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ABSTRACT

The schooling gap between Hispanics and other ethnic groups contributes to the depressed economic condition and social status of this minority. The aim of this study was to determine whether there is a correlation between teacher expectations and student performance for Hispanic students. "Teacher expectations" refers to the level of academic success the teacher expects for the student. This case study analyses the power relationships that are ignored or taken for granted in the classroom, but are central to the question of teacher expectations. The teacher studied was a graduate of the high school at which he taught in Texas, a school with many Hispanic American students. The study occurred over 5 months. Interviews were conducted with 11 students considered to be underachievers, and 6 of these students agreed to continue participating in the study. Interviews were also held with four teachers, two counselors, and the high school's principal. A first theme that resulted from the study was that a close relationship between the student and the teacher resulted in increased motivation for the student. Also important to motivation was a personalized learning environment. The second major finding was that of lower teacher expectations for minority students. A third theme that emerged was the relationship between teacher expectations and student motivation. Data on low student motivation could be further grouped into subthemes of disengagement from school, feelings of helplessness, and the lack of a clear vision of the future for Hispanic students. (Contains 67 references.) (SLD)

One Teacher's Perspective on the Difference of Academic Expectations for Hispanic Students: A Case Study

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One Teacher's Perspective on the Difference of Academic Expectations for Hispanic Students: A Case Study

Introduction and Literature Search

Today, the Hispanic[1] people comprise the second largest minority in the United States, and the largest minority in the Southwest (Dolman & Kaufman, 1984; Grebler, Moore & Guzman, 1970), with a projection that by the year 2030, Hispanics will comprise the single largest minority group in the United States. Even now, Hispanic students make up the largest ethnic category in schools of some of the nation's largest cities (Archer, 1996). By the year 2030, nearly one in four school age children in the United States will likely be of Hispanic origin, a new report from the U.S. Bureau of the Census (1990) predicts. Hispanics are highly differentiated from the mainstream society in nearly every yardstick of social and economic position, with the gap of educational attainment being one of the widest (Grebler, Moore, & Guzman, 1970; Dolman, & Kaufman, 1984; Griffin, 1988).

Since 1988, there has been a widening gap between the academic performance of Anglo and minority students (Olson, 1997). Persistent school failure among large numbers of Mexican-descent students and other Hispanic groups in the United States is a pervasive, well-documented and enduring problem (The Achievement Council, 1984; Arias, 1986; Brown et al., 1980; California Postsecondary Education Commission [CPEC], 1982; Carter, 1970; Carter & Segura 1979; Coleman, 1966; Ogbu, 1974, 1978; Obgu & Mantute-Bianchi, 1986; U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1971). Today, Hispanics, as well as other minorities, perform well below other students in all subjects at all grade levels tested by the National Assessment of Educational Progress, which tests a representative sample of students nationwide (Olson, 1997). Educators,

[1] The 1990 U. S. Census attempted to provide Hispanics with a more detailed identity. In the 1990 census, those surveyed were asked to classify themselves as Hispanic if: the persons' origin is Mexican, Mexican-American, Chicano, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Argentinean, Colombian, Costa Rican, Dominican, Ecuadorian, Guatemalan, Honduran, Nicaraguan, Peruvian, Salvadorean, From other Spanish-speaking countries of the Caribbean or Central or South America, or from Spain.

who have traditionally been unable to serve educationally disadvantaged and culturally distinct children, should be concerned with this widening gap in performance at a time when the minorities comprise a growing portion of the student population.

In California, Texas, and New York, traditionally three out of every ten Hispanics are drop-outs. The drop-out rate for Hispanics in Texas is 45% (McMillan & Reed, 1994). The student who comes from a background where lower socioeconomic status and limited educational achievement are factors, and whose cultural values conflict with the White, middle class values that dominate our schools, finds it difficult to identify (value and belong) to that school (Ogbu, 1987; Rumberger, 1987). When students feel alienated from learning or school, the results may be nonparticipation, misbehavior, and low academic achievement. A serious consequence of disengagement is that the student drops out of school. Students disengage from school when they believe that teachers are uninterested in them (Moos & Moos, 1978; Tuck, 1989; Wehlage & Rutter, 1986) and when they believe that their opportunities for involvement and success are limited (Hawkins, Doueck & Lishner, 1988; Howard & Anderson, 1976). Educational attainment, measured in the median years of schooling completed, continues to be one of the most conspicuous status indicators pointing to a substantially lower socioeconomic position of Hispanics in comparison to non-Whites (Grebler, Moore & Guzman, 1970). One of the most widely recognized facts about Hispanics is their generally low attainment in formal schooling (Grebler, Moore & Guzman, 1970). As a group, Hispanics participate less and do less well academically than any other group in the Southwest except for Native Americans, with indications that there is a widening academic gap between these students and other groups (The Achievement Council, 1984). This schooling gap between Hispanics and other ethnic groups, contributes to the depressed economic condition and social status of this minority. While any attempt to relate the underachievement of Hispanic youth to measurable or clearly identifiable variables inside or outside the school poses perplexing problems, the overall aim of this study is to determine whether there is a correlation between teacher expectations and student performance for Hispanic students.

Teacher Expectations:

In this study, teacher expectations are defined as the level of academic success the teacher has for the student. Much has been written about the power of teacher expectations, one of the best know being the controversial study, Pygmalian in the Classroom by Rosenthal and Jacobson in 1968. In this study, teachers were given phony data concerning students. Approximately 20 % of the student population, selected at random, were identified as "bloomers" on an intelligence test. Teachers were given the names of the supposedly high-potential students, to be held in confidence, and these students achieved at significantly higher levels than other students. Even critics of this study accept the notion that teacher expectations affect student achievement. Two decades of research have followed this study with the consensus that teachers' expectations clearly affect teacher-student interaction and student outcomes; however, the processes are much more complex than originally believed (Bennett, 1994). Research has shown that a teacher's distribution of behavioral interactions among individual students' often is associated with students' achievement level or the teacher's expectations for students' future achievement level (Brophy & Good, 1974; Braun, 1976; Good, 1981).

Teachers' expectations are often based on generalizations that low socioeconomic students and students from oppressed groups do not perform well in school (Baron, Tom & Cooper, 1985). Studies document that students are classified, segregated, and taught differently starting with their first days of school (Rosenthal & Jacobson 1968; Rist, 1970, Gay; 1977). As early as junior high, minorities and poor children typically take fewer courses in mathematics and science, and in many high schools advanced courses in these subjects are not even offered (Gollnick & Chinn, 1994). From other research, we know that poor and minority children are disproportionately represented in vocational and technical tracks and so called "low-ability" groups (Oakes, 1985). A disproportionate number of Hispanics are tracked into low-level academic courses or vocational programs, based on their presumed inability to handle more rigorous academic courses. Only 35% of Hispanic high school seniors are enrolled in college preparatory programs, compared to 50% of non-Hispanic white students (Stewart, 1998). The Education Trust in its report Education Watch: The 1996 Education Trust State and National Data Book

documents:

> Poor and minority students are more likely to be taught a low-level curriculum with low standards for performance. Only one in four students from low-income families is placed in a college-preparatory sequence of courses. In contrast, poor and minority students are over represented in less challenging general and vocational education program (p. 56).

The report above suggests that teacher beliefs and expectations influence student beliefs and behaviors or teacher and student interest with the class content (Bennett, 1995). Consequently, when teachers lower expectations for student, then they might be keeping students from having an equal opportunity for academic achievement.

Three processes, self-fulling prophecy, perceptual bias, and accuracy, contribute to why students generally confirm the expectations teachers hold for them (Jussim, 1989; Jussim & Eccles, 1992; see reviews by Brophy & Good, 1974; Jussim, 1986). The first two, self-fulling prophecy and perceptual bias involve the teacher's beliefs and how these beliefs influence student achievement. The third reason, accuracy, refers to the teaching successfully predicting without influencing, students' achievement. Self-fulfilling prophecies occur when teachers induce students to perform at levels consistent with the teachers' initially erroneous expectations. Perceptual biases occur when the teachers base evaluations of students on the teachers expectations rather than on the students' performance (Kolb & Jussim, 1994).

Studies by Gay and Rist (1970) and the U.S. Civil Rights Commission (1973) have shown that many teachers have lower expectations for African-American and Hispanic students. Further studies have indicated that White teachers have lower expectations for their non-White students and that a classroom climate of acceptance is related to increased student achievement, especially among minorities in the classroom (Bennett, 1995; Griffin, 1988; Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968; Hurn, 1966, Dusek & Joseph, 1985). However, Powell (1997) reported that White teachers can develop class instruction that is high energy and meaningful for non-White students. In 1973, the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights conducted a study aimed at discovering whether there where significant differences in how teachers reacted to students of other ethnic

backgrounds. The conclusions reached indicated that Hispanic students were significantly less likely to be praised, less likely to be asked questions, and less likely to have their contributions elaborated on by the teacher, than were White students. Griffin (1988) concluded that schools often did not encourage minorities to strive for academic achievement, instead they operated as institutions which served as training grounds for accommodating the existing status, allowing students to simply stay where they were, with no chance of advancement. In addition, studies suggest that curriculum tracking is influenced more by social class than by a student's ability and that the parent's level of education and the father's occupation are significant factors in educational achievement of minority students (Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968, Griffin, 1988).

Schlosser (1992) reported that teachers who were most successful in helping culturally diverse students be engaged more successfully in school demonstrated two unique classroom approaches. These successful teachers knew about the home lives and cultural backgrounds of the students and about the impact of young adolescents' developmental needs on learning. Knowing about their culturally distinct groups thus allowed these teachers to build closer student-teacher relationships. These relationships led to an increase in student motivation and aspiration by encouraging the students to develop a sense of identification that is associated with success in school.

Personalized learning environments, where students are given individualized attention and taught on level with appropriate strategies for their learning style, are potentially powerful motivators for any student's academic success. However, they are critical to those from culturally diverse (Anderson, 1988; Russel & Piternick, 1981) or poverty-striken backgrounds (Knapp, Turnbull & Shields, 1990) and for students who are only marginally successful (McLaughlin et al., 1990) because they promote feelings of belonging and acceptance.

Student Motivation and Aspirations:

Abi-Nader (1990) identified three areas of vulnerability among high school Hispanic students. Abi-Nader focused on the Hispanic students' lack of vision of the future (their inability to plan for future events) (Lewis, 1966); poor self-concept (Margolis, 1971); and alienation form

the majority culture (Carter, 1971). These factors can be related to the student's motivation and career aspirations and are influenced directly by teacher's academic expectations.

Students who lack a vision may have little motivation. Using Bandura's definition, self-efficacy is a person's judgment about his or her capability to organize and execute a course of action that is required to attain a certain level of performance (Bandura, 1986, 1991). Self-efficacy tends not to focus on the past, but instead represents future expectations of being able to perform at certain levels thus enabling the student to have a vision. The principles of self-efficacy suggest that students can develop their intelligence, and consequently make gains in academic achievement, through hard work and application. A year long study conducted with four schools which had incorporated these principles of self-efficacy, gave evidence of a gain in motivation and a positive sense of control over the mastery of instruction (Law, 1995). There was some indication that intrinsic motivation is positively correlated to a sense of control over the outcomes that can be acquired through the individual's actions (Henderson & Dweck, 1990).

A teacher's self-efficacy has been defined as the teacher's beliefs about teaching effectiveness and their beliefs concerning their own ability to teach particular students regardless race, appearance, or gender (Ashton & Webb, 1986, Denham & Michael, 1981; Gibson & Dembo, 1984). By intentionally maintaining high expectations, and promoting a positive self-filling prophecies, we may also create an environment that facilitates academic performance is created. (Kolb & Jussim, 1994).

Viewed from a multicultural perspective, self-concepts of students relate not only to their racial, cultural, and class identification but also to their feelings of power in the school (Ramsey, 1987). Students with poor self-concepts often view themselves as failures academically and perhaps socially. Students who feel torn between two cultural systems may have low self-concepts because they assume they cannot be successful in either society (Ramsey, 1987). One of the factors of a poor self-concept is often a lack of motivation. Motivation in this study is recognized as the initiation or start of behavior, direction of behavior, intensity of action (cognitive and physical effort), and persistence of the behavior over time. Cognitive theories of behavior are those which view behavior as purposeful, goal directed, and based on conscious or subconscious

intentions. This same theory assumes that individuals engage in some form of conscious behavior relating to the performance of tasks. Locke and Latham (1990) proposed that at all levels of explanation, cognitive motivational factors play a role in explaining both the choice and action and its degree of success. Motivation can include a variety of psychological processes which determine whether a student will pursue achievement goals (such as high academic performance, or conform to behavioral standards), which achievement goals will be pursued, and how effectively these goals will be pursued (Henderson & Dweck, 1990). Many students exhibit two distinct achievement behavior patterns as they are faced with failure. They will develop a helpless pattern characterized by failure-oriented cognitions, negative affect, and deterioration in academic performance; or a mastery-oriented pattern characterized by task-oriented cognitions, positive affect, and stable or improved academic performance (Henderson & Dweck, 1990). Low confidence and the belief that intelligence is fixed may predispose individuals to devalue achievement and to avoid achievement situations in defense of their self-esteem (Henderson & Dweck, 1990).

The third area of vulnerability for Hispanic students involves alienation from the majority culture as noted by Carter (1971). Non-mainstream students often have difficulties succeeding in school because how they go about learning is incompatible with school expectations and norms, not because they lack desire, motivation, aspiration, or academic potential. Opportunities to participate in substantive components of teaching and learning frequently are a condition of the extent to which students conform to the "correct procedures and social protocols" (Holliday, 1985). Failure to master these procedures and protocols virtually ensures academic failure. Hispanic cultural elements were defined by many educators as inhibiting or interfering with school performance and in general, teachers interviewed in the Southwest in 1970 attributed the problems of failure for Hispanic students to the lack of the Mexican culture to prepare or motivate the child for school (Grebler, Moore & Guzman, 1970). Many minority students find themselves in what Boykin (1986) calls a "triple quandary," having to negotiate simultaneously in three often-disparate realms of experience: the mainstream school culture, their natal ethnic cultures, and the status of being members of oppressed, powerless, and unvalued minority groups. Fisher (1995)

has established that there is a strong positive correlation between an individual's IQ score and parents', teachers' and peers' judgments of intelligence of an individual. Whether or not an individual values achievement, such as high academic performance, in the same way that society values it; and why that individual might devalue achievement is rooted in a student's culture (Griffin, 1988; Grebler, Moore & Guzman, 1970). Coleman (1966) concluded that the achievement of Hispanic students was most closely related to the family background.

Low motivation to succeed academically in school also influences the future aspirations of the student. Without recognition of ability and high teacher expectations, many students have low aspirations for their future. Coleman (1966) found that relative to other racial and ethnic groups, Hispanic students (a) planned in fewer numbers to attend college, yet set equally high occupational aspirations; and (b) expressed a considerably lower sense of control over the environment than Whites.

Theoretical Perspective and Assumptions

The study analyzes the power relationships that were ignored or taken for granted in the classroom, yet are central to the question being studied. These relationships will be examined using the perception of one teacher as it relates to the teachers, students, and educational setting in the study. This study borrows from the writings that are consistent with critical theory, which is directed at examining how inequitable distributions lead to inequalities among groups and individuals. One of the assumptions of critical theory, as proposed by Kincheloe and McLaren (1994) is that facts can never be isolated from the domain of values or removed from some form of ideological inscription. For the education of any minority student to be complete, one must consider not merely the cognitive experience; societal and cultural factors must be recognized and incorporated into the experience. The critical theory framework replaces the single point of view of the dominate majority with a more pluralistic one, including the voice of the minority. The critical theorist seeks to have an acceptance and appreciation of cultural diversity and respect for human dignity and universal human rights (Bennett, 1995). If the selection of a curriculum ignores or undervalues the talents of young people it will result in a society where there is no appreciation for

a multitude of excellences (Noddings, 1995). These assumptions of critical theory were central to this study if we consider the idea that a priority of education is for society to prepare young people to take advantage of the opportunity to become individuals. Individuals who are capable of understanding what is possible: what they want; individuals who can perceive the limitations, obstacles, and injustices that get in their way, and who know how to get through them. Education should encourage the development of individual persons, not interchangeable cogs in a social/cultural machine. Noddings (1995) questions privileged knowledge where the standard form of education would produce students with the idea that there is a single model of an educated person.

Cultural racism, as defined by Bennet, is manifested in low expectations for minority student achievement held by nonminority teachers, ethnic/racial myths and stereotypes held by students and teachers (Bennett, 1995). Cultural racism combines ethnocentrism, the view that other cultures are inferior to the Anglo-European, and the power to suppress or eradicate manifestations of non-Anglo-European cultures. The legacy of cultural racism can be found in many schools in the formal curriculum -- in tests, media, and course offerings. Racism can be detected in the hidden, informal curriculum of many schools.

Critical studies in the sociology of education (Apple, 1979, 1982; Giroux, 1983) and the micropolitics of school (Ball, 1987) demonstrate that schools are contested terrains, both influenced by and contesting dominant ideologies and relations of power in the school and broader society. Critical theory provides an exploration of the theory of *correspondence* proposed in the 1970s. This theory states that the structures of schooling and the classroom discourse correspond directly to the class structure of society. Following this theory, the school "reproduces" the societies of class structure. This could have direct implications for a student's motivation. According to Apple (1993), student underachievement is largely seen as the fault of the student. This failure is seen as the result of the biological and economic marketplace, instead of at least partially interpreted as the fault of severely deficit educational policies and practices. This is similar to the *deficit model* (Flores, Cousin & Diaz, 1991) of low achieving African-American students. This model located student's education problems in putatively pathological families, communities,

and culture conditions outside of the school. Explanations for why students are not motivated that operate under the assumption that the educational system is appropriate are likely to shift the responsibility for difficulty to the student (Johnson, 1994) with the expectation that the student must adapt to or comply with the expectations of the educational setting. This traditionally used epistemological model of educational risk fails to acknowledge the contributions of the instructional environment to the failure or success of the social relations student (Garcia & Ortiz, 1988). Another explanation for lack of success is the *social relations model* which attributes school failure to the student's lack of personal connection to school and likewise their alienation from school adults (Wehlage, Rutter, Smith, Lesko,& Fernandez 1989). The current model of schooling, developed during the Progressive Era at the turn of this century, was not designed to, never has, and still does not educate all students equally (Miller, (1992). Academic success has traditionally been defined and measured in terms that reinforce conformity with the dominant culture's values and behavior (Moll, 1992).

Stereotypes and biases create inequities in the classroom, thus restricting the potential of individuals to learn and achieve. When there is not recognition of the biases and stereotypes, the exclusion of students from opportunities and equal treatment occurs. This lack of recognition results in placing constraints on academic achievement and educational opportunity for Hispanic students. Mexican cultural elements were defined by many educators as inhibiting or interfering with school performance and in general. Teachers interviewed in the Southwest in 1970 attributed the problems of failure for Hispanic students to the lack of the Mexican culture to prepare or motivate the child for school (Grebler, Moore & Guzman, 1970). Too often, educators ignore the voice of the Hispanic student (Gay, 1970; Rist, 1970, U.S. Commission of Civil Rights, 1973). The effect of teacher expectations which express the majority perspective on the motivation of students who have the minority voice will be examined.

Context:

Because this study focuses on a single teacher, who has lived in Midtown community and graduated from Midtown High School twenty years ago, some historical data about the community is necessary. Midtown High School is the single high school of a rural community in

West Texas. The community has a population of approximately 10,000. In the high school, there are approximately 630 students with a ethnic distribution of 250 White, 333 Hispanic, 30 African-American, 1 Asian, and 2 American-Indian students. The senior class of 1997 was composed of 100 students, 51 Whites, 44 Hispanics, and 5 African-Americans. In comparison, the senior class of 1977 had 129 members, 102 of which were White, 28 Hispanics and 1 African-American.

Nationally, ethnic minorities now compose less than 15% of the teaching force and less than 12% of school administrators (Gay, 1993). This is significant because often the ethnical, racial, and cultural diversity among the educators does not reflect that of the community. This holds true in Midtown, where the teaching staff ratio compares to the national average, with only 10% of the staff members being Hispanic. The teaching staff of the high school is composed of 41 White teachers and 4 Hispanic teachers. The administrative staff is exclusively White. A degree of diversity is to be noted because in 1977, all professional positions (51 teachers, and 4 administrative) were held by Whites. Data from the county population analysis of 1977 reveals that the percentage of individuals who were over 25 years of age and had not graduated from high school was 54.2% of Whites and 95.6% for Hispanics.

Several indicators from the most recent Academic Excellence Indicator System for Midtown High School (1995-96) indicate a disparity between Hispanic and White academic achievement. The percentage of White students enrolled in advanced courses during the 1994-95 school year was 24.2% as compared to 11.0% of Hispanics for that same time period. The results also show that 1% of the Hispanic students took an Advanced Placement exam, while 1.5% of the White students took those exams. In addition, of the class of 1995, 77.9% of the White students took the SAT tests while only 51.1% of the Hispanics took the SAT test. One interesting note is that the Hispanics who took the SAT compared favorably with the Whites in mean scores. The mean score for the Whites was 827 and for Hispanics 809. The dropout rate for Whites during the 1994-95 school year was 0.6% while it was 2.4% for Hispanics.

This study occurred over the spring semester, approximately a 5 month period. This location was chosen both for the convenience of the researcher and because data for the past as well as the present was accessible, thereby making comparisons possible. I purposively choose

Mr. Mendoza because of his ethnicity, and his attendance in this high school twenty years ago.

This study sought to explore what happens in the social context of the community/educational environment by describing naturally occurring events in that context. The social organization of a school is seen as a function of its students and how the climate effects those students. Further, the salient behaviors, beliefs, and attitudes as perceived by the individuals who live in this context are reported. These perceptions, of the participants' lived experience provided insight into the community and its' educational aspirations for minority students. In order to minimize any gender bias of the researcher and reader, both male and female Hispanic students were interviewed. Initially, the Midtown High School counselor compiled a list of 11 Hispanic students who were considered to be underachievers in their academic subjects. I interviewed each of these students, explaining briefly what the study consisted of and explained that I would like to interview them further. Six students signed consent forms allowing me to continue to interview them. In addition, I interviewed two female teachers, two male teachers, two counselors, and the principal of the high school. Classroom observations were done in four classrooms, with multiple observations in two of these.

Because of time limitations and the accessibility to the classrooms and students, the most extensive interviews occurred with: Maria, a 17 year-year-old female Hispanic student in the eleventh grade. Maria has lived in Midtown all of her life and has only attended Midtown schools; Jesse, a 17 year-old male Hispanic student in the eleventh grade who moved into the community and schools approximately one year ago; Mrs. Blankenship, the junior English teacher, who has taught in the system for six years; and Mr. Mendoza, the Algebra teacher, who was raised in Midtown, and has entered teaching after working in another profession for a number of years.

The student's perspective is seen through the interviews of Jesse and Maria. While they have different stories to tell, their experiences at this high school have similar strands. The interviews and observations of Mrs. Blankenship gives us the perspective of a White teacher who has been a long time member of the community and who is part of the established social order for the school and community. She is concerned about her student's achievement and tries to be

motivating to her students. *"I'm very open and straight forward with them, and I try to encourage them...I say ' Why didn't you do this, because you're capable of doing this'"*. She values the ability to think individually as evidenced by the lively discussions in her classroom *"They're allowed to say whatever is on their mind, I allow my kids to be as open as they want to be, within reason"*. In an effort to recognize diversity in her classroom, Mrs. Blankenship, tries to bring in literature from many different ethnic writers. *"American literature is a composite of all types of races and religions and we do a big variety. We read Hispanic literature, Black literature, and Native American literature. I try to bring in some of the newer, more controversial writers"*.

Mr. Mendoza's interviews give a Hispanic perspective of both the school and the community and its expectations for the students. The reflections of early memories of racial, cultural, and educational differences helped Mr. Mendoza to articulate his perceptions of the present state of Hispanics in the school today. When educators overlook the potential of diverse students, they create a lack of expectancy. Only if one has a expectation of appropriate future goals for students will that likelihood become a reality. The expectancy of appropriate future goals for Hispanics does not seemed to have changed much over the last twenty years in Midtown High School. Mr. Mendoza compares expectation levels for students today to when he was a student at Midtown High School. He relates that even though he always knew "in himself" that he was going to college he never was never encouraged to take anything but the basic courses, the minimum required for graduation. *"..when I was here in high school, at home, I was never pushed, and at school I was never pushed"*. Nobody ever said, *'Oh why don't you work and try to do this'"*.

To ensure triangulation (Denzin, 1978) throughout the study, I gathered data from three primary sources, including formal and informal interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis. In the informal and formal interviews, I used a process which could be described as semi-structured. I began the interviews with a focused question, then allowed the participant to guide the conversation. The purpose of this method was meaning-making. I would listen as the participants reflected aloud on past and present experiences and consider them in relation to the significance of teacher-student interactions and expectations.

Data Source

During this study I used the constant comparative method of data collection as suggested by Glasser and Strauss (1990). Constant comparison refers to the continual process of comparing segments within and across categories. The term constant highlights the fact that the process of comparison and revision of categories is repeated until satisfactory closure was achieved. This method was utilized to analyze the data and develop a set of grounded themes (Glasser & Strauss, 1990) based on classroom observations and formal and informal interviews. Grounded theory was chosen because the aim of this method is to develop explanatory theory concerning common social life patterns (Chenitz & Swanson, 1986). Guba and Lincoln (1989) considered grounded theory research as dealing with verification as well as discovery. Through the use of archival records, classroom observations, formal and informal interviews this study sought to verify previous research and to discover new themes for future investigations. Formal interviews were audio taped and transcribed for analysis. Field notes and theoretical observations of students, teachers, and administrators were recorded weekly. A reflective journal was maintained to record thoughts and observations as the study progressed. As the data was generated, concepts were organized and labeled, code notes developed, and categories and themes named. These themes were then analyzed and interpretations were identified. As I continued to gather data the existing themes were compared.

Results

Theme 1: Relationship Between Student and Teacher

Social Relations Model

The first and most evident theme which emerged in the study the idea that *a close relationship between the student and teacher resulted in increased motivation for the student.* Schlosser (1992) reported that teachers who were the most successful in helping culturally diverse students be engaged more successfully in school knew about the home lives and cultural backgrounds of the students, and were knowledgeable of the impact of young adolescents'

developmental needs on learning. The social relations model (Wehlage, Rutter, Smith, Lesko, & Fernandez, 1989) attributes school failure to a lack of personal connection to school and their alienation from school adults. The data gathered from both the students and the teachers in this study corroborates this research.

Maria in describing the teachers she feels expects the most from her : "*Mrs. Blankenship, she tell us she likes us and that she wants what is best for us. She helps us to understand. Like in literature, they got huge words, I don't understand the meaning...she'll sit there and explain it to us, she'll kid around, and help us get the meaning*". Maria identified a second teacher as someone she felt close to. *"And Mrs Garcia, "Last year, when my parents were going through a divorce, she asked me if she could help. She expects a lot, but she gives you confidence that you can do it*". Mrs Garcia will say, "*I know you can do better and YOU know you can do better*".

Jesse, when asked what makes a "good" teacher said, good teachers are "*somebody who gets along with their students and can communicate with them, and thinks the way they do". One particular teacher was noted as " he has a feeling for what you're thinking*". In particular, Jesse confirmed that he wanted his teachers to know his personal life and that felt closer to those who did. The teachers who took the time to know me "*saw something in me that I didn't see in myself*'.

Mrs. Blankenship tries to engage her students in conversation about their homes, friends, and values their opinions about school and community issues. She repeatedly introduces material into the classroom that is relevant to the students in their daily lives. Mrs. Blankenship was concerned about her student's achievement and tries to be motivating to her students. "*I'm very open and straight forward with them, and I try to encourage them...I say ' Why didn't you do this, because you're capable of doing this*'".

Personalized Learning Environments

The data also showed how the use of personalized learning environments were important to the motivation and achievement of the Hispanic students. A personalized learning environment is one that utilizes the concepts of learning styles, cooperative learning and brain compatible teaching strategies. The three teachers that the students indicated as the "best" teachers all utilized

these tactics to a degree. "I *let them discuss, and work together with a partner or friend. The students may work in groups of two, three, or four, it doesn't matter. When the students work together they are more likely to figure out the answer, and learn, than if I show them how*", Mr. Mendoza says.

Mrs. Blankenship values the ability to think individually as evidenced by the lively discussions in her classroom "*They're allowed to say whatever is on their mind, I allow my kids to be as open as they want to be... within reason*". Both Jesse and Maria felt that a particular math teacher was outstanding, that she cared about them as individuals and that she had the ability to help them learn math. Jesse lacked confidence in his math abilities yet he said that if he could have this teacher he would take the higher level courses. When he did not get this teacher, he dropped the class and changed to an elective. While observing this classroom, I watched as the teacher utilized manipulatives and activities to teach math concepts. In one lesson she employed strategies that would reach the visual, auditory and tactile/kinestic learner. In addition her room was set up in an informal style with varied seating arrangements which seemly relaxed the students.

Theme 2: Teacher Expectations

Deficit Model

The second result of the study that of *lower teacher expectations for minority students.* Values, attitudes, and stereotypes influence the expectations of teachers, counselors, and administrators as they interact daily with students (Lindley & Keithley, 1991). These expectations carry subtle but powerful messages. When students' experiences do not match those expected by teachers and schools, teachers may attribute school problems to "deficient" home and community environments and may lower their exceptions for student success (Ortiz & Yates, 1989). When asked about the difference between academic achievement between ethnic groups, Mrs. Blankenship said, "*On a whole, the Hispanic kids are the least academic*". When pushed for why she believed this, she answered, "*I think it is their home situation. In most cases, they do not have parents that support them*". This attitude contributes to the deficit model (Flores, Cousin, & Diaz, 1991) which contends that student's educational problems lie in punitively pathological

families, communities, and culture. One manifestation of the deficit model is that of labeling students at risk and attributing school failure to being a member of that category (Cuban, 1989).

Mr. Mendoza relates, "*When White teachers see Hispanic or Black students, they expect less from them. Suppose the majority of these students don't work very hard and they just want to get by, the teachers say, 'oh, he's Hispanic, I'm just going to help him get along'. But if there are those Hispanic students who are potentially high , the teachers still see them in the same category. I feel that Hispanic students are not being pushed towards higher level classes. We expect more from the Whites, so the teachers will automatically say, 'You need to sign up for this or for that'. They are not being pushed at school or at home*". In comparing today's expectation level to his experience Mr. Mendoza states "*I pushed myself, whereas, I wish I'd been pushed in high school. And I feel we've got a million Hispanics here that are the same way*". When asked if she felt that Anglo students got an advantage over the Hispanic students, Marie answered, "*Not always, some teachers are that way, most of them aren't*". Maria's attitude was similar to Mr. Mendoza in that she had inner confidence that she was academically capable and would attend college after high school. She implied that she did not need the staff's encouragement.

Theme 3: Teacher Expectations and Student Motivation

The final theme that emerged in the data was the *relationship between teacher expectations and student motivation* . The data on low student motivation could be grouped into three separate subthemes.

Disengagement from school

Students became disengaged from school because they believed that some teachers were uninterested in them . Without encouragement and recognition of potential, students may choose the least strenuous path to graduation. Students who feel alienated from school may select courses which meet the minimum requirements necessary in the core subjects and supplement these with an unrelated variety of electives. Upon completion of high school students who have completed only the minimum requirements are ill equipped to enter either the work force or higher education. In Jesse's interview we find, "*If I don't like the class, (if the material is being presented in what he*

considers a boring way, or if he feels the teacher doesn't like him) I just sit there and I just drift off. In English, I could learn...if I would sit there and pay attention". When I continued to question Jesses as to why he did not want to pay attention and get more out of class, he answered, *"The attitude I guess. You have the attitude that you just want to graduate and get out of here and you don't care what your grades look like...as long as you barely get by*". When speaking about teacher expectations, Mr. Mendoza says, " *I know they (the students) are going to want to get by. I feel that if you expect more you can get more, otherwise you're going to get whatever they feel like giving you*" . Jesse added, "*Teachers need to demand something, or otherwise kids just do the minimum*".

With low motivation, students may develop a helplessness pattern characterized by failure-orientated cognitions, negative affect, and deterioration in academic performance. Jesse explained his failure in a class this way. "*I don't always do my work, and so she's always on me about my work. I just forget to do my work. I understand it, but when she just goes on and on, I'll just sit there and do nothing*"

Feelings of Helplessness

A second subtheme found under low student motivations was the Hispanic student and teachers feeling of helplessness to change the situation. This feeling of helplessness to change the situation is seen in the common reference to "they", the established power. Mr. Mendoza was encouraging students to sign up for a higher math course, but his students related that "they" wouldn't let them sign up because the students had not been selected as capable for honors math. When asked if he believes that he was tracked into lower level classes in high school because he was Hispanic, Mr. Mendoza says, "'*they' put me in Fundamentals of Math I and Fundamentals of Math 2 and 'they' said that was all you need to graduate*". When discussing the fact that as a teacher, he was pushing students to take more advanced classes, he comments that "'*they*'" (the other math teachers*) "didn't like it and so I kinda stopped saying it*".

Vision of Future

The third subtheme dealing with student motivation is the lack of a clear vision of the future for the Hispanic student is hampered by the lack of role models in the home, school, and

community. Role models and mentors who are members of the minority students' cultural background serve to influence his or her own expectations about success and failure. It is important for students to have access to teachers and community members who can support their academic efforts and ambitions, and who motivate the student to perform. Research indicates that whether or not an individual values achievement, such as high academic performance, in the same way that society values it; and why that individual might devalue achievement may have roots in one's culture (Griffin, 1988; Grebler, Moore & Guzman, 1970. When asked the importance of grades, Jesse states, "*I never thought of an A as important. Some kids think they have to make all A's.* When I questioned him as to why they think A's are important, Jesse answered, "*When they were small, their parents put it in their heads*". Jesse also observed that some kids are just "naturally smart" and don't have to pay attention. Jesse compared his generation to that of his mother's. When his mom was young, she didn't finish school and a bunch of people in her class didn't finish. Jesse believes that his generation is working hard to finish high school.

The educational process should be viewed as a series of ongoing interactions between schools, communities, families, educators, and students. The academic success of minority students is embedded in a series of interactions between and across classroom, school, and home, all of which operate within a broader societal context. For example, at the societal level, the low performance of many Hispanic students is embedded in the interactions between majority and "minority" groups, which influence educator role definitions and school climate (Cummins 1986, 1994; Obgu & Mature-Bianchi, 1986).

Implications

To work effectively with the heterogeneous student populations in our schools, educators must realize the impact of societal and cultural influence on academic achievement. Society must become aware of the large number of people who live under the dual handicap of ethnic or racial minority status and poverty. The challenge is to create conditions in which the Hispanic can become ever more active participants in our society, can develop their individual abilities without hindrance, and are free to make personal choices with regard to their cultural identity. The continued population growth of minorities in the Southwest demands that educational practices be

examined for effectiveness for all cultures. When there is not recognition of the biases and stereotypes, the exclusion of students from opportunities and equal treatment occurs. This study reports data that relates to the idea that teacher's expectations are often based on generalizations that low socioeconomic students and students from oppressed groups do not perform well in school (Baron, Tom & Cooper, 1985). Many of the teachers continued to identify their expectations for students according to whether students were in regular or honors classes and as to whether the student were White or minority. Those teachers which offered intellectually stimulating or challenging curriculum to all students remained isolated individuals. This leads to the conclusion that teacher beliefs and expectations interact with student beliefs and behaviors (Bennett, 1995). At least some of the educators which were interviewed expressed a belief that Hispanic students were not as capable academically as the White students. The general characteristics attributed to at risk students tended to strengthen the teacher's convictions that student's and their families were the problem, not the school. These perspectives narrowed the teacher's vision of alternatives to existing practice.

Additionally, the study contributes information on how students with low motivation may perform below their academic potential. Student lack of academic success could be attributed to an alienation from the curriculum and the school's culture. The student voice also implicated that their lack of achievement was a factor of their resistance to a rote approach to teaching and learning, especially in the minimum track courses, and to the teacher's racial biases. If we, like Ramsey (1987) believe that individuals approach social interactions with some expectations and preformed ideas about what the people will be like; and furthermore, these assumptions shape our perceptions and responses, which in turn influence the actions of the person or people with whom we are in contact ,then we see the significance of a teacher's expectations on a student's motivation.

Students who became disengaged from school because they believed that some teachers were uninterested in them (Moos & Moos, 1978; Tuck, 1989; Wehlage & Rutter, 1986). often receive minimum skills or drop out of high school. Some Hispanic students were taking lower level classes and were not being challenged to fully realize their potential academically. While these students might express goals of college or professional careers, they did not see the correlation

between a rigorous high school course of study and the fulfillment of these goals.

To respond effectively to the particular needs, concerns, and interest of the Hispanic student, educators must see the community as the context of their work. Often educators decisions are mediated by the influence of the parents, those who share their ideas with the school board, and the community as a whole. In Midtown, the White middle-class voice is heard, while other interests may gone unattended. There is little external impetus for the school to embrace fundamental change or reassess expectations or assumptions about students. Without the benefit of alternative perspectives, teachers tended to reinforce the dominate constructs. Teachers have few incentives to examine critically or to challenge the culture of the school. Real change in unlikely to occur in this atmosphere of protected privileges, a legacy of racism, and a lack of organized minority agenda.

The challenge for education is to remove the obstacles which the larger system has placed in the path of socioeconomic improvement for the Hispanics. Conditions must be created which will allow the Hispanics to become active participants in our society and to develop their individual abilities without hindrance. While this study focused on Hispanic students in a context-specific setting and therefore may be limited in its generalizability, it nonetheless provides insight into how one teacher's perceptions of the effect of majority teacher expectations on student motivation and future aspirations.

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