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The relationship between acculturation status, goal orientation, and self-efficacy in adolescents

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The Relationship Between Acculturation Status,
Goal Orientation, and Self-Efficacy in Adolescents

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A thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty of

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Abstract

Current commentary on population growth in the United States more often than not includes phrases such as, “the increasing minority population”. While the composition of our overall population is evolving and changing, so does the makeup of our schools. As seen through the current state of the achievement gap, differences between cultures, ethnicities, and races are growing in relevance as we work to address educational shortcomings. The current study aims to investigate the relationship between acculturation status, achievement goal orientation, and self-efficacy. A sampling of 98 10th grade students was taken from a large and diverse school district in the Pacific Northwest. Despite diverse population statistics, the sample taken for this study was fairly homogenous, likely impacting the results. Findings indicated that there were weak and non-significant correlations between achievement goal orientation and acculturation status as well as between acculturation status and general academic self-efficacy. A weak, yet significant, positive correlation was seen between approach-type goal orientations and general academic self-efficacy. These results seem to indicate that integration into the mainstream culture of the United States does not have any relationship with a students’ achievement goal orientation or general academic self-efficacy. The significant correlation between approach-type goal orientations and self-efficacy may be indicative of developmental effects on goal orientation or the manifestation of adaptive educational behaviors. Interventions to increase students’ identification with approach-type goal orientations may prove to be beneficial in increasing overall achievement. Further implications and future directions of this research are discussed.

Introduction

Statement of the Problem

The makeup of American society has been slowly changing over the past several decades. As of 2005, the total minority population represented 33% of all United States citizens. The total minority population is forecasted to increase by six percentage points, to 39% of the total population by 2020 (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2007). Across the United States, immigration is changing the face of America. In fact, according to the U.S. Department of Education, for the 2009-2010 school year, approximately 44% of students enrolled in school belonged to a minority group. Hispanics make up the largest minority group, including 22% of the student population, trailed by African-Americans, representing 16% of the population, Asians/Pacific Islanders at 5%, American Indians/ Alaska Natives at 1%, and under 1% of the students reported belonging to two or more races (NCES, 2010). We are already seeing an increase in minority students enrolling in school at a higher rate than originally forecasted. As increasing numbers of first generation immigrants plant themselves in the United States, cultural diversity is due to increase exponentially. The makeup of the population is shifting not just due to immigration, but through second and third generation individuals as well.

As immigrants choose to settle in the United States, small cultural pockets can develop. Some cultural ideals lend themselves to being able to support and encourage these types of communities, such as African American and Hispanic cultures (Fischer, 1996; Mirandé, 1997). For example, African American culture can often emphasize religion; African American communities often center around and stem from local churches. Collectivist Asian communities are also often made up of large family units

that live in close proximity and provide emotional, financial, and other practical supports to one another. These communities are able to collectively raise future generations of children in accord with their culture. Additionally, children and grandchildren of multicultural parents themselves become of a mixed culture, continuing to increase the diversity of America. Due to the steadily changing cultural makeup of American society, it is important to realize the impact that it has on various aspects of government service delivery.

Education is a piece of the government that has the utmost importance in the lives of American children. As a scaled version of society, the makeup of public schools shifts as the population changes. In order to best serve the increasing diversity of children in schools, it is imperative that school officials be knowledgeable of the best learning environments for a multicultural student body. Enrollment in pre-kindergarten education and care (ages 3-5) increased four percentage points for both Caucasian and Hispanic populations and eight percentage points for African-American populations from 1991 to 2005 (NCES, 2007). From 1993 to 2003, total minority enrollment in public and secondary school increased from 34% to 41.3%; Hispanic student enrollment increased the most over this period of time by 6%, followed by Asian/Pacific Islanders being responsible for about 1% of the increase, and African American and American Indian/Alaska Native student enrollment remaining about constant (NCES, 2007). This vast assortment of cultures presents an interesting challenge for school staff and officials.

Each individual culture brings a slightly different attitude and belief system to education, interpersonal relations, and religion to name just a few. Hofstede (1986) details several dimensions upon which cultural influences may impact the educational

atmosphere. Of utmost importance are the factors which affect interpersonal relationships between teachers and students. Collectivist and individualist societies emphasize different values and mannerisms that are often contradictory. For example, an individualist culture assumes that an individual will look primarily after his or her own interests and the interests of his or her immediate family. An individual within a collectivist culture is given the protection of the society but is expected to provide permanent loyalty in return.

Furthermore, many collectivist societies highlight tradition, learning “how to do”, preferential treatment to high performing students, speaking only when first spoken to, and the importance of “face.” On the other hand, individualistic societies praise individuals who speak up in large groups, impartial teaching, and learning “how to learn.” This contrast can be seen when comparing values generally taught in the United States and those in a more collectivistic culture, such as in China. These values are almost perfectly contradictory, which is only the beginning of the culturally based conflicts that may arise in a school community. Previous work by Chheda (2008) investigated the relationship between various levels of cultural integration and school belonging, as well as relationship between minority status and school belonging in the United States. She stated that in order for a school to maximize a student’s capacity for learning, it must be able to foster an environment where the student feels like they belong and are a part of the community. Chheda found that students of a minority status had a lower sense of belonging than those students who identified with the majority culture. She also found a moderate positive correlation between acculturation status and school belonging.

There are many differences between cultures that can serve as road blocks to multicultural students. An additional example is that of language, where differences in vocabulary or dialect may mean a complete misunderstanding of a situation, academic or otherwise. There are countless more aspects of cultural interactions that may lay the foundation for a behavioral dispute between a teacher and a student, a teenager appearing to defy school rules for the sake of disobeying, or poor achievement on an exam. Beyond differing behavioral and societal norms, cultural values can run deep in an individual's motivation and attitude towards learning. School has been said to be the place where immigrant and refugee students first face true American culture (Berry, Kim, Power, Young, & Bujaki, 1989).

An area of education that evidences the disparity between cultures in the United States is the achievement gap. According to the main assessments of children aged 9, 13, and 17 by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (Vanneman, Hamilton, Baldwin, & Rahman, 2009), overall scores were higher than when first assessed in the 1970s for Black, White, and Hispanic students in reading and mathematics. However, there has been no improvement in narrowing the White-Black and White-Hispanic achievement gaps for these age groups in either math or reading between the 2004 and 2008 assessments. In better understanding our students and their culture, we may be able to create a school environment that is more tailored to suit the needs of the non-Caucasian student. We may then begin to address these needs in attempts to narrow the achievement gap.

Within this research, I will investigate culture through acculturation, which identifies the level at which a student has integrated their personal cultural identity with

the majority culture, which is Caucasian in this instance. Furthermore, in order to understand more fully the relationship between acculturation and achievement, we look at two of the four aspects of motivation that have been shown to impact student achievement. Linnenbrink and Pintrich (2002) suggest that social cognitive motivational theory consists of four major constructs: self-efficacy, attributions, intrinsic motivation, and goal orientations. Here, the focus is on the concepts of self-efficacy and goal orientation and their correlation with acculturation in attempts to identify additional factors that contribute to students' approaches towards school.

It is with a thorough understanding of factors that can impact a student within the school atmosphere that a school psychologist can help to foster positive educational attitudes. In identifying where a student may lie along the acculturation spectrum, we are better able to understand a student's identity and therefore promote a more inclusive educational environment. Achieving multicultural sensitivity among school staff may be made easier and more comprehensive. With the appropriate awareness and consideration, a school psychologist may be able to help shape the environment and policies of a school in order to better support its minority students and increase achievement overall.

Review of the Literature

Acculturation

The minority student population has been increasing steadily. The students are from all different cultures and origins, with varying levels of involvement in the United States culture. An immigrant student from China will have different beliefs, motivations, behavior, and achievement than a second generation student from Jamaica. The nuances involved in recognizing and considering the effects of culture on a student's outlook towards learning are numerous. It is up to the school psychologist and other school staff to accept the responsibility of understanding a student in his or her entirety. As they enter the school system or society in general, many undertake the process known as acculturation.

We can understand the process of adjusting or rejecting a culture through what is termed acculturation. It is a term that has been coined in reference to the process that individuals go through when adapting to a new country, society, and way of living. This process occurs when individuals from two different cultures are exposed to each other over an extended period of time, such as when a family or individual immigrates to a country different than their country of origin. Berry et al. (1989) outlined a widely-accepted model of acculturation which takes into account various individual attitudes. These attitudes include personal opinions on importance of maintaining a personal cultural identity and importance of maintaining interactions with people of other cultures. This research outlines four different classifications of acculturation strategies that stem from different combinations of the approaches to the two values systems indicated above.

Table 1

Cultural Values of Acculturation Statuses

		Value personal cultural maintenance	
		yes	no
Value intercultural interactions	Yes	integration	assimilation
	No	separation	marginalization

Berry et al., state that an attitude of assimilation is held when the individual values interacting with different cultures and is willing to give up their own cultural identity in favor of the values and ideals of another culture. Separation is the theoretical opposite of assimilation, where the individual values their personal cultural identity more than those of another and therefore withdraws from interaction in favor of remaining in-group. When individuals value both interactions with other cultures and their own heritage, they are said to prefer the integration strategy, which is also commonly known as a bicultural acculturation strategy. Marginalization can also be known as de-culturation because the individual values neither their own culture nor a different culture. Additionally, marginalization has been associated with anxiety and confusion, namely when an individual either rejects, or is rejected by a different culture. This reaction has been termed acculturative stress, where the individual experiences anxiety as a result of a loss of identity and feelings of alienation (Berry et al., 1989).

Acculturation attitudes have been shown to play a role in mental health for several different ethnic groups (Kvernmno & Heyerdahl, 2003). Acculturation attitudes have also been shown in some cultures to play a part in achievement. Chen and Stevenson (1995)

found that what they termed “cultural modification” affected many aspects of a students’ attitude towards achievement. Particularly, they saw that Asian-American students who were able to attend more towards studying and education, had a more positive attitude towards math, and took more difficult courses as compared to Caucasian American students, but less so than Chinese and Japanese students. Chen and Stevenson (1995) attribute cultural modification to the process of acculturation when a family immigrates into the United States. The beliefs of the family can gradually modify and adapt to those of the majority culture, thus is it not only the student that goes through acculturation, but also the family system as well. Birman, Trickett, and Buchanan (2005) stated that although the acculturation literature is fairly abundant, it lacks the depth that is necessary for a true understanding of the process. Acculturation must be understood within the context of the community, which is often neglected in studies. They also state that culture and community structure can differentially affect attitudes towards education including attendance, school involvement, peer relationships, and achievement.

Many studies have focused on adolescent and early adolescent acculturation with different cultures as focus points, and with varying outcomes and implications (Birman et al., 2005; Farver, Narang, & Bhadha, 2002; Rhee, Chang, & Rhee, 2003). Adolescence itself is a period of personal identity turmoil and growth. Future research can only further help clinicians and practitioners to understand adolescents. Furthermore, adolescents can be particularly vulnerable to social pressures and the search for one’s own identity, with achievement and learning often falling to the wayside. Additional acculturation research with adolescent students can only further our understanding of this process, thereby allowing school staff a wider lens through which to understand their students.

Achievement Goal Orientation

Another aspect to understand is a student's attitude towards learning, known as achievement goal orientation. The construct of achievement goal orientation has developed and matured since its inception in the mid-80s (Dweck, 1986). Dweck originally proposed a dichotomous relationship between the development of competence (mastery goals) and the demonstrating of competence (performance goals). More recent research has developed this concept further into a trichotomous framework, utilizing the mastery-performance distinction at its base and further distinguishing performance goal orientation into approach and avoidance sub-types (Elliot & Harackiewicz, 1996). The mastery achievement goal orientation remained focused on describing students that desired to gain competence. The performance-approach and performance-avoidance orientations delineated students into those that strive to demonstrate superior competence as compared to others and those that desired to avoid demonstrating incompetence as compared to others. Elliot and Harackiewicz (1996) discuss how splitting the performance goal allows for more accurate definitions of adaptive behavior (approach orientation) and maladaptive behavior (avoidance orientation). They also found that students with performance-approach goal orientations were able to maintain similar levels of intrinsic motivation with mastery goal orientation students and significantly higher levels than those with performance-avoidance goal orientations.

Researchers have made further distinctions recently, by dividing the mastery goal orientation into -approach and -avoidance subsets (Elliot & McGregor, 2001) in order to investigate if this framework of achievement goal orientation more accurately

operationalizes the theory. Mastery-approach goals involve an individual's drive to master or improve a skill simply for the sake of the knowledge or an otherwise inherent drive. The mastery-avoidance goal orientation is a relatively new construct, with little published research (Hulleman, Schrager, Bodmann, & Harackiewicz, 2010). As Hulleman et al.(2010) state, the general concept behind the mastery-avoidance goal is that a student desires to avoid being unable to master a task or fail to develop skills.

In their study, Hulleman et al. (2010) conducted a meta-analysis of 243 correlational studies regarding self-reported achievement goals. When looking at performance goals, they saw that early research revealed either no relationship or a negative relationship between performance goals and achievement or achievement-related processes. This relationship was expanded upon when researchers began to classify performance goals as –approach and –avoidance. Hulleman saw that studies revealed performance-avoidance goals were more associated with negative achievement outcomes whereas the performance-approach goals were often positively associated with higher achievement outcomes. However, Hulleman et al. cited studies that have found the performance-approach goals were associated with maladaptive processes that have negative impact on overall achievement, such as cheating and reduced help-seeking behavior. Overall, though these are the general thoughts towards these performance goal orientation constructs, there are many conflicting studies that cast doubt. Regarding mastery-approach goal orientations, Hulleman et al. find that studies are much more harmonious in reporting mastery-approach goal orientations correlate positively with various adaptive motivational processes such as self-efficacy and intrinsic motivation. Though little comprehensive research has been performed with mastery-avoidance goal

orientations, studies do point towards more negative associations than with mastery-approach goals. To further complicate the field of achievement goal orientation theory, Hulleman et al. concluded that overall, different researchers are using similar language to describe different constructs.

In practical applications of achievement goal orientation theory, a large portion of the literature focuses on African American and Caucasian students; however, there have been various studies that looked at the goal orientations of different cultures (Urdu, 2004). Witkow and Fuligni (2007) investigated the fit of a 2x2 achievement goal orientation model with a diverse population of high school students. Not only were they looking across multiple cultures, but with a population that was previously understudied in the area of goal orientation. Remedios, Kiseleva, and Elliott (2008) compared goal orientations of university students from Russia and the UK, to find overall differences in orientation, but similar trends in decrease of mastery orientation overtime. Bong (2009) performed a replicative study of Elliot and McGregor's 2001 study with a population of early adolescent Korean students. She aimed to be able to generalize previous findings to not only different cultures, but also to different age groups. Results of her study provided additional evidence to support the 2x2 achievement goal framework in adolescent populations, where previous evidence had mainly come from college-age populations.

Additionally, it has been found that goal orientations also vary between cultures for various reasoning (Remedios et al., 2008). Rosen and D'Andrade (1959) stated that achievement motivation stems mainly from influence from the parents and parental behavior. How the parent interacts with and motivates the child, influences how a child develops their motivation towards achievement. We can then deduce that the motivation

that a child has towards achievement is a parallel concept to achievement goal orientation. Many cultures have fundamental differences in values and beliefs, which all play into raising a child. As cited by Urdan (2004), he states that collectivists and individualists maintain opposing values of self-identity, affecting motivation towards performance goals. Those students who identify with a collectivist culture would tend to define themselves in terms of the group as opposed to themselves, as they would with an individualistic cultural identification. These differences imply an effect on the reasoning behind a student's motivation. For example, the student holding an individualistic self-definition may adopt a performance-approach goal for pride or personal satisfaction whereas a student espousing a collectivist culture may do so for family pride. There are countless aspects of culture that affect an individual's attitude towards education.

Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy is an additional factor that has been theorized to impact overall achievement (Pintrich, 2000, Pintrich & De Groot, 1990). As Bandura (1997) first introduced this concept, self-efficacy is known as beliefs that people hold about their capabilities or people's judgment of their capabilities to complete a designated task successfully. Self-efficacy is narrower in scope than constructs such as self-concept or self-esteem. Where self-concept refers more to a general statement of a person's perception of himself or herself, self-efficacy refers to competence in regards to a specific task, such as "I'm good at writing English papers about Shakespeare's works." With this in mind, the focus is placed on self-efficacy within the academic setting.

Self-efficacy has been shown, through correlational and experimental studies, to have a predictive relationship to general achievement as well as cognitive engagement

(Pintrich, 2000; Pintrich & De Groot, 1990) and is stable across grades and genders (Bandura, 1997, Pintrich & Schunk, 2002). It is these characteristics that make self-efficacy a logical choice to investigate further. Pajares (2003) summarizes studies that indicate that self-efficacy has a link with academic performance. Furthermore, some of the studies referenced by Pajares found the direct effect of self-efficacy on performance was comparable to the effect of ability. With a link to achievement, we can gain a broad view of how these three constructs correlate within a secondary school-age population and glean insight into possible areas of application within schools.

The relationship between acculturation, goal orientation and self-efficacy has been discussed in general thus far. This study aims to investigate the relationships between these three variables in a less commonly studied population. In order for a school psychologist to be able to service an increasingly diverse population, they must be able to understand the factors that impact students in the schools.

Research Questions

The first hypothesis that this paper presents is that achievement goal orientation will vary along with acculturation status. Specifically, those students who are more acculturated will have positive correlations with performance goal orientations. The more an individual student feels integrated with the majority culture, the more likely it is that the student will adjust themselves towards the goal orientation of the majority culture. As students acculturate here in the United States, they are incorporating aspects of the culture, which leans towards individualism. There have been several studies that have documented differences in achievement for various cultures (Chiu & Chow, 2010; Zha, Walczyk, Griffith-Ross, Tobacyk, & Walczyk, 2006). Some research points to evidence

that students of individualistic societies tend towards performance goal orientations. Many of these past studies however, focus on either elementary school-aged children or the older college-student population. This study aims to replicate past findings with a population of high school students in order to support the generalizability of findings to an adolescent population.

This study also postulates that goal orientation will vary with self-efficacy. Past research has pointed towards positive correlations between self-efficacy and approach goal orientations in specific contexts, such as math or technology classes (Hsieh, Sullivan, & Guerra, 2008). Additionally, with studies as noted above finding a relationship between self-efficacy and achievement, we would like to investigate this relationship further. Beyond extending the research to a different aged population, this study aims to generalize findings to overall academic self-efficacy.

A third hypothesis is that varying levels of self-efficacy correlate with level of acculturation. Specifically stated, the more acculturated a student has become (moving towards integration), the higher their ratings of self-efficacy. As the culture in the United States tends towards individualism, it could follow that simply adopting the cultural values could impact levels of academic self-efficacy. Overall, this study begins to investigate this relationship.

Methodology

Participants

The targeted population of this study consisted of 10th grade high school students attending school in a Pacific Northwest school district. As of October 2009, this school district had a total student population of 20,959 students, with roughly even percentages of male (51.1%) and female (48.9%) students. The district is also representative of a culture pocket, with the majority of students identifying as White (70.9%), followed by Asian/Pacific Islander (14.4%), Black (11.7%), Hispanic (8.5%), and American Indian/Alaskan Native (1.6).

English classes were chosen to be the method of delivery because all sophomores must take an English class. Five Sophomore English teachers from two of the district's three high schools were contacted. Approximately 300 tenth grade students were introduced to the study and were given assent and consent forms during their English classes. During the introduction, the students were also informed that those who returned completed consent and assent forms would be eligible to win one of two gift certificates to be distributed at random at the conclusion of the study. Only those students who returned the completed parental consent form and youth assent form were allowed to participate in the study. Participation was voluntary and anonymous for all students, and perceived risk of harm as a result of completing the questionnaire was believed to be minimal.

A total of 98 tenth grade students participated in the study, with 41 identifying themselves as male and 57 as female. The average age of the participants was 15.72. Of

the participants, 53% self-identified as White, 29% as White-Mixed, 7% as Asian, 5% as Hispanic, 3% as European, 2% as African-American, and 1% as Middle Eastern.

Procedure

Permission to conduct the study was received from two of the three high schools in a Pacific Northwest school district. Within these two high schools, Sophomore English teachers were informed about the study, and five agreed to lend class time to this study. The researcher visited each 10th grade class and informed the students to the study with a short introductory presentation. At this time, consent and assent forms were distributed to all of the students, with the knowledge that the consent form must be signed by a parent or guardian and indicate permission to participate. The students were also informed that they needed to agree to participate in the study by signing the assent form and indicating that they would like to participate. Furthermore, students were encouraged to return the consent and assent forms through a gift card incentive, where students who had returned completed forms would be eligible in a random drawing.

Approximately one week later, the researcher returned to the classrooms and collected completed consent and assent forms from the teacher, who had been collecting them from students throughout the week. With one teacher, the time between form distribution and collection was approximately three weeks in order to increase response rate. Those students that had received permission from their parents and given self-assent to the researcher were asked to step out into the hallway to complete the questionnaire. They were seated in a quiet section, free from major distractions. The questionnaires distributed to the participants were identical and consisted of three measures as well as demographic questions. Two measures were multiple-choice, two involving a 5-point

Likert scale, another measure consisted of a single question, and the demographic questions were mainly fill-in-the-blank. The students were asked to complete the questionnaire quietly and independently while the researcher stood nearby in order to answer any questions. Most of the students were able to finish the questionnaire within 15 minutes and were dismissed back to class as they completed the questionnaire. Many of the participants took the questionnaire under less than ideal circumstances, such as in the school hallway, due to time and space constraints as well as by teacher request. After the data were collected, the names of two students were selected at random from those students that had returned completed consent and assent form, and each received gift cards.

Instruments

The demographic questionnaire asked students to identify their age, gender, grade level, as well as their ethnic identity. All major ethnic groups were available to select. “Multiracial” and “other” options were also available. The “other” option also included the ability to write-in an unlisted ethnic identity. Students were asked to identify what generation U.S. citizen they were by selecting one of four choices that describe how long their parents and grandparents had been in the country. Respondents were also asked to identify the primary language spoken in their home.

Acculturation was assessed using the Acculturation, Habits, and Interests Multicultural Scale for Adolescents (AHIMSA ; Unger, Gallaher, Shakib, Ritt-Olson, Palmer, & Johnson, 2002), which measures the four orientations of acculturation (integration, separation, assimilation, and marginalization). This is a brief 8-question measure, utilizing a multiple choice response format; responses consist of “The United

States”, “The country my family is from”, “Both”, and “Neither”. This measure provides a score on each of the four continuous scales, rating the participants’ level on each. The reported Cronbach’s alpha for each of the AHIMSA’s scales are Assimilation (.79), Separation (.68), Integration (.79), Marginalization (.50). The relatively low alpha values from the separation and marginalization categories are indicative of restriction of range. For the purposes of this study, the participants will be scored based on their highest scale. The items and response choices for this measure are provided in Appendix A.

Achievement motivation was measured using the Achievement Goal Questionnaire – Revised (AGQ-R) instrument (Elliot & Murayama, 2008). This 12-item scale is designed to be used with students in college-level classes and from various cultural backgrounds. Questions are presented using a 5 point likert scale format, with responses ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”. Elliot and Murayama (2008) also reported Cronbach’s alphas for the scales in this measure. The alpha was .92 for the performance-approach scale, .94 for the performance-avoidance scale, .84 for the mastery-approach scale, and .88 for the mastery-avoidance scale. The items in the scale are provided in Appendix A.

Though the primary focus of this research is to investigate correlations between acculturation status and achievement goal orientation of students, one self-efficacy question was included in order to gain a broad perspective. It was believed that a general measure of self-efficacy would be able to convey valuable correlational data to the other constructs we investigate here. Therefore, one item was constructed, which asked students to rate their belief in their ability to succeed in school. A multi-item self-efficacy measure was thought to distract from the main content of the questionnaire and to collect

data that would be beyond the scope of this research. The question was phrased broadly to investigate overall academic attitudes as opposed to attitudes toward specific subjects or classes (Bandura, 1997).

Results

The first hypothesis of this study theorized that achievement goal orientation will vary along with acculturation status. In particular, those students who are more acculturated will have positive correlations with performance goal orientations. First we present the descriptive statistics for both variables as measured by the AHIMSA and the AGQ-R in the following tables.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics on Achievement Goal Orientation

Goal Orientation	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Cronbach's Alpha
Mastery-Approach	98	4.00	.69	.69
Mastery-Avoidance	98	3.85	.91	.76
Performance-Approach	98	3.41	1.18	.80
Performance-Avoidance	98	3.82	1.13	.80

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics on Acculturation

Acculturation Status	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Assimilation	84	6.50	1.45
Separation	1	7.00	---
Integration	16	5.63	1.31
Marginalization	1	3.00	---

Goal orientation was analyzed by averaging the responses of the items that loaded to an individual goal orientation. Therefore, each individual has an average score for each orientation. In contrast, acculturation status was determined by summing the number of responses that fell in the majority category. Furthermore, it is important to note that four individuals had two majority responses and therefore both stages for that individual were taken into account. The one individual who self-identified as marginalization was one of the four who had identified two statuses. Table 4 displays the correlations between the scales of the achievement goal orientation questionnaire.

Table 4

Correlation Between Achievement Goal Questionnaire – Revised Scales

	Mastery Approach	Mastery Avoidance	Performance Approach	Performance Avoidance
Mastery Approach	---			
Mastery Avoidance	.434*	---		
Performance Approach	.482*	.478*	---	
Performance Avoidance	.413*	.707*	.612*	---

*Significant at the 0.01 level (one-tailed)

The correlational analysis of achievement goal orientation vs. acculturation status is presented in the table below. Analysis also included a one-tailed test of significance, though no significant correlations were found. Weak correlations were seen in all comparisons. The largest correlation found was a negative correlation between Integration and Mastery-Approach achievement goals. Correlations were not able to be calculated for the Separation and Marginalization acculturation statuses as each only had one respondent.

Table 5

Correlations between Acculturation Status and Achievement Goal Orientation

	Mastery Approach	Mastery Avoidance	Performance Approach	Performance Avoidance
Assimilation	-.029	-.074	.138	-.009
Separation	--	--	--	--
Integration	-.271	.255	-.053	.051
Marginalization	--	--	--	--

The second hypothesis postulated that goal orientation would correlate with self-efficacy. Table 5 presents descriptive statistics for self-efficacy. As students rated their levels of overall academic self-efficacy on a Likert scale from 1 to 5, this sampling of 10th grade students appears to have a high average of overall academic self-efficacy. It was originally hypothesized that self-efficacy would have a positive correlation with approach goal orientations. Table 6 presents results from the correlational analysis between self-efficacy and achievement goal orientation.

Table 6

Descriptive Statistics on Self-Efficacy

<u>N</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>Standard Deviation</u>
98	4.26	.75

Table 7

Correlations between Achievement Goal Orientation and Self-Efficacy

	Mastery Approach	Mastery Avoidance	Performance Approach	Performance Avoidance
Self-Efficacy	0.190*	0.063	0.225*	0.087

* Significant at the .05 level (one-tailed)

These results indicate weak, yet significant, positive correlations between self-efficacy and both the mastery-approach and performance-approach goal orientations. The correlations between self-efficacy and the avoidance goal orientations were not significant, supporting the original hypothesis.

Table 8

Correlations between Acculturation Status and Self-Efficacy

	Assimilation	Separation	Integration	Marginalization
Self-Efficacy	0.147	---	0.23	---

The third hypothesis stated that self-efficacy will also vary with acculturation status. The results presented above in Table 7 again do not include correlations for the acculturation statuses of separation and marginalization due to low N. Analysis indicates non-significant correlations between these two variables.

Overall, we find marginal and non-significant correlations between two acculturation statuses and the four goal orientation types. The correlation between self-

efficacy and acculturation status was also non-significant. A weak, but significant, correlation was found between self-efficacy and approach-type achievement goal orientations as hypothesized. Several correlations were not able to be analyzed due to low N in the separation and marginalization acculturation types.

Discussion

The literature is rich in studies documenting differences between cultures and ethnicities in all different aspects of life. Education research has further documented these differences in the educational environment, such as school behavior, performance, and attitudes. The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between acculturation status, achievement goal orientation, and self-efficacy. The aim was to explore the presence of a relationship between these three variables in order to provide a better overall lens through which school personnel would be able to understand their students. With this understanding, a richer environment could be created in order to foster these students' overall achievement and allow them to gain the most from the experience of school.

The first hypothesis of this study postulated that acculturation will correlate with goal orientation. Specifically, students who are more acculturated with mainstream culture will have a positive correlation with performance orientation. It was believed that the cultural ideals of United States citizens tend towards individualism. Furthermore, it was also believed that mainstream culture would then be more associated with performance achievement goal orientations. The findings pointed towards no correlation between these two variables.

Research supports different variations in goal orientations between cultures (Remedios et al., 2008; Bong, 2009). However, the research here did not reveal significant correlations between acculturation and achievement goal orientation. These results only imply that the acculturation and subsequent adoption of the mainstream culture does not relate to achievement goal orientation. As a result of this study, it

appears that acculturating to the mainstream culture in the United States is not related to a student's fundamental approach towards school. For these students, achievement goal orientation may not be as culturally influenced as some studies have found in the past (Dekker, 2008). However, due to the nature of the sampling and the demographics of the results, conclusions drawn from the acculturation scale may not be very reliable.

The study's second hypothesis stated that self-efficacy is positively correlated with approach type achievement goal orientations. The results indicated that there was a significant correlation between goal orientation and approach type achievement goal orientations. This, therefore, points to students with higher ratings on approach goal types being likely to also have higher overall academic self-efficacy. Not only does previous research point towards approach type achievement goals being related to adaptive educational behaviors, but also they have been related to higher levels of achievement, as found in Linnenbrink-Garcia, Tyson, & Patall (2008). It may be that these adaptive behaviors directly impact academic self-efficacy. However, it may also be that the attitudes held by students with approach goal orientations are more self-efficacious by nature than those with avoidance goal orientations. Much of this research is correlational as opposed to experimental and, therefore, causality of this relationship is less well-studied.

Furthermore, as previously stated, much of the achievement goal orientation work has focused on populations other than the high school aged population. Correlations and relationships have been found in these other populations, though this study extends findings to the high school-aged population. As these students are going through a period of extreme physical, emotional, and social change and development, other factors of their

lives are sure to fluctuate. The weak correlations found as a result of this research may be a demonstration of the turmoil of adolescence. University-aged students have been shown to have strong relationships between self-efficacy and the different achievement goal orientations. Therefore, it could be believed that this weak correlation shows the formation of what will later be established as a university student's approach-type achievement goal orientation. Another interpretation could involve students that have this strong relationship in high school then go on to be accepted to college.

The third hypothesis of this research postulated that there would be a positive correlation between self-efficacy and more highly acculturated students (those that identified with integration and assimilation acculturation statuses). It was believed that if the previous two hypotheses were supported, that it would in turn indicate the influence that adopting American values may have on these students. However, no correlations were seen between acculturation status and self-efficacy. This may be indicative of academic self-efficacy being more of a personal trait that is not related to culture. Following that, and the nonsupport of the first hypothesis, it could also be interpreted that for this age group, the acceptance of American cultural values does not play a factor in regards to their academic self-efficacy or their achievement goal orientations.

Despite two of the three hypotheses remaining unsupported, understanding these variables within our schools is still an important factor to performing our jobs well as education professionals. A different theory with which to consider these implications is through an understanding of the expectancy-value model. First proposed by Eccles, Alder, Futterman, Goff, Kaczala, Meece, & Midgley (1983), the expectancy-value model is only one theory of achievement motivation. At its core states that expectancies and

values held by an individual will directly impact achievement choices, behaviors, and motivation. “Expectancies” include concepts such as self-efficacy and overall beliefs regarding ability whereas “values” comprise of the importance that an individual places a task or skill. Both of these elements combine to produce a motivation style. What has been suggested here by the hypotheses in this research is the relationship of cultural values, as measured by acculturation status, with achievement goal orientation and self-efficacy. Within the framework of expectancy-value theory, it was believed that acculturation status would differentially affect the expectancies (self-efficacy) that would in-turn impact the overall motivation, or achievement goal orientation.

Though this relationship was not supported in this research, it does not lessen the impact that self-efficacy or value of a task has on overall motivation. As will be described in the following section, it is critical for educators to understand where individual students lie on the spectrum of self-efficacy, acculturation, and achievement goal orientation. Though the relationships between these variables have not been fully supported through this research, it does not diminish the importance that they have individually.

Implications

At its heart, this study was designed to provide insight into students’ attitudes towards education and the relationship that acculturation may play. As stated above, even though the results discovered minimal correlations between these variables, it does not diminish their individual importance and in fact may even highlight it. School employees, counselors, administrators, and school psychologists in particular, are in a position where they have the ability to have a large impact on students. As supported by this research

and past literature, carefully and individually tailored interventions aimed towards increasing students' identification with approach-type goal orientations may then help with raising overall self-efficacy. By increasing those two variables, we may be able to increase achievement for our students. Research has seen in particular contexts that minimal intervention to keep course material relevant to students will help to raise overall performance (Hulleman & Harackiewicz, 2009). Interventions in this area may consist of time for reflection or a short written reflection in the midst of a unit's material. This will keep theoretical and abstract information relevant to the student and will help foster student engagement.

Limitations of the Current Study

This study contains several limitations that must be considered in addition to the results and for future research. Firstly, this study is limited by its relatively small sample size and homogeneity. This may have significantly impacted the two hypotheses for which no significant results were found. With a larger sample size, it is more likely that more participants would fall into each acculturation status, and therefore increasing the number of participants falling into the separation and marginalization acculturation statuses. Furthermore, diversity of the sample as a whole may have been increased as well. Not only would the sample therefore be more characteristic of the district population as a whole, but this again may play a part in increasing the number participants falling into the separation and marginalization acculturation statuses.

Correlations from those population groups were unable to be calculated and the findings are therefore not reliably generalizable. Again, the limited diversity of the sample should be taken into consideration as it was unrepresentative of the districts'

overall student population. A more representative sampling, rather than a convenience sampling of students, would improve generalizability of these results. This study could be improved by a pre-screening of participants. By doing this, the sample is more controlled and participants can be selected due to their minority group identification. Therefore, the chances of increasing N of the separation and marginalization acculturation categories is substantially increased. Findings may then be generalizable to not only the whole school district, but to other school districts in the Pacific Northwest.

Furthermore, different methods of analysis could reveal additional results from the acculturation measure. The AHIMSA can also be analyzed by summing all of the individual responses in a category, i.e. summing all of the “Assimilated” responses across all items for all participants. Correlations could then be performed between the acculturation and achievement goal orientation scales as well as will the self-efficacy measure. This would be in contrast to what was done in this study, where the participants were classified into an acculturation category. This alternative analysis could yield more interpretable and generalizable results as it may increase N in the separation and marginalization categories.

There were additional data collection difficulties in that there is qualitative evidence that reduces the reliability of the achievement goal orientation data. Several students through notations on the questionnaire or verbal questions to the researcher, indicated either misunderstanding of several questionnaire items or a lack of differentiation between the item intent. For example, several students asked the researcher what the difference between items was and though the provided response

seemed to clarify the issue, the participants still appeared confused. These reliability issues may have impacted the overall quality of the AGQ-R data.

Further reliability concerns stem from high correlations between the different goal orientation scales. Table 4 displays the observed correlations between the four scales in this study. As discussed in Elliot and McGregor (2001), the scale's different questions load on different factors and their results present correlations much lower than ones seen within this study. The correlations between mastery-approach and mastery-avoidance scale and between the performance-avoidance and the performance-approach scales were the only correlation similar or lower than those reported in either Elliot and McGregor (2001) or Elliot and Murayama (2008). One reason for high correlations could include utilizing a 1-5 Likert scale as opposed to a 1-7 scale. This would have inherently decreased the differentiation seen between scales. Though, despite these high correlations, current research utilizing the AGQ-R is resulting in additional studies that report similar high correlations between scales (K. Barron, personal communication, May, 19, 2011). This points towards the scale having different characteristics than first reported by Elliot and McGregor (2001).

Moreover, goal orientation measures are still being revised and tuned. As Hulleman et al. (2010) found in their meta-analysis, there are multiple variations of achievement goal orientation scales. Researchers are using similar language to describe different constructs and instruments are not necessarily comparable across constructs due to this. As complex of a topic as achievement goal orientation is, it can fit within the larger construct of motivation, which is a widely researched and debated topic. Only with further research in this area will scholars be able to converge on the theory behind

achievement goal orientation as well as the instruments used to measure the construct in applied settings.

Despite the limitations of this study it is important to remember to simply continue to get to know students individually. As a large and diverse district in the Pacific Northwest, the first step for school district employees is to get to know and understand students at this level. This level of understanding, will positively impact the relationship that educators have with students, and could improve the fidelity of any interventions attempted by staff. Forming and maintaining relationships is the simplest and easiest way that we can have a positive impact on students.

Future Directions

The opportunities for future research are numerous in this area. First of all, being able to include a direct measure of achievement would be a benefit to a study such as this. It was not included in the original research design due to the current change that is happening in the current district. The district and state methods for measuring achievement are in constant flux. This school year was the first where the high school proficiency exam was utilized and the statewide instrument used to measure achievement was also changed. Due to their state of infancy, it was believed that these achievement measures would not have been fine-tuned yet and that utilizing them would be premature. Future research in this area would benefit from direct measures of achievement and being able to look at direct relationships between achievement, acculturation status, and achievement goal orientation.

Another direction could entail further investigation into acculturation status. Researchers could look at acculturation status in reference to cultural identification. From

this, we could glean where students are on the acculturation spectrum in regards to their acculturation status. With this information, educators should not stereotype students, but instead would be able to encourage and support those that fall into the separation or marginalization statuses. Following that thought, replications in different areas of the country could provide insight into culture pockets. The acculturation status of students in the Pacific Northwest may differ from those in Southwest. Furthermore, the various cultural groups may be differentially impacted by the presence, or lack thereof, of other cultures. For example, Hispanic students in an area largely populated with Hispanic individuals may behave differently and have beliefs different than Hispanic students in a largely Asian community.

Lastly, another direction for this research would be into longitudinal studies. This would provide a look at achievement goal orientation development over time. As our students develop and change, it is important that educators be aware of how that change presents. In order to support students in their journey through K-12 education, we must be able to understand their development throughout. This enables our school personnel to not only better interpret, handle, and resolve situations that may arise, but also to better support and encourage all students as a whole.

In conclusion, we are only beginning to scratch the surface when it comes to looking at acculturation and achievement goal orientation theory in high school students. This study presented a unique combination of variables to focus and though only one hypothesis was shown to be significant, there are a wealth of different viewpoints to take on these variables in future studies. By focusing on understanding multicultural students, school professionals attempt to expand their perception of that population. This opens the

door to possibly adopting a more inclusive and understanding educational atmosphere. Providing all students with a complete and thorough education is a goal for all educators and taking this step towards a better understanding of students will aid in that endeavor.

Appendix A. Acculturation and Goal Orientation Correlational Scale

**The Acculturation, Habits, and Interests Multicultural Scale for Adolescents
Acculturation Scale**

Please indicate which letter best completes the following sentences for you using these choices:

- a. The United States
- b. The country my family is from
- c. Both
- d. Neither

1. I am most comfortable being with people from...	A	B	C	D
2. My best friends are from...	A	B	C	D
3. The people I fit in with best are from...	A	B	C	D
4. My favorite music is from...	A	B	C	D
5. My favorite TV shows are from...	A	B	C	D
6. The holidays I celebrate are from...	A	B	C	D
7. The food I eat at home is from...	A	B	C	D
8. The way I do things and the way I think about things are from...	A	B	C	D

Achievement Goals Questionnaire – Revised

Please indicate the extent to which you agree with each of the statements below by circling the best number. Circling a score of 1 indicates that you strongly disagree. Circling a score of 5 indicates that you strongly agree. If you agree more or less, circle the number between 1 and 5 that best describes your level of agreement.

1 2 3 4 5

Strongly Disagree

Strongly Agree

9. My aim is to completely master the material presented in this class.	1	2	3	4	5
10. I am striving to do well compared to other students.	1	2	3	4	5
11. My goal is to learn as much as possible.	1	2	3	4	5
12. My aim is to perform well relative to other students.	1	2	3	4	5
13. My aim is to avoid learning less than I possibly could.	1	2	3	4	5
14. My goal is to avoid performing poorly compared to others.	1	2	3	4	5
15. I am striving to understand the content of this course as thoroughly as possible.	1	2	3	4	5
16. My goal is to perform better than the other students.	1	2	3	4	5
17. My goal is to avoid learning less than it is possible to learn.	1	2	3	4	5
18. I am striving to avoid performing worse than others.	1	2	3	4	5
19. I am striving to avoid an incomplete understanding of the course material.	1	2	3	4	5
20. My aim is to avoid doing worse than other students.	1	2	3	4	5

Self-Efficacy

- On a scale from 1 to 5, with 5 being the strongest and 1 being the weakest, how strongly would you say you believe in your ability to succeed in school?

Demographics

1. What is your age? _____
2. What is your sex?
___ M ___F
3. How would you describe your ethnic background? Circle all that apply. If selecting "Other", please fill in the blank.

White	American Indian/Alaska Native (Tribe) _____
African-American	Asian Indian
Chinese	Filipino
Japanese	Korean
Vietnamese	Other Asian _____
Native Hawaiian	Guamanian or Chamorro
Samoan	Other Pacific Islander _____
Other _____	

4. Check the statement that is most true for you?

___ I was born in a different country and immigrated to the United States.

___ I was born in the United States and one or both of my parents were born in a different country and immigrated.

___ I was born in the United States, my parents were born in the United States, and one or more of my grandparents were born in a different country and immigrated

___ I was born in the United States, my parents were born in the United States, and my grandparents were born in the United States

5. What is the primary language spoken in your home?

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