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PREVIEW

AN ATTEMPT TO UNDERSTAND SUCCESSFUL EMPLOYABILITY IN
MEXICAN-AMERICAN WOMEN AS A FUNCTION OF LEVELS
OF ACCULTURATION AND ACHIEVEMENT
ORIENTATION

Approved:

Harmon M. Hirsch

G. William Luckes

Philip Hornelstein

Gloria A. Gary

Michael E. Rind
Dean of the Graduate School

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ORIENTATION

by

Edna Luisa Reyes-Wilson, B.A.

THESIS

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of
The University of Texas at El Paso
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of
Master of Arts

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO

December 1984

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Philip Himelstein, Ph.D., Gloria A. Young, Ph.D., and G. William Lucker, Ph.D. for their interest and support in this project. I would like to give Harmon M. Hosch, Ph.D. a special thanks for his constant availability and ever valuable assistance and for his helping to instill a greater interest in and respect for research.

Submitted to the committee November 28, 1984.

Abstract

Levels of acculturation and achievement orientation have not previously been investigated with respect to their influence on the employment success of Mexican-American women. The El Paso Acculturation Scale and the Work and Family Orientation Questionnaire were administered to 100 Mexican-American women in their homes. Fifty had successfully completed 90 days in employment and 50 had been unsuccessful in maintaining a job for 90 days. Their employment performance was analyzed in relation to the results of the questionnaires using multiple regression techniques. Results failed to support the hypotheses with regression coefficients and correlations showing non-significant relationships among acculturation and achievement orientation and their effects on success. Regression coefficients ranged from $-.09$ to $.07$. A posteriori analysis indicated a Mexican-oriented population whose mode of response was significantly different from the original norming population of the WOFO. Post hoc analysis demonstrated the inappropriateness of this scale in dealing with a Mexican population and the need for developing norms with an appropriate sample.

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An Attempt to Understand Successful Employability in
Mexican-American Women as a Function of Levels
of Acculturation and Achievement Orientation

There is an increasing number of women joining today's work force.

A great many of these women, especially in the Southwestern United States, are of Mexican descent, or Mexican-American. This change in the traditional female role has come about because of social and economic situations and/or pressures. The increase in the Mexican-American populations in El Paso, Texas, has been from 43.6% of the population in 1960, to 56.9% in 1978. Nationwide, the percentage of employed Mexican-American women has risen from 28.8% in 1960, to 45% in 1978 (Sheppard, Montoya & Carolyn, 1977). In spite of the apparent interest and need to work, there is a marked number of women who have been unable to succeed as employees. The Texas Department of Human Resources reports a success rate of approximately 25% from their employment program, which provides job assistance to predominantly Mexican-American women (L. Macias, personal communication, September 21, 1983).

Concentrating on the Mexican-American woman does not mean to imply that women of other ethnic origins do not possess similar characteristics or problems in their transition of roles. There are aspects of the Mexican-American female, however, which are unique and of particular interest: her vast numbers and continual influx in the border areas, as well as differences in her cultural background. It is felt that acculturation and achievement need to be looked at as influential in her employment success.

Traditionally, the Mexican-American woman has accepted the role of

mother, wife, and homemaker, where she has functioned as the pillar of the family and is responsible for cultural survival. The family is the main vehicle for group and personal identity. It functions as the source of care and socialization of the young, and the management of adult personality tensions. It has religious, educational, medical and social welfare functions. The family serves to establish and maintain solidarity of members. This system is the responsibility of the woman (Garcia-Bahne, 1977). Mirande (1977) states that as the father is a remote and distant authority figure, the mother plays a critical part in the children's lives. She not only performs domestic tasks but is also responsible for setting parameters for the children's behaviors, is a strong informal influence in the home, is extremely important in ultrafamily relationships, as well as perpetuating the language and values of the Mexican-American.

The Latin woman has commonly been depicted as cloistered in the home due to an extreme double standard differentiating between feminine passivity and masculine aggression (Boone, 1980). She has had less freedom in social contacts and her life has been dominated by her father and other males in the family. Any work the Mexican-American woman does outside the home is seen as a threat to the male as it decreases her financial dependence on him and means less time she can devote to him (Maccoby, 1971). The Mexican-American male's income is a powerful force in shaping his family (Garcia-Bahne, 1977). However, his sole income is often times not sufficient to provide adequate support for the family. Twenty-one percent of all Hispanics in the United States had family incomes below the poverty level in 1977. In 1981, 55.9% of all Hispanic women, without husbands, were below the poverty line. Hispanic women have more children than do Anglos