M. (1997). Power, borders, and identity formation: Understanding the world of Chicana/o students. *Perspectives in Mexican American Studies*, (6), 142-167.
- Reyes, M. L., & Halcon, J. J. (1988). Racism in academia: The old wolf revisited. *Harvard Educational Review*, 58, 299-314.
- Saldaña, D. H. (1995). Acculturative stress: Minority status and distress. In A. M. Padilla (Ed.), *Hispanic psychology: Critical issues in theory and research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Saracho, O. N. (1989). Sex role modifications of women. *Education*, 109(3), 295-301.
- Soto, E. (1983). Sex role traditionalism and assertiveness in Puerto Rican females living in the U.S. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 11, 316-354.
- Suarez, S. A., Fowers, B. J., Garwood, C. S., & Szapocnik, J. (1997). Biculturalism, difference, loneliness, and alienation in Hispanic college students. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences*, 19(3), 489-505.
- Tabachnick, B. G., & Fidell, L. S. (1989). *Using multivariate statistics* (2nd ed.). New York: Harper & Row.
- Tracey, T. J., & Sedlacek, W. E. (1985). The relationship of non-cognitive variables to academic success by race over four years. *Journal of College Student Personnel*, 25, 405-410.
- Vásquez, M.J.T. (1982). Confronting barriers to the participation of women in higher education. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences*, 4(2), 147-165.
- Vásquez, M.J.T. (1984). Power and status of the women. In J. L. Martinez, Jr. and R. H. Mendoza (Eds.), *Chicano psychology* (pp. 269-288). San Diego, CA: Academic Press.
- Vásquez, M.J.T. (1994). Latinas. In L. Comas-Díaz & B. Greene (Eds.), *Women of color: Integrating ethnic and gender identities in psychotherapy* (pp. 114-138). New York: Guilford.
- Vega, W. A. (1995). The study of Latino families: A point of departure. In R. Zambrana (Ed.), *Understanding Latino families* (pp. 3-17). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Vigil, J. D. (1988). The nexus of class, culture and gender in the education of Mexican American females. In T. McKenna & F. I. Ortiz (Eds.), *The broken web: The educational experience of Hispanic American women*. Claremont, CA: Tomás Rivera Center and Floricanto Press.
- Williams, N. (1988). Role making among married women: Issues of class and ethnicity. *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 24(2), 203-217.
- Zambrana, R. E., Dorrington, C., & Bell, S. A. (1997). Mexican American women in higher education: A comparative study. *Race, Gender & Class*, 4(2), 127-149.

Yolanda Flores Niemann is an assistant professor of Comparative American Cultures at Washington State University. Her research interests include the effects of stereotypes on individual behavior and intergroup relations, the psychological effects of tokenism, and the perception of a conflict between gender roles and the pursuit of higher education for Chicanas and Chicanos. She has numerous publications in refereed journals and book chapters.

Andrea Romero is currently at the Stanford Center for Research in Disease Prevention, Stanford University School of Medicine. Her research interests include cultural factors such as coping mechanisms, culture-specific stressors for adolescents, and the mental well-being of children and adolescents from diverse cultures.

Consuelo Arbona is an associate professor of counseling psychology in the Educational Psychology Department at the University of Houston, Texas. She specializes in multicultural psychology and career and vocational issues with an emphasis on Latino populations.