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To cite this article:

Taggart, A. (2024). Cultural values as contributors to Latinx student grades. *International Journal on Studies in Education (IJonSE)*, 6(1), 109-125. <https://doi.org/10.46328/ijonse.197>

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Cultural Values as Contributors to Latinx Student Grades

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Article Info

Article History

Received:

05 July 2023

Accepted:

20 November 2023

Keywords

Latinx students

Cultural discontinuity

Grades

High school

Abstract

Cultural discontinuity, or the misalignment of learning processes based on cultural values practiced at home and at school, is one factor that has been explored in the educational experiences of racial/ethnic minority students. The purpose of the current quantitative study was to examine the influence of cultural discontinuity between Latinx and Eurocentric cultural values on the grades of Latinx high school students. The conceptual framework for this study was developed from relevant literature. The model theorizes that Latinx students' grades are influenced by socio-demographic variables, academic experiences, and cultural discontinuity. Participants were 334 Latinx students recruited from three high schools in the U.S. Southwest. Data was collected via a self-administered questionnaire and student transcripts. Hierarchical multiple regression was conducted to identify which variables were associated with student grades. Results of this study showed that Latinx students who reported experiencing higher levels of cultural discontinuity had lower GPAs than students who reported lower levels of cultural discontinuity.

Introduction

Latinx students make up over one-quarter of public school students in the United States (U.S.) and are currently the largest minority group in public schools (de Brey et al., 2021). This population has increased across all 50 states and the District of Columbia over the past decade (Irwin et al., 2021). Although high school dropout rates have decreased and college enrollment rates have increased for Latinx students over the past 20 years, they still have the lowest high school and bachelor's degree completion rates among their Asian, Black, and White peers (de Brey et al., 2019; 2021).

Cultural discontinuity has been explored in the literature as one contributor to the academic challenges of racial/ethnic minority students (Baker, 2005; Boykin, Tyler, & Miller, 2005; Cartledge & Loe, 2001; Foster et al., 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Taggart, 2017). It has been defined as "a school-based behavioral process where the cultural value-based learning preferences and practices of many ethnic minority students—those typically originating from home or parental socialization activities—are discontinued at school" (Tyler et al., 2008, p. 281). It has also been termed cultural mismatch, incongruence, misalignment, dissonance, conflict, and collision (e.g., Beachum & McCray, 2008; Foster et al., 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Nguyen & Nguyen, 2020; Phillips et al., 2020; Stephens et al., 2019). Though heterogeneity exists within cultural groups and between individuals within those groups (Mercado & Trumbull, 2018; Warikoo & Carter, 2009), U.S. educational institutions tend to promote

Eurocentric cultural values such as individualism, independence, and competition (e.g., Mercado & Trumbull, 2018; Phillips et al., 2020; Schwartz et al., 2013; Vasquez-Salgado et al., 2015) that may not reflect the collectivism prioritized in Latinx families and communities (Greenfield et al., 2003; Lopez et al., 2012; Mejia-Arauz et al., 2007; Mosier & Rogoff, 2003; Pinquart & Kauser, 2018). The discontinuity that results between these contrasting cultural values has been shown to contribute to academic and psychosocial difficulties for culturally diverse students (Chang et al., 2020; Cholewa & West-Olatunji, 2008; Lui, 2015; Phillips et al., 2020; Stephens et al., 2019). For example, research has found that home-school dissonance is correlated with lower self-esteem, mental health, and academic outcomes (Arunkumar et al., 1999; Lui, 2015; Phillips et al., 2020; Stephens et al., 2012; Vasquez-Salgado et al., 2015).

Much of the work on cultural discontinuity in schools has focused on African American elementary school-age students and has shown that although African American students prefer learning in ways congruent with their cultural values, otherwise termed Afrocentric values (e.g., Boykin, Albury, et al., 2005; Marryshow et al., 2005; Sankofa et al., 2005; Tyler, Boykin, Miller, & Hurley, 2006), their teachers prefer and practice Eurocentric cultural values and behaviors in the classroom (Boykin & Cunningham, 2001; Boykin, Tyler, & Miller, 2005; Tyler, Boykin, & Walton, 2006) and reject Afrocentric behaviors (Marryshow et al., 2005). While the body of research on cultural discontinuity is growing and has addressed non-Latinx cultural heritage groups (e.g., Davis et al., 2018; Kearney et al., 2011), elementary-age students (e.g., Torrez, 2017), and college students (e.g., Phillips et al., 2020; Stephens et al., 2012), there remains a lack of empirical research on the relationship between cultural discontinuity and academic outcomes for Latinx secondary students. Therefore, the purpose of the current quantitative study was to examine the influence of cultural discontinuity between Latinx and Eurocentric cultural values on the grades of Latinx high school students. The present study extends previous research on this topic (Taggart, 2017) by examining the relationship between cultural values and student grades with a larger sample of students across a greater geographic area. The research questions guiding this research were:

- 1) Are there significant differences between Latinx students who do and do not experience cultural discontinuity between home and school?
- 2) What is the influence of discontinuity between Latinx and Eurocentric cultural values on Latinx students' grades?

By surveying students across multiple schools and in turn examining their grades, this study effectively synthesized specific cultural experiences prevalent in these educational settings and their influence on student achievement. In addition, by learning about the cultural values and related behaviors to which Latinx students have been socialized at home, as well as the influence these values have on student outcomes, educators can work to incorporate culturally affirming ways of learning for Latinx students while simultaneously alleviating the marginalization of their culture in schools.

Conceptual Framework and Related Literature

The conceptual framework for this study was developed from related literature. The variables in the model were culled from previous research focused on predictors of academic achievement for Latinx students (see Taggart

[2018] for a comprehensive review) as well as literature on the cultural values thought to be prioritized in U.S. educational institutions and in Latinx culture. The model theorizes that Latinx students' grades are influenced by socio-demographic variables, academic experiences, and cultural discontinuity. The following review of the literature synthesizes the body of research on the Eurocentric cultural values prominent in schools and the contrasting values promulgated in many Latinx families, the misalignment of which may result in cultural discontinuity between home and school.

School-Based Cultural Values

Individualism and competition have been named in the literature as prominent cultural values in the U.S. that are also promoted in its institutions (e.g., Phillips et al., 2020; Piquart & Kauser, 2018; Stephens et al., 2019). Individualism includes the principles of autonomy, independence, individual recognition, and independent academic achievement (Glass & Rud, 2012; Greenfield & Quiroz, 2013; Rothstein-Fisch et al., 2009; Tyler et al., 2008) and is reflected in educational organizations. For instance, in a study of 261 university administrators, the majority describe their institutional cultures as more independent than interdependent (Stephens et al., 2012). Relatedly, competition is considered to be a prominent U.S. cultural value (Rogoff, 2003) and is also exhibited in schools, including being a central component of how students are compared and graded (La Roche & Shriberg, 2004).

Prior research has lent support to the salience of individualism and competition in U.S. schools. For instance, Boykin, Albury, et al. (2005) examined the influence of culture on African American and European American low-income students' perceptions of academic success at two racially integrated urban elementary schools. They found that the European American students were significantly more accepting of individualistic and competitive high achievers than were the African American students, who endorsed communal behaviors considerably more. Furthermore, in their study on prevalent cultural themes observed across six elementary schools, Boykin, Tyler, and Miller (2005) found that individualism was the most frequently occurring cultural theme in 52 classroom observations.

Latinx Cultural Values

In contrast to individualism and competition, collectivism is considered to be one of the most prevalent cultural values present in Latinx communities (e.g., Davis et al., 2018; González-Prendes et al., 2011; Greenfield et al., 2008; Lopez et al., 2012). Collectivism focuses on the interdependence of people rather than on their independence from each other. It is defined as "social responsibility...centered on the good of the whole group or family" where "a person's responsibilities are geared toward advancing or maintaining the group" (Tyler et al., 2008, p. 287). In their study on collectivistic behavior, Mejía-Arauz et al. (2007) examined the extent to which triads of U.S. children of Mexican and European descent engaged in either cooperative (e.g., at least two children working together) or individualistic (e.g., one child working alone) work styles when given a task to accomplish. They found that Mexican-descent children more often engaged with at least three children while European American children more often worked individually. Additionally, both quantitative and qualitative research has shown that

collectivism is endorsed among Latinx college students (e.g., Arevalo et al., 2016; Natal et al., 2021). Other research with over 300 college students found that first-generation students endorsed interdependence when they began college more so than continuing-generation students and that doing so decreased their sense of institutional fit and predicted lower grade point average (GPA) at college graduation (Phillips et al., 2020).

Method

Participants

Participants in the current study were 334 Latinx (55% male, 44% female) students recruited from three high schools in three school districts in the U.S. Southwest. Males were overrepresented among the participants as the percentages of males and females in the three schools were approximately equal (49% - 50% each), although the ethnicity of the participants was representative of that of the schools' student bodies. Participants were self-selected. Based on a ratio of 10 participants for each of the nine predictor variables examined in the study, the number of participants in the study was considered acceptable (Brace et al., 2000).

Most participants reported being born in the U.S. (92%), and a large percentage identified English as the primary language they spoke at home (75%). Furthermore, 64% of participants stated that at least one of their parents was born in the United States. The majority also reported that they expected to graduate from a 4-year college or beyond (77%). In contrast, merely 15% of their parents had done so. Nearly three-quarters of students had not taken any Advanced Placement (AP) courses (72%), though 85% had passed three or more mathematics courses and, correspondingly, 83% had passed a state-mandated mathematics assessment required for graduation. The mean GPA for the sample was 2.93. The characteristics of student participants are reported in Table 1.

Table 1. Characteristics of Study Participants

Variable	Sample characteristics ($n = 334$)			
	n	% ^a	M	SD
<i>Socio-demographic variables</i>				
Gender				
Male	182	55		
Female	151	45		
Primary language spoken at home				
English	248	75		
Not English	85	26		
Student born in the U.S.				
Yes	298	92		
No	26	8		
At least one parent born in the U.S.				
Yes	205	64		
No	117	36		
Student expected level of education				

Variable	Sample characteristics ($n = 334$)			
	n	% ^a	M	SD
Complete a 4-year college degree	257	77		
Not complete a 4-year college degree	73	23		
Education level of at least one parent				
Completed a 4-year college degree	49	15		
Did not complete a 4-year college degree	276	85		
<i>Academic experiences</i>				
Enrolled in AP classes				
Yes	92	28		
No	235	72		
State standardized mathematics test				
Passed	259	83		
Did not pass	54	17		
Units in mathematics			3.47	1.00
<i>Cultural discontinuity</i>				
Cultural discontinuity score			.44	.36
<i>Outcome variable</i>				
GPA			2.93	.71

Note. AP = Advanced Placement; GPA = grade point average

^aDue to rounding, percentages may not equal 100%.

Data Collection

All participants completed a self-administered questionnaire. Demographic and academic data were collected through student transcripts. The information gathered from the transcripts included participants' age, gender, ethnicity, GPA, standardized test scores, and enrollment in AP courses and mathematics courses.

Survey items were adapted from the Self-Construal Scale (SCS; Singelis, 1994), which measures interdependent and independent self-construals that correspond to the constructs of collectivism and individualism. A sample item from this measure is, "I make my own choices rather than listen to others." Further survey items were obtained from individualism and collectivism domains utilized in other published individualism–collectivism scales (Oyserman et al., 2002) and were used to measure the cultural values of individualism and competition, which make up a comprehensive factor labeled cultural discontinuity (Singelis, 1994). Prior research has reported Cronbach's alpha reliability of .69 for the Independent subscale of the SCS (Singelis, 1994). The current study found this measure to show slightly higher reliability for the sample (Cronbach's alpha = .71). Validity was determined by use in other published studies (e.g., Schwartz, 2007; Shorey et al., 2002; Taggart, 2017).

Each item was reworded to operationalize distinct behaviors, activities, or practices that students may experience at home and at school (Tyler et al., 2008). Items measured the frequency of the occurrence of those behaviors and

were measured twice. First, behaviors were measured for the frequency with which they occur at home. Next, they were measured for the frequency with which the behavior occurs at school. For instance, one item stated, “In my home, adults encourage me to compete against others,” followed by, “In my school, adults encourage me to compete against others.” For each of the items, a four-point Likert-type scale was used with the following possible responses: 4 = always, 3 = sometimes, 2 = rarely, 1 = never. After the questionnaire was administered, a cultural discontinuity score was determined by subtracting the school score from the home score. Scores that did not equal zero were found to demonstrate discontinuity between home and school, and absolute values then were used to regress cultural discontinuity against Latinx students’ grades (Tyler et al., 2008).

Most of the participants were found to have experienced some cultural discontinuity between home and school. Therefore, to determine which students experienced higher and lower levels of cultural discontinuity, the mean (.441) and standard deviation (.361) of the cultural discontinuity scores were examined. Participants with cultural discontinuity scores that were at least one standard deviation above the mean (.802) were rated as having experienced higher levels of cultural discontinuity, whereas participants with cultural discontinuity scores at least one standard deviation below the mean (.081) were rated as having experienced lower levels of cultural discontinuity. These scores were then used to descriptively compare the characteristics of students who experienced higher and lower levels of cultural discontinuity between home and school (Taggart, 2017).

Variables

Three blocks of variables were hypothesized to be related to Latinx students’ grades. Socio-demographic variables were included in the first block of the model, including gender, primary language, student’s generational status, the generational status of at least one parent, student’s educational aspirations, and the level of education of at least one parent. Academic experiences then were added to the model, including the number of AP courses that a student had taken in high school and the number of mathematics courses that a student had taken. Lastly, the cultural discontinuity variable was added as the last block of the model, comprising the scores obtained from the questionnaire for cultural discontinuity. A coefficient of determinant (R^2 change) was used to determine whether the addition of each new block of variables resulted in an overall improvement in the fit of the model. In addition, outliers, multicollinearity, nonlinearity, and non-normality were examined when assessing the fit of the model. The standard error was also examined. The outcome examined was cumulative GPA (Taggart, 2017).

Data Analyses

Descriptive statistics were utilized to compare the characteristics of students who experienced higher and lower levels of cultural discontinuity between home and school. T-tests were computed for interval- or ratio-level variables to identify significant differences between the means of students who experienced higher and lower levels of cultural discontinuity between home and school, as well as to examine whether or not there was a significant difference in the cumulative GPA of students who experienced higher and lower levels of cultural discontinuity. Chi-square tests for independence were calculated to discover whether significant relationships existed between categorical variables (Cronk, 2010), and effect sizes were calculated and examined for practical

significance (Bracey, 2000).

Using block sequential modeling, hierarchical multiple regression was conducted to identify which variables were associated with student grades and to determine the percent of variance in the outcome that could be explained by the predictor variables (Garson, 2008). Data analyses were conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics 26 except for the determination of participants' cultural discontinuity scores, which were calculated in Microsoft Excel. A probability level of .05 was set for each research hypothesis. Prior to analyses, data were screened for skewness and outliers and then examined for test assumptions (Mertler & Vannatta, 2010). Only participants with no missing data were included in the analyses (Taggart, 2017).

Limitations

Various limitations must be accounted for when considering the results of the study. Primarily, the survey itself does not account for every type of cultural discontinuity that Latinx students may experience between home and school, but only those most prominently discussed in the literature. Furthermore, the study did not include additional forms of academic achievement (e.g., college entry) or other factors that may affect achievement (e.g., socioeconomic status) due to their lack of accessibility to the researcher. Next, the study participants attended three high schools, thereby limiting generalizability to other populations. Lastly, data collection was limited by the number of respondents and their parents/legal guardians who were willing to participate.

Results

Descriptive Findings

Descriptive statistics were utilized to examine significant differences between the characteristics and GPA of Latinx high school students who did and did not experience cultural discontinuity between home and school. A comparison of students who experienced higher ($n = 47$) and lower ($n = 31$) levels of cultural discontinuity showed many differences between the two groups. Male students were more likely to have reported experiencing cultural discontinuity than were females (57% vs. 44% higher cultural discontinuity; 68% vs. 32% lower cultural discontinuity). Similar percentages of students whose primary home language was English indicated that they experienced either higher (72%) or lower (74%) levels of cultural discontinuity between home and school. In addition, nearly equal percentages of student born in the U.S. reported experiencing higher (91%) and lower (93%) levels of cultural discontinuity. However, students with at least one parent born outside of the U.S. reported experiencing higher levels of cultural discontinuity (61%) in comparison with students who experienced lower levels of cultural discontinuity (52%). Students with higher levels of cultural discontinuity were more likely to expect to graduate from college than students with lower levels of cultural discontinuity (78% vs. 60%) and also had at least one parent who had graduated from college (22% vs. 11%). Students who experienced higher levels of cultural discontinuity also were enrolled in AP classes at greater rates than students who experienced lower levels of cultural discontinuity (21% vs. 13%), though they passed the state standardized mathematics assessment at lower rates (77% vs. 85%) even as they took a comparable mean number of mathematics courses (3.3 vs. 3.5).

Chi-square tests of significance were run to investigate whether the independent variables were associated with levels of cultural discontinuity. No significant relationships were found for gender, $\chi^2(1) = 0.980, p > .05$; primary language spoken at home, $\chi^2(1) = 0.056, p > .05$; whether or not a student was born in the U.S., $\chi^2(1) = 0.094, p > .05$; whether or not at least one parent was born in the U.S., $\chi^2(1) = 0.665, p > .05$; whether or not a student expected to complete a 4-year college degree, $\chi^2(1) = 2.944, p > .05$; and whether or not at least one parent had completed a 4-year college degree, $\chi^2(1) = 1.562, p > .05$. Descriptive findings for cultural discontinuity are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Descriptive Comparison of Students Who Experienced Cultural Discontinuity

	Students with higher levels of cultural discontinuity	Students with lower levels of cultural discontinuity
	% (<i>n</i> = 47)	% (<i>n</i> = 31)
<i>Socio-demographic variables</i>		
Gender		
Male	56.5	67.7
Female	43.5	32.3
Primary language spoken at home		
English	71.7	74.2
Not English	28.3	25.8
Student born in the U.S.		
Yes	91.1	93.1
No	8.9	6.9
At least one parent born in the U.S.		
Yes	61.4	51.7
No	38.6	48.3
Student expected level of education		
Complete a 4-year college degree	78.3	60.0
Not complete a 4-year college degree	21.7	40.0
Education level of at least one parent		
Completed a 4-year college degree	22.2	10.7
Did not complete a 4-year college degree	77.8	89.3
<i>Academic experiences</i>		
Enrolled in AP classes		
Yes	20.5	13.3
No	79.5	86.7
State standardized mathematics test		
Passed	77.3	85.2
Did not pass	22.7	14.8
Units in mathematics	3.31 (mean)	3.48 (mean)

Further, descriptive statistics were computed to determine whether or not there was a significant difference in the cumulative GPA of Latinx students who experienced higher and lower levels of cultural discontinuity between home and school. Students who experienced higher levels of cultural discontinuity had lower GPAs than students who experienced lower levels of cultural discontinuity (2.64 GPA vs. 3.01 GPA). An independent samples t-test was conducted to compare the mean GPA of students with higher levels of cultural discontinuity to the mean GPA of students with lower levels of cultural discontinuity and a significant difference was found, $t(73) = 2.47, p < .05$. The mean of students with higher cultural discontinuity ($M = 2.64, SD = 0.613$) was significantly different from the mean of students with lower cultural discontinuity ($M = 3.01, SD = 0.695$). The mean, standard deviation, and t-value for GPA are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3. Mean, Standard Deviation, and t-Value for Academic Experiences

	Students with higher levels of cultural discontinuity (<i>n</i> = 47)		Students with lower levels of cultural discontinuity (<i>n</i> = 31)		
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>
<i>Academic experiences</i>					
Units in mathematics	3.31	1.01	3.48	.74	.803
GPA	2.64	.61	3.01	.70	2.464

Note. GPA = grade point average

Multiple Regression Findings

Hierarchical multiple regression was conducted to determine which independent variables (socio-demographic variables, academic experiences, and cultural discontinuity) were predictors of students' GPA. Tolerance was examined prior to the data analyses and was found to be adequate among the independent variables because coefficients for all independent variables included and excluded were above 0.1. Regression results indicated that the blocks socio-demographic variables, academic experiences, and cultural discontinuity significantly predicted GPA, $R^2 = .322, R^2_{adj} = .306, F(7, 284) = 19.290, p < .001$. This model accounted for 32.2% of the variance in students' GPA, which represents a large effect size (Cohen, 1988). Significant predictors of GPA included gender ($p < .001$), language ($p < .05$), student educational aspirations ($p < .05$), AP enrollment ($p < .001$), the number of math units in which a student had enrolled ($p < .05$), and cultural discontinuity ($p < .01$). Cultural discontinuity had an inverse relationship with GPA ($\beta = -.130$). Table 4 displays the parameter estimates, significance values, and fit statistics for the regression model predicting GPA.

Table 4. Multiple Regression Model Predicting GPA

Variable	β	<i>t</i>	<i>SE</i>
<i>Socio-demographic variables</i>			
Gender	.165	3.303***	.071
English primary language or not	.117	2.365*	.081
Student expected level of education	.163	3.058*	.095

Variable	β	t	SE
<i>Academic experiences</i>			
Enrolled in AP classes	.297	5.167***	.090
Units in mathematics	.121	2.006*	.042
Passed state standardized mathematics test or not	.102	1.827	.104
<i>Cultural discontinuity</i>			
Cultural discontinuity score	-.130	-2.643**	.102

Note. AP = Advanced Placement

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Discussion

Results of this study advance prior research by documenting the influence of cultural value factors on GPA for Latinx secondary students. In the present study, cultural discontinuity was found to have an inverse relationship with GPA. In other words, students who reported experiencing higher levels of cultural discontinuity had lower GPAs than students who reported lower levels of cultural discontinuity. This is important given that prior research has shown achievement, including grades, to have multiple effects on Latinx students, including influence on their psychological outcomes, dropout rates, college enrollment, and career aspirations and opportunities (e.g., Fu et al., 2021; Valle et al., 2013; Zarate & Pineda, 2014). For example, in a national longitudinal study, high school GPA was found to be a positive predictor of six-year baccalaureate degree attainment among Latinx students (Arellano, 2020). Therefore, results suggest that cultural discontinuity may serve to advance or prohibit Latinx students' educational outcomes.

Enrollment in AP classes and the number of mathematics units in which a student was enrolled during high school also were found to contribute to GPA, even after controlling for the other variables in the model. As such, results from this study support earlier research indicating that the level of rigor in academic courses does influence student achievement (e.g., Gonzalez et al., 2003). For instance, research has shown that students in high-level tracks have better academic and psychological/emotional outcomes than students in low-level tracks. These positive outcomes include grades, test scores, dropout rates, college aspirations and enrollment, self-esteem, and identity development (e.g., Jackson, 2014; Mosqueda & Maldonado, 2013; Taggart & Paschal, 2017).

Additionally, students' expected level of educational attainment was found to contribute to GPA even after controlling for other variables in the model. This aligns with previous research showing that academic achievement may correlate with aspiring to earn at least a bachelor's degree (e.g., Taggart & Paschal, 2017). For example, using a nationally representative database, Cooper (2009) found that achievement in mathematics was a positive predictor of high educational aspirations while being enrolled in a general curriculum rather than a college preparatory curriculum was negatively associated with Latinx high school students' educational aspirations.

Expectedly, students who reported experiencing lower levels of cultural discontinuity had higher mean GPAs,

took a higher number of mathematics units, and passed a state-mandated standardized mathematics test at greater rates than did students with higher cultural discontinuity. However, greater percentages of students who expected to complete a bachelor's degree and students who enrolled in AP classes reported experiencing higher levels of cultural discontinuity between home and school. These descriptive findings are surprising given that educational aspirations and AP enrollment were found to positively predict GPA. Although it appears incongruous that variables associated with greater academic achievement would be associated with students who feel higher levels of discontinuity between home and school, these findings could be considered in light of previous research on assimilation and cultural values for Latinx students.

For instance, Kim et al.'s (2013) research with nearly 300 Mexican-American students found that students who retained their cultural heritage rather than embracing mainstream cultural practices reported significantly higher educational achievement than did highly assimilated students. According to the researchers, this finding reflects the assimilation paradox "in which a greater degree of assimilation...is associated with more negative outcomes" (Kim et al., 2013, p. 48). Other research with Latinx students has found that the Latinx cultural value of familism, which is closely related to collectivism, was positively related to grades (Cupito et al., 2015), higher levels of educational attainment (Roche et al., 2012), greater academic motivation (Stein et al., 2020), and lower levels of risk behavior (Wheeler et al., 2017).

These ideas may be useful when thinking about the results of the present study, which showed that students who experienced higher levels of cultural discontinuity between home and school also were more likely to have college degree aspirations and to be enrolled in AP courses. It may be that the Latinx students who experienced higher levels of cultural discontinuity did so even as they were associated with variables related to high student achievement because they were accommodating the values of the dominant school culture even as they held strongly to their own cultural values from home. Therefore, it may be that the cultural values promoted in AP courses are based on the Eurocentric values of individualism and competition, ensuring a disconnect between Latinx students' home- and school-based cultural values.

Recommendations

Recommendations for Future Research

Although this study contributes to our understanding of the relationship between cultural discontinuity and GPA, there are many other forms of achievement to consider when examining success for high school students. Therefore, future research should explore the impact of cultural discontinuity on academic outcomes such as test scores, high school graduation or dropout, college enrollment, and postsecondary degree completion. Moreover, the survey instrument utilized in this quantitative study could not capture all types of cultural discontinuity students may experience. It is recommended that qualitative research be conducted in order to provide a richer, deeper understanding of experiences of cultural discontinuity that Latinx students may encounter between home and school. Additionally, because rigorous course-taking has been shown in both this study and in previous research to influence student grades, future research should examine how schools and/or programs recruit and enroll Latinx students in AP, honors, and other advanced courses.

Recommendations for Practice

Because schools play a decisive role in dictating the educational success of Latinx students through organizational, curricular, cultural, and instructional practices, the findings of this study will benefit any educator interested in or already involved in implementing culturally relevant pedagogy in schools and classrooms. An awareness of the discontinuity between the home and school lives of diverse groups of students may help educators to adapt their current instructional strategies and work to improve the academic success of these students. To encourage teaching practices designed with all students in mind, culturally relevant pedagogy should be integrated into classroom instruction and the cultural values of diverse groups of students should be reflected in school activities. To accomplish this, teachers and school administrators must be trained in culturally responsive teaching practices. Although all educators should be exposed to such training, it should be required especially of teachers and administrators working in schools with large populations of racial/ethnic minority students.

Conclusions from this study highlight the important role that teachers play in students' academic achievement, as they are the individuals who control classroom activities, assign students' grades, and funnel them into particular course-taking patterns. Results of this study showed that enrollment in AP classes and more mathematics classes was a significant predictor of GPA. Previous research has shown that early placement of Latinx students in AP courses has been shown to increase their enrollment in further advanced courses (Shiu et al., 2009). Given that Latinx students are often placed in honors classes at lower rates than are White students (Witenko, 2017), a necessary step in the process of ensuring equitable educational opportunities for all students is to provide them with access to a rigorous academic curriculum. Therefore, it is recommended that high schools place an increased emphasis on advanced course-taking, which should include targeted recruitment of Latinx students.

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