Parental Involvement Among Immigrants: Examining Group Differences of Latent Means Using Categorical Data

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### BACKGROUND

Bourdieu’s model of cultural and social reproduction suggests that parents of mainstream backgrounds possess higher levels of cultural and social capital, thus magnifying their level of participation in their children’s educations.

Previous studies supporting this theory, have categorized parents of racial-ethnic minorities by pan-ethnic categories (Black, Asian, Hispanic, etc.). This study is one of the first to explore parental involvement levels of parents from different nationalities.

### RESEARCH QUESTIONS & HYPOTHESES

Q: How should parental involvement among immigrants be conceptualized?

H: In conjunction with previous findings, I hypothesize that parental involvement can be conceptualized as a three dimensional construct.

Q: Are parental involvement measurements the same across nationality groups?

H: I predict configural and metric invariance across nationality groups.

Q: Are parental involvement levels similar across nationality groups?

H: I predict that latent means for the parental involvement constructs will differ across nationality groups.

### DATA AND METHODS

My sample is drawn from the Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Survey, 1991-2006. Data were collected from immigrant parents and their children living in San Diego and Miami.

The present study uses only the parent survey, which includes dichotomous and ordered categorical data. My analysis is limited to N = 714 respondents which include parents from two of the largest nationalities available, Mexicans (n = 341) and Filipinos (n = 373).

Using Mplus version 5, I specify a three factor CFA model (with a probit approach) and test for configural invariance across two nationality groups. Next, I test for metric invariance by constraining the factor loadings to be equal across groups. Finally, I examine differences in the latent means. Chi-square tests are used to compare the three models.

### PRINCIPLE FINDINGS

Consistent with my first hypothesis, parental involvement can be conceptualized as a three dimensional construct. Indicators load onto three separate factors: monitoring, home-based, and school-based involvement.

Consistent with my second hypothesis, the three factor parental involvement model has metric invariance across nationality groups. Indicators of parental involvement operate similarly for Mexicans and Filipinos.

Consistent with my final hypothesis, latent means differ across nationality groups. Levels of monitoring, home-based, and school-based involvement differ for Mexicans and Filipinos.

- Filipino parents are more commonly involved with their children’s educations at school (parent-teacher organizations, attending conferences, volunteering).
- Mexican parents are more frequently involved with their children’s education at home (talking about school, plans, and helping with homework).

### CONCLUSIONS

Immigrant parents of different nationalities vary in their levels of involvement with their children’s education. Using Bourdieu’s model of social and cultural reproduction, these differences can be explained by the amount of social and cultural capital available to parents.

Mexican parents in the sample have typically come to the US as migrant laborers, while Filipinos have generally come as more highly educated professionals. These differences may have consequences for children, as evident from differences in involvement levels.