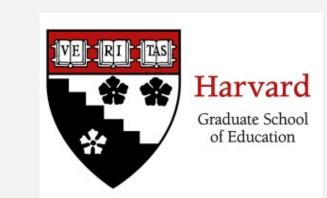# Time Spent on Homework Among Mexican American Adolescents: Contextual Correlates and Implications for Achievement Orientations

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Background

- Mexican American youth exhibit lower levels of education achievement compared to other ethnic groups in the US (US Census Bureau, 2017). They are a rapidly growing population, however, making it imperative that we investigate factors that promote their achievement.

- Time spent on homework is a dimension of school engagement that is important to achievement—as well as adjustment outcomes across childhood and adolescence (Bartko & Eccles, 2003; Fan et al., 2017). We know very little, however, about Mexican American youth's involvement in homework.

- The ecological model (Bronfenbrenner, 1986) directs attention the sociocultural factors that may promote or interfere with minority youth's school engagement, including homework.

Study Aims

Aim 1: Identify sociocultural factors that may be linked to Mexican American youth's time spent on homework in early and middle adolescence, specifically, school ethnic composition, perceived discrimination from peers, ethnic pride, and involvement (i.e., time spent) with family and/or non-family Mexican Americans.

Aim 2: Test homework time in adolescence as a predictor of Mexican American youth and young adults' achievement orientations five years later, including education aspirations and perceived barriers to education and career.

Participants

- The data came from a longitudinal study of 246 two-parent Mexican American families with at least two adolescents who lived in a southwestern metropolitan area, the *Juntos* Project.

- Mothers and 93% of fathers were of Mexican origin.

- At Time 1 (T1), families included a seventh grader with at least one older sibling and a mother and father living in the home.

- Data were drawn from two time points of the larger study.

    At T1, older siblings averaged 15.46 (SD = 1.29) and younger siblings averaged 12.76 (SD = .57) years of age.

    Time 2 (T2) was 5 years later when youth were in late adolescence/ young adulthood.

- At T1 and T2, youth (50% female) were interviewed in their homes. At T1 they also completed 7 nightly phone calls (5 on school days, 2 on weekend) during which they reported on their time spent in activities outside of school hours and their companions in each activity.

Measures

	Constructs	Descriptions
Time 1	*Weekly time spent on homework on school days*	Summed across school days (Monday-Thursday) and square-root transformed for skewness
	Ethnic pride	5-point, 10-item; e.g., "I have a lot of pride in my Mexican roots" (Thayer et al., 2002)
	School ethnic composition	Percentage of Hispanic students in each youth's grade in school
	Perceived discrimination from peers	4-point, 4-item; e.g., "Kids at school have negative beliefs about Mexicans or Mexican Americans" (Hughes & Dodge, 1997)
	Time spent with family members (exclusive)	Averaged across the 7 days and square-root transformed for skewness.
	Time spent with non-family Mexican Americans	
Time 2	*Education aspirations*	"How far would you like to go in school?" Coded into years of education
	Barriers to education	6-item, 5-point; "I am not sure if I will be able to finish school." (Holland et al., 1980)
	Barriers to career	6-item, 5-point; "I lack the special talents to follow my first choice." (Holland et al., 1980)

Results

- *Analysis plan.* Given the clustered (siblings within families) design, we used a multilevel modeling approach (Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002).

Aim 1: Identify socio-cultural contextual correlates of homework time

- Controls: *Youth gender* (0 = girl, 1 = boy) and *age*, *parent education* (averaged across mother and father), *youth GPA at Time 1*, and *whether youth was born in the US* (0 = no, 1 = yes).

Correlates	γ	SE
Intercept	1.09	.37**
Youth gender	-1.02	.40*
Youth age	.18	.14
Parent education	.02	.06
Youth GPA	.74	.21**
Youth born in US	-.64	.42
Ethnic pride	**.78**	**.28****
School ethnic composition	-.01	.01
Discrimination from peers	**.61**	**.26***
Time with family members	.04	.06
Time with non-family Mex Americans	**-.16**	**.05****

- Ethnic pride and perceived discrimination from peers were positively correlated, and time with non-family Mexican Americans was negatively correlated with youth's time spent on homework on school days.

Results, cont.

Aim 2: Links between homework time (T1) and achievement orientations 5 years later (T2)

	Education aspirations		Barriers to education		Barriers to career	
	γ	SE	γ	SE	γ	SE
Intercept	16.22	.19**	2.11	.06**	2.18	.06**
Youth gender	-.23	.26	-.08	.09	-.11	.09
Youth age	.09	.08	.01	.03	.01	.03
Parent education	.11	.04**	-.06	.01**	-.05	.01**
Youth GPA	.43	.15**	-.15	.05**	-.08	.05
Homework time	**.10**	**.03****	**-.03**	**.01****	**-.03**	**.01****

Discussion

Aim 1

- Sociocultural factors were linked to Mexican American youth's time spent on homework, beyond the effects of GPA.

- Ethnic pride, considered a protective factor among Mexican American youth (Umaña-Taylor et al., 2012), was a positive correlate of homework time.

- Inconsistent with previous findings about its negative links to adjustment (Umaña-Taylor et al., 2012), perceived peer discrimination from peers was a positive correlate of homework time, suggesting a resiliency mechanism that needs further investigation.

- Time spent with non-family Mexican Americans was negatively linked to homework time; such time may compete with homework and conflict with academic engagement.

Aim 2

- Controlling for GPA, homework time predicted orientations toward achievement 5 years later. These orientations may lay the foundation for further educational and career attainments in adulthood.

Acknowledgement