Understanding Academic Attitudes and Achievement in Mexican-Origin Youths: Ethnic Identity, Other-Group Orientation, and Fatalism

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This study tested the relationships among ethnic identity, other-group orientation, fatalism, and 2 dependent variables: attitude toward education and school, and grade point average (GPA). Mexican-origin adolescents (N = 222) completed the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (J. S. Phinney, 1992), the fatalism scale of the Multiphasic Assessment of Cultural Constructs—Short Form (I. Cuéllar, B. Arnold, & G. González, 1995), and the attitude scale of the Learning and Study Strategies Inventory—High School (C. E. Weinstein & D. R. Palmer, 1990a). Other-group orientation was positively related to attitude and GPA, and a negative relationship between fatalism and attitude was demonstrated. No relationship emerged between ethnic identity and the dependent variables.

Keywords: ethnic identity, academic achievement, attitude, education, school, Mexican-origin adolescents

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Data from the U.S. Census Bureau (2000) reflect a dropout rate of 21% for Hispanic1 16- to 19-year-olds, compared with 12% for African Americans, 7% for non-Hispanic Whites, and 4% for Asian Americans. Nearly 40% of Mexican immigrant 16- to 19-year-olds are dropouts, whereas U.S.-born Mexican-origin adolescents have a 15% dropout rate (Fry, 2003). In studying the Latino high school dropout problem, researchers have often conducted between-groups studies, focusing their efforts on comparing Latinos as a whole with other socioracial groups rather than examining the issue within Latinos or within any particular Latino ethnic group. However, grouping all Latinos together ignores a host of factors that affect the educational experience of specific Latino ethnic groups, such as sociopolitical history with the United States, immigration policy, and socioeconomic factors. In addressing such issues, the promise of within-group studies seems particularly important. For this reason, and because the dropout rate is particularly high for adolescents of Mexican descent, both immigrant and U.S. born, as compared with their other Latino peers, this study focuses solely on this segment of the Latino population.

To this point, empirical studies examining the high school dropout rate among Latinos have focused primarily on behaviors and not psychological processes (Boyd & Tashakkori, 1994; Jordan et al., 1996; Ramos & Sanchez, 1995; Wojtkiewick & Donato, 1995) but rarely to ethnic identity development, or enculturation, the process of being socialized into a person’s own ethnic group (Casas & Pytluk, 1995).

In line with examining an individual’s within-group experience, it is further proposed that looking at in-group cultural messages or assumptions, sometimes called cultural scripts, as they interact with the U.S. educational experience may also shed light on Mexican-origin adolescent underachievement. As such, we propose that attitude toward education and school among youths of Mexican heritage would differ as a result of ethnic identity, other-group orientation, and fatalism. Grade point average (GPA) was also examined as a function of these predictor variables to see if the proposed relationship would also hold for this more objective measure of academic achievement.

**Ethnic Identity and Other-Group Orientation**

Phinney (1996) outlined three stages of ethnic identity development: unexamined, during which ethnicity is not a salient part of the self-concept, and there is an acceptance of the attitudes and values present in the person’s environment; exploration, a time during which interest in knowing about the ethnic group grows, and an awareness of discrimination increases; and achieved, when the role of ethnic group membership becomes more clear, and a secure sense of self as a member of the ethnic group develops (Phinney, 1996). Other-group orientation de-

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1The term Hispanic is used in the present article when referring to an article or statistical report that utilized that term, otherwise, the term Latino is used. While we acknowledge the different implications of each term, the debate favoring one term over the other is beyond the scope of this article.
scribes whether an individual is inclined to interact and socialize with other ethnic groups. This latter variable is related to but separate from ethnic identity, in that at any stage, an adolescent may socialize exclusively within his or her in-group or may have friendships with out-group members (Phinney, 1992). While ethnic identity can be thought of as the internal process of negotiating ethnic in-group membership, other-group orientation can be thought of as the outward, behavioral expression of negotiating interaction with out-group members.

**Ethnic Identity and Academic Achievement**

Although there is evidence connecting Mexican-origin ethnic classification to academic achievement values or an achievement orientation (Graham, Taylor, & Hudley, 1998; Olívárez & Tallent-Runnels, 1994; Steinberg, Dornbusch, & Brown, 1992), there is little research connecting ethnic identity to school attitudes or actual academic achievement (GPA; Phinney, 1992; Stalikas & Gavaki, 1995). Phinney (1992) has proposed, and we concur, that an examined ethnic identity may insulate students from buying into automatic, internalized stereotypes that may undermine their academic confidence and influence them toward risky behaviors that interfere with school completion.

**Other-Group Orientation and Academic Attitude and Achievement**

While there is minimal empirical evidence connecting ethnic identity to academic achievement, there is little to none demonstrating the link between other-group orientation, as conceptualized by Phinney (1992) and academic achievement variables. Based on work by Ogbu (1987) describing the phenomena of primary and cultural discontinuity, we propose that low other-group orientation may occur because differences between a minority ethnic group and the majority ethnic group come to be seen as deficits in the former (e.g., Spanish language skills are seen as inferior to English and as a hindrance to success in children entering U.S. schools instead of being viewed as a strength). When rejected by the dominant group, ethnic minority individuals may make various adaptations that include stronger ethnic ties, as well as rejection and distrust of the culture and customs of the dominant group. They may begin to see the behaviors, values, and symbols of the dominant group as inappropriate for them and may develop a new sense of social identity in opposition to the dominant group (Ogbu, 1987). A relevant example of how such a response style, which can be viewed as low other-group orientation, may be related to academic achievement would be not working for good grades because this is seen as a “White” behavior (Headden, 1997).

When a student rejects White dominant culture, which heavily influences the environment of U.S. schools, there may be a decreased understanding of the reward structure of such institutions. Mexican-origin students who do not interact with their White peers, teachers, and administrators may fail to learn the “rules of the game.” Bernal, Saenz, and Knight (1995, p. 81) stated, “Each of our social identities has a set of rules and appropriate behaviors that guide our actions,” and if “Mexican American” is the prevailing social identity, then individuals might find that their ethnically based behaviors and attitudes are incompatible with the requirements of an academic setting that does not mirror and respect their culture (Reyes & Valencia, 1995; Valenzuela, 1999).

**Fatalism**

In addition to ethnic identity and other-group orientation, the manner in which a Mexican-origin cultural script, in this case fa-
talismo or fatalism, might affect a youth’s perception of education and school and actual academic performance was studied. Díaz-Guerrero (1967) conceptualized cultural scripts as *sociocultural premises*, conscious or unconscious culturally significant assumptions on which a given group bases its thinking, feeling, and behavior. The concept of fatalism refers, most generally, to the extent to which people feel their destinies are outside of their control, but it also encompasses religious views and a present-time orientation (Cuéllar, Arnold, & González, 1995). Empirical validations of this concept have found mixed results. Rotter’s (1990) internal–external (I-E) control theory refers to the degree to which people expect that an outcome of their behavior is contingent on their own behavior versus chance, luck, fate, or the control of powerful others. However, through a factor analysis of Rotter’s I-E scale (1966, as cited in Garza, 1977), Garza found that Mexican Americans may conceptualize fatalism differently from European Americans.

In line with Garza’s (1977) findings, Sue and Sue (1990) cautioned that it is important to distinguish between various meanings of externality when dealing with culturally diverse clients, as these meanings may have to do with a belief in chance, luck, religious beliefs, or political forces (racism and discrimination). Falicov (1998, p. 150) stated that there are two theories of fatalism: a *deficit-oriented* theory in which fatalism is seen as increasing psychological distress, and a *resource-oriented* theory in which it may be used to selectively cope with losses that are beyond a person’s control, such as incurable disease or an unexpected death (see also Neff & Hoppe, 1993). The conceptualization of fatalism being offered in this investigation is an interactive model, not a simplistic one. It is proposed that fatalism may be a disadvantage *within the context of* the U.S. educational system. We recognize that in other contexts fatalistic beliefs may be a resource. The idea that fatalistic beliefs may become an obstacle in this environment should be perceived more as a cultural mismatch than a deficit. Furthermore, the U.S. educational school system itself may exacerbate fatalistic beliefs and contribute to underachievement in this population (Romo & Falbo, 1996; Valencia, 2002; Valenzuela, 1999). There is evidence in the literature demonstrating the connection between fatalistic beliefs and poorer academic attitude (Cabrera, 1963; Justin, 1970) and performance (Matute-Bianchi, 1986) in Mexican-origin adolescents, but a connection between a quantitatively measured fatalism variable and school-reported GPA was not explored in these studies.

**Hypotheses**

As stated earlier, the purpose of this research was to examine the relationship between specific cultural factors, including ethnic identity, other-group orientation, and the cultural script of fatalism, and two dependent variables: attitudes toward education and school as well as cumulative GPA in students of Mexican descent. In the original dissertation study (Guzmán, 2002), interactions among the predictor variables were proposed, an idea that appeared theoretically meaningful, especially between ethnic identity and other-group orientation. However, none of the proposed interactions were significant; therefore, the interactions were dropped from the model, and only the main effect hypotheses were included in this article.

It was hypothesized that (a) students with higher ethnic identity scores and (b) higher other-group orientation scores would demonstrate more positive attitudes toward education and school. (c) Students with higher fatalism scores would exhibit less positive attitudes toward education and school. Regarding academic performance, it was hypothesized that (d) students with higher ethnic identity scores and (e) higher other-group orientation scores would have higher GPAs, and (f) students with higher fatalism scores would have lower GPAs.
Method

Participants

Two hundred twenty-two high school students of Mexican descent (having at least one parent of Mexican ancestry) from Austin, Texas, and surrounding areas participated in the study. The sample consisted of 34% male and 66% female students with an average age of 16.59 years (SD = 1.59). Regarding birthplace, 20% of students were born in Mexico, 78% were born in the United States, and 2% were born elsewhere. Regarding ethnicity, students self-identified in the following manner: 2% as American, 5% as Chicano, 53% as Hispanic, 2% as Latino, 19% as Mexican, 16% as Mexican American, 1% as being of Mexican descent, and 1% as other (chosen by students who had one parent who was not Latino or was from another Latino group). With respect to high school grade level, 15% participants were freshmen, 13% were sophomores, 38% were juniors, and 34% were seniors. The Spanish version of the questionnaires was completed by 8% of students, whereas 92% of students filled out the English version. Income below $24,999 was reported by 28% of families in this sample, 30% reported between $25,000 and $49,999, and 29% reported above $50,000. It should be noted that 12% of students did not report family income.

Instruments

The Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM; Phinney, 1992) consists of 14 items that measure ethnic identity across three major dimensions (affirmation and belonging, ethnic identity achievement, and ethnic behaviors). Items are rated on a 4-point Likert scale (e.g., 4 = strongly agree, 1 = strongly disagree). A low score indicates ethnic identity diffusion, whereas a high score reflects ethnic identity achievement. Other-group orientation is a separate subscale consisting of 6 items, scored independently from ethnic identity. A higher score indicates a greater willingness to interact with other ethnic groups. Phinney (1992) found the overall reliability of the ethnic identity scale to be .81 in a sample of high school students, whereas the other-group orientation subscale showed a somewhat lower reliability of .71. Construct validity of the MEIM has been supported by confirmatory factor analysis (Phinney, 1992) and correlations with measures of psychological well-being (Roberts, Phinney, Masse, & Chenet, 1999). A Spanish version of the MEIM, which was translated and then back-translated into English to ensure item content accuracy, was also utilized in the present study (Saavedra, 1999).

The Multiphasic Assessment of Cultural Constructs—Short Form (MACC–SF; Cuellar, Arnold, & Gonzalez, 1995) measures the following theoretical cultural constructs in a Mexican-origin population: fatalism, familism, folk beliefs, machismo, and personalismo. The MACC–SF consists of 60 true/false items, written in both Spanish and English. The original form offered the English items alongside the Spanish items in parallel columns. In this study, the items were offered in their respective language packets. The number of “true” responses, indicating belief in the cultural script, are totaled to arrive at the score for each subscale (the fatalism subscale also has 1 reverse-scored item). The fatalism subscale consists of 8 items and has a coefficient alpha of .63. For this subscale, a 0 would indicate no endorsement of fatalistic beliefs as operationalized by the scale, whereas an 8 would reflect a strong belief in the fatalistic statements presented. Support for construct validity was provided through factor analysis, as well as comparison of the fatalism subscale score with an acculturation measure outcome that demonstrated that the constructs are significantly correlated, in a negative direction as predicted by acculturation theory (Cuellar, Arnold, & Gonzalez, 1995).

The Attitude scale of the Learning and Study Strategies Inventory—High School version (LASSI–HS; Weinstein & Palmer,
1990a) was used to measure attitude toward education and school. The LASSI–HS is a 76-item self-report instrument designed to assess student thought processes and behaviors that relate to successful learning in high school. Items are rated on a 5-point Likert scale (e.g., 5 = not at all like me, 1 = very much like me). The Attitude scale contains 8 items addressing attitude toward education and school and has a coefficient alpha of .74 (Weinstein & Palmer, 1990b). A high score on this scale demonstrates a student’s positive attitude and high motivation for succeeding in school and a willingness to perform the tasks related to school success. A low score would indicate a lesser degree or lack of these traits. Evidence of the LASSI–HS criterion-related validity was demonstrated by examining scores from performance measures. Construct validity was demonstrated by comparing the scale scores to other tests or subscales measuring similar factors, and through exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis (Olivarez & Tallent-Runnels, 1994; Weinstein & Palmer, 1990b).

The Spanish version of the LASSI, the Inventario de Estrategias de Estudio y Aprendizaje (IEEA; Weinstein & Valenzuela González, 1995), was administered to those students whose primary language was Spanish. While the LASSI–HS has not been translated into Spanish, only one item from the Actitud scale of the IEEA differed from the Attitude scale of the LASSI–HS. We translated and back-translated the item from the LASSI–HS until an acceptable equivalent was achieved. The discrepant IEEA item was then replaced with the translated LASSI–HS item. The Attitude scale of the IEEA has a coefficient alpha of .70. Evidence for the predictive and discriminant validity of the IEEA has been established in a Spanish-speaking adolescent sample (Garcia-Ros, Perez-González, Martinez, & Moliner, 1996).

Procedure
Participants were recruited utilizing a drawing for mall gift certificates as an incentive for participation. Because the participants were minors, parental permission was required. Participants were told only that the study involved the investigation of ethnic identity. All cover letters, consent forms, and demographic questionnaires were written in both English and Spanish, and an explanation of the study was given to the student in his or her primary language. Once the consent form and parental demographic information were returned, students completed a packet of questionnaires that included the student’s portion of the demographic questionnaire and the instruments described in the previous section. As mentioned, all measures were available in both English and Spanish. The questionnaires were counter-balanced to minimize carryover effects and coded to ensure anonymity. The fact that GPAs would be obtained directly from the school or organization was clearly stated in the consent form. A list of participant names, with copies of the signed consent forms, was submitted to the registrar or other appropriate school official, and the list was returned with the most current cumulative GPA for each student. The person providing the GPAs had no knowledge of the study or its purpose.

Data Analyses
Data were analyzed using two three-predictor multiple regression tests. Because two separate regression equations were used in the analysis, the error rate was split across the two dependent variables to protect the experimentwise Type I error rate (Cohen & Cohen, 1983). Therefore, the significance criterion utilized in this study was \( p < .025 \).

Results
Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for each of the independent and dependent variables. Reliability coefficients (Cronbach’s alpha) were calculated for
each of the scales with the present sample: ethnic identity, .79; other-group orientation, .65 (MEIM); attitude toward education and school, .80 (LASSI–HS); and fatalism, .58 (MACC–SF). Intercorrelations among the independent variables and attitude toward education and school are presented in Table 2. With the more stringent criteria for this study ($p < .025$), ethnic identity was not significantly correlated with attitude toward education and school. However, as predicted, higher other-group orientation scores were associated with a more positive attitude toward education and school, and higher scores on fatalism were associated with lower attitude scores. In a relationship that was not predicted, other-group orientation was found to be significantly negatively correlated with fatalism. Intercorrelations among the independent variables and GPA are presented in Table 3. GPA was not significantly correlated with ethnic identity, but higher other-group orientation scores were associated with a higher GPA, and higher scores on fatalism were associated with a lower GPA.

Table 4 summarizes the results of the simultaneous regression analyses. The first hypothesis, predicting that students with higher ethnic identity scores would demonstrate more positive attitudes toward education and school, was not supported. The second hypothesis stated that students with higher other-group orientation scores would have more positive attitudes toward education and school. Other-group orientation did make a significant unique contribution to the equation, accounting for approximately 6% of the variability in attitude toward education and school. Although this is a medium effect size by accepted rules of thumb (Cohen, 1988), it should be noted that even small and medium effect sizes, such as the ones reported in this study, are meaningful (Rosenthal & Rubin, 1982). Darlington (1990) suggested that the unsquared coefficient (in this case $\beta = .25$) may better represent the “importance” of the effect of the predictor variable on the dependent variable. In sum, the data support the hypothesis that students who are more other-group oriented will display more positive attitudes toward education and school. In the third hypothesis, it was predicted that students with higher fatalism scores would demonstrate less positive attitudes toward education and school. Fatalism did make a significant unique contribution to the variance in this dependent variable ($r^2 = .02$, $\beta = .16$). The data support the hypothesis that students who are more fatalistic will exhibit less positive attitudes toward education and school.

The fourth hypothesis, predicting that students with higher ethnic identity scores would have higher GPAs, was not supported. The fifth hypothesis stated that students with higher other-group orientation scores would demonstrate higher GPAs. Other-group orientation made a sig-

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**TABLE 1 Descriptive Statistics for Ethnic Identity, Other-Group Orientation, Fatalism, Attitude, and GPA**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic identity</td>
<td>3.15</td>
<td>0.40</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other-group</td>
<td>3.48</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>1.83</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fatalism</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>1.80</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>8.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude</td>
<td>33.80</td>
<td>5.05</td>
<td>10.00</td>
<td>40.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GPA</td>
<td>2.54</td>
<td>0.99</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Other-group = other-group orientation; Attitude = attitude toward education and school; GPA = grade point average.

*a N = 218.  b N = 218.  c N = 208.  d N = 219.  e N = 221.*
significant unique contribution to the regression equation, accounting for approximately 7% ($\beta = .28$) of the variability in GPA. The data support the hypothesis that students who are more other-group oriented will have a higher GPA. In the sixth hypothesis, it was predicted that students who were more fatalistic would have lower GPAs. The relationship between fatalism and GPA was not significant. While there was a significant negative zero-order correlation between fatalism and GPA indicating that fatalism alone is related to GPA, the regression analysis indicates that fatalism does not uniquely contribute to the variance in GPA when ethnic identity and other-group orientation are also considered in the equation.

**Discussion**

The goal of the present investigation was to test hypotheses connecting ethnic identity, other-group orientation, and fatalism to attitude toward education and school as well as GPA in a sample of Mexican-origin youths. The results from the study provided partial confirmation of the proposed model. No relationship was found between ethnic identity and each of the two dependent variables: attitude toward education and school, and GPA. Full support was found for the relationship between other-group orientation and both attitude and GPA. Fatalism was found to have a significant relationship to attitude but not GPA.

**Ethnic Identity**

The results of the regression analysis did not support the hypothesis that students who have higher ethnic identity scores would demonstrate more positive attitudes toward education and school. Restriction of range with regard to ethnic identity and attitude toward education and school may have been a problem. The majority of the participants in the present study were in 11th and 12th grade ($N = 160$; 72%). Phinney (1992) found a developmental trend where ethnic identity is concerned, with college students scoring higher on ethnic identity achievement than high school students. High school dropout rates increase as students get older (National Center for Education Statistics, 1999), indicating that these students who are still in school for their junior and senior years may be a self-selected group that places more importance on academic achievement.

The hypothesis that students who have higher ethnic identity scores will demonstrate higher academic achievement as measured by GPA was also not supported. Phinney (1992) found that high school students reporting average grades of A or B had higher ethnic identity scores than those reporting C or D. In reporting this finding, Phinney did so for the entire sam-

**TABLE 2 Intercorrelations Among Predictor Variables, and Attitude Toward Education and School**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Ethnic identity</th>
<th>Other-group</th>
<th>Fatalism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attitude</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>.30***</td>
<td>-.24***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic identity</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>-.06</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other-group</td>
<td></td>
<td>-.31***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Other-group = other-group orientation; Attitude = attitude toward education and school. Because of missing data, $N = 203$ for this analysis.*** $p < .001.$

**TABLE 3 Intercorrelations Among Predictor Variables and GPA**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Ethnic identity</th>
<th>Other-group</th>
<th>Fatalism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GPA</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.33***</td>
<td>-.19**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic identity</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>-.06</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other-group</td>
<td></td>
<td>-.31***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Other-group = other-group orientation. Because of missing data, $N = 204$ for this analysis. GPA = grade point average. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001.$
ple, not separate ethnic groups, so it is unclear if this relationship would have held for Latino students, or a specific sub-group of Latinos, in her study. Second, Phinney utilized self-reported grades, which may have been subject to social desirability biases. The present investigation utilized GPAs obtained directly from the student’s school. Nonetheless, these findings appear puzzling and raise new questions for future research. Contrary to the rationale proposed, it may not be the case that ethnic identity insulates ethnic minority students from internalized stereotypes that may undermine academic confidence and performance (Phinney, 1992). A student’s academic attitude and performance may be independent of his or her ethnic group membership experience, or it may be the case that no direct relationship exists, but that further research incorporating mediating variables such as self-esteem, which has a demonstrated relationship to ethnic identity (Phinney, 1991), may shed further light on the connection to academic achievement. It is important to note that an inverse relationship was not found, meaning that the findings do not suggest that having a strong ethnic identity is related to poor academic attitude and performance.

Other-Group Orientation

The data support the hypothesis that students of Mexican descent who are more other-group oriented demonstrate more positive attitudes toward education and school and have higher GPAs. It is important to clarify that being other-group oriented is not equivalent to being assimilated or highly acculturated. The items on the MEIM other-group orientation scale (Phinney, 1992) primarily reflect a willingness to interact with other ethnic groups (not just Whites), whereas acculturation scales for people of Mexican descent such as the Acculturation Rating Scale for Mexican Americans—II (Cuellar, Arnold, & Maldonado, 1995) address whether people engage in activities (speaking, reading, writing) in English versus Spanish, how they identify ethnically, and, to a lesser extent, their degree of interaction with European Americans.2 Additionally, as stated earlier, other-group orientation is separate and distinct from ethnic identity (Phinney, 1992). Ethnic identity and other-group orientation were not significantly correlated in this study (see Tables 2 and 2).

2These authors utilize the term Anglo in their measure. While the trend is changing among younger generations, Anglo is a term that has historically been used by Latinos to refer to White European Americans.
In sum, it is important to keep in mind that a student may have an achieved sense of ethnic identity, have a sense of belonging to his or her Latino culture, engage in ethnic behaviors, and hold a separate and distinct preference for or against interacting with members of other groups.

While this study suggests that being other-group oriented is important to academic success for this sample, it does not provide a clear answer as to why it may be important. First, it could be that these adolescents are allowing “student” to operate as their prevailing social identity in the school environment (Bernal et al., 1995), focusing on achievement, and mixing with other ethnic groups, including White peers, thereby learning the rules of success in U.S. educational institutions. Second, it may be that the process of interacting with other ethnic groups in a positive manner (and one has to assume the interaction is positive if students express a willingness to engage in this interaction) protects students from the cultural inversion discussed earlier (Ogbu, 1987). If Mexican-origin students can experience the values, customs, and so forth of the dominant group by mixing with them, then their degree of comfort with these differences may increase, and they may not feel that those beliefs and practices are inappropriate for them. However, whether ethnic minority group members develop social identities in opposition to the dominant group depends somewhat on how they are received by members of that group and whether their native culture is respected. Therefore, interventions aimed at increasing understanding and tolerance must target both minority and dominant group members. These considerations and possibilities are tentative, and further research is needed. However, it does appear that lack of integration with other ethnic groups may be an academic risk factor for students of Mexican origin. Promising areas for future research include the relationship between other-group orientation and academic achievement, perhaps incorporating other variables such as perceived discrimination and acculturation, to see if any of the variance in this relationship is better accounted for by other predictors, and to further investigate the questions of how and why other-group orientation is important to academic success in this population.

Fatalism

The data support the hypothesis that students who are more fatalistic will demonstrate less positive attitudes toward education and school but did not support the relationship between fatalism and GPA. It is important that the finding connecting fatalism to attitude not be used to imply that Mexican-oriented values and cultural scripts are erroneous or inferior, only that they may not “fit” well with the expectations of the U.S. educational system. Students of Mexican heritage, as well as their parents, may need assistance in reconciling fatalistic attitudes with an educational system that demands planning, a future-oriented focus, and recognition that academic success is somewhat within their control. Students should be encouraged to draw strength from their cultural values. For example, a student who holds fatalistic values can be taught that while he or she must take some responsibility for studying for a test, a sense of faith or destiny can be drawn upon to reduce test anxiety by working within a context such as, “If I try my best, things will work out the way they are supposed to.”

Replication of the findings concerning fatalism and attitude toward education and school is needed. While the results suggest that this cultural script is related to attitude, the finding that it was not related to GPA, when ethnic identity and other-group orientation were also considered, leaves room for further investigation. It may be that the connection between fatalism and attitude toward education and school, both consisting of beliefs, may be more straightforward, but the path between fatalistic beliefs and the actual behaviors that result in a student’s GPA contains elements not captured in this
Further research should explore the relationships among fatalism, attitude toward education and school, and behavioral variables such as completing homework and school attendance. Because the relationship between fatalism and GPA was not confirmed, we must question how effective targeting fatalism as an intervention point would be on actual school performance.

There are limitations to the study that should be considered. First, the generalizability of the study may be limited to Mexican-origin adolescents. Adolescents from other Latino subgroups undoubtedly experience somewhat different cultural and educational experiences. Second, with regard to measures, students may have found the Attitude and Fatalism scales (which were extracted from their larger measures, the LASSI–HS and MACC–SF, respectively) to be transparent and perhaps attempted to answer them in a socially desirable manner, and the MACC–SF is a measure with limited published research and mediocre psychometrics. It has only been validated on a Mexican-origin adult sample. Therefore, caution must be used in interpreting the scores with this adolescent sample.

**Conclusion**

Because the findings of the study were modest, with only partial confirmation of the hypotheses, recommendations for counseling interventions and educational policy made here are tentative. First, the findings regarding other-group orientation point to the importance of positive relationships among students of Mexican descent, other students of color, and White European Americans in schools. Challenging and dismantling the stereotypes of Latinos held by the dominant group (e.g., Mexicans are lazy) and by their own in-group (e.g., making good grades and having White friends means that a person is “selling out”; Niemann, 2001) may help Mexican-origin students be open to socializing with their eth-

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According to statistics obtained from the Austin Independent School District in October 2000, Hispanic students accounted for 46% of all students in the school district most heavily sampled from in this study. Although 46% of female students districtwide were Hispanic, only 18% of teachers were Hispanic females. Hispanic males accounted for 46% of male students districtwide but only 4% of teachers were Hispanic males. Statistics were not available for Mexican-origin students only. However, the majority of Hispanics in the Austin Independent School District are of Mexican heritage.

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