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Born to Achieve: Educational Attainment Among Hispanics

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Research Question

We predict that U.S.-born Hispanics will have higher educational achievement than foreign-born Hispanic immigrants in the United States.

Method

- We compared the means of standardized test scores, parent’s education, language acquisition, parental involvement, family composition, and income for U.S.-born Hispanics and foreign-born Hispanics.
- We created three linear regression models to measure the interactions between our variables as well as to show the amount of variance in test scores that each explains.
  - Model 1 compares U.S.-born and foreign-born Hispanics in regards to standardized test scores.
  - Model 2 takes income, language acquisition, and family structure into account for both U.S.-born and foreign-born Hispanics.
  - Model 3 adds parent’s education and parental involvement to the analysis.

Variables

- Educational Achievement- dependent variable- created by looking at standardized test scores for reading and math.
- U.S. vs. Foreign-Born- moderator created by looking at where respondent was born.
- How Long Respondent has been in U.S.- how long ago respondent came to U.S.
- Parental Educational Attainment- highest level of degree completed by father and mother.
- Respondent’s Language Acquisition- does respondent usually speak English or Spanish?
- Parental Involvement- created by looking at parental involvement in requiring homework and chores to be done as well as speaking to teachers and attending school events.
- Family Structure- who lives in same household as respondent.
- Majority of Hispanic students live with both birth parents.
- Parent’s Income- range of household income.
- For both U.S.-born Hispanics and foreign-born Hispanics their income range is $0 to $24,999.

Results

- Standardized Test Scores
  - There is no statistical difference between the standardized test scores of U.S.-born Hispanics and foreign-born Hispanics.
  - Education
    - Father’s highest level of education completed is one of the best predictors of children’s standardized test scores.
    - Parents of U.S.-born and foreign-born Hispanics both, on average, have equal level of education.
- Language Acquisition
  - The child’s primary language being English versus Spanish has no significant effect on standardized test scores.
- Parental Involvement
  - Parents who speaking to teachers or counselors has a significant negative effect on standardized test scores.
- Family Composition
  - Family composition has no significant effect on standardized test scores.
- Income
  - Income is one of the best predictors of children’s standardized test scores.
  - Parents of U.S.-born Hispanics have significantly higher income than parents of foreign-born Hispanics.

Discussion

- Our hypothesis that U.S.-born Hispanics would have higher standardized test scores than foreign-born Hispanics was incorrect - there is no difference.
- Future research should look at the correlation between family income and father’s education on standardized test scores for U.S. white children.
- If there is a correlation between family income and father’s education, then we should compare white children with Hispanic children (and look at other races as well) while controlling for father’s education and income.
- It may be that test scores among children are less affected by their race than they are by the income level of the child’s family and the child’s father’s education level.
- Rather than school programs to help minorities we would need to find a way to equalize opportunities for education and income.