

This chapter describes the nature of Mexican American and European American parents' aspirations for their children's futures and the links between family resources and community resources.

Aspirations of Low-Income Mexican American and European American Parents for Their Children and Adolescents

Catherine R. Cooper, Margarita Azmitia,
Eugene E. Garcia, Angela Ittel, Edward Lopez,
Lourdes Rivera, Rebeca Martinez-Chavez

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Among the settings of children's learning and development outside of school, families are considered a central context for children's mastery of important cultural tools. Contemporary analyses emphasize the "cultural capital" or "funds of knowledge" that parents pass on to their children (Mehan, 1992; Moll, Velez-Ibanez, and Gonzalez, 1991), but Harkness, Super, and Keefer (1992) also note that "theories of culture acquisition must deal with the reality of cultural change" (p. 163). In this chapter, we consider the accommodations that parents make when they immigrate to a new culture or move into a new ecological niche within their present culture. In particular, we examine low-income parents' goals and aspirations for their children and consider potential sources for the differences in the aspirations for children in middle childhood and those in adolescence. We pay special attention to how parents' experiences of poverty may affect their aspirations as well as their guidance, and we argue that the transition to adolescence may represent a key time, one at which parents and children reassess their goals and aspirations for the children's futures as well as the availability of resources that would enable the children to attain the goals.

Ecocultural Perspectives on Contexts of Development

Like others (for example, Bronfenbrenner, 1988; Harkness, Super, and Keefer, 1992; Lerner and Lerner, 1983; Rogoff, 1990; Whiting and Edwards, 1988), we have argued that to account for children's and adolescents' competence and vulnerability, social scientists need to move beyond describing stereotypical, global, and static features of culture toward developing multidimensional descriptions of the ecocultural niches of children and adolescents and their relationships. Our approach has been extensively informed by the ecocultural framework proposed by Tharp and Gallimore (1988) and Weisner, Gallimore, and Jordan (1988), which highlights ways that development and socialization occur in the activity settings of everyday life. The dimensions of family activity settings include goals and values of socialization; scripts, or patterns, of communication used to express universal human tasks of guidance, negotiation, planning, and conflict resolution; and key personnel, that is, the configurations of the primary relationships involved in socialization, including children's parents, siblings, extended kin, and fictive kin. Although these dimensions are interdependent, in this chapter we focus primarily on parents' goals and values and their guidance scripts for socializing their aspirations, and we consider how both developmental and societal factors associated with the transition from childhood to adolescence may lead to reassessments of both parents' and adolescents' goals and aspirations.

The ecocultural framework appears especially useful for investigating developmental stability and change within individuals, families, groups, and cultures (Cooper, in press; Goldenberg, Reese, Balzano, and Gallimore, 1993). Although not a formal theory of falsifiable propositions, the ecocultural framework dimensionalizes the qualities of individual, relational, and group change that allow researchers to test hypotheses in order to account for within-culture variation in both competence and vulnerability during childhood and adolescence. Thus, a key advantage of this multidimensional framework is that it avoids the stereotyping of cultural differences between mainstream and minority group children and adolescents in terms of deficits. Such stereotyping is a particular risk because so much research on U.S. minority youth has been driven by the problem orientation of criminal justice, drug, and adolescent pregnancy funding initiatives (Cooper, in press; McLoyd, 1989).

Role of Poverty in Parental Aspirations

Low-income parents from diverse ethnic groups have been described as holding low educational and vocational aspirations for their children, and such aspirations have been assumed to contribute to school failure, unemployment, and persistent poverty. Yet recent research portrays low-income parents as holding high aspirations for their children while differing in their abilities to guide their children toward achieving the parents' wishes (Heath, 1983; Reese, Balzano, Gallimore, and Goldenberg, 1991). However, Rodman and Voydanoff (1988) have shown that, although low-income parents hold high aspirations for their children, these parents also tend to express dreams and goals that are more modest. Rodman and Voydanoff suggest that such mitigation may reflect parents' accommodations to their limited resources and uncertain future.

This chapter specifically concerns the aspirations and guidance of low-income Mexican American and European American parents of children and adolescents. Mexican American families are experiencing severe unemployment and poverty, and school dropout rates of Mexican American youth are among the highest of minority students (Garcia, in press). In our program of research, in order to assess how dimensions of Mexican American culture may influence family socialization, we have focused on immigrant parents whose children were born in the United States. Many of these families immigrated to the United States so their children could get a good education that would allow them to move out of poverty; the immigrant parents themselves typically have only an elementary school education (Suarez-Orozco, 1991). Low-income European American families experience both persistent and temporary poverty for multiple reasons that include divorce, job loss, and life-style choice. They constitute the majority of those living in poverty in the United States but are often ignored in discussions of poverty, developmental risk, and school failure (McLoyd and Flanagan, 1990). Low-income European American parents' pessimism regarding education as a way out of their poverty has been proposed as an explanation for their children's poor performance in school (Heath, 1983), yet many questions remain concerning within-group differences in the aspirations and guidance of these families for their children.

Stability and Change in Aspirations and Guidance

Recent research is illuminating how stability and change in parental goals and aspirations occur differentially across domains. For example, in the People's Republic of China, Lee and Zhan (1991) found stability from the 1950s to 1980s in parents' moral values-particularly those rooted in the traditional Chinese culture-but not in the political values mandated by government leaders during the parents' own youth. Other studies suggest that parents' moral goals for their children may remain relatively unchanged while educational and vocational goals may be modified over time, either by feedback from children's interests, achievements, or difficulties (Goldenberg, Reese, Balzano, and Gallimore, 1993) or by the "cooling off" of parental expectations resulting from teachers' and counselors' gatekeeping (Erickson and Schultz, 1981). In this chapter, we explore stability and

change in parents' educational, vocational, and personal/moral aspirations from middle childhood to early adolescence.

Contemporary discussions of stability and change in parental goals have been further enriched and sharpened by conceptions of hierarchies and timetables. The daily stresses of poverty may supersede parents' educational goals for children. For example, parents may place a higher priority on solving immediate financial problems than on long-term educational goals and may ask an older child to stay home to care for younger siblings or to seek employment to help the family rather than complete high school or a higher education. Similarly, parents may keep children home from school to protect them from neighborhood violence or such potential dangers at school as gang violence, drugs, or sexual activity. Thus, parents' aspirations for their child's or adolescent's personal safety, morality, or family obligations may supersede educational and vocational goals and lead to the parents' reassessing previously established goal hierarchies (Thomas, Chess, Sillen, and Mendez, 1974). Parental reassessments of goal hierarchies may also correspond to developmental timetables or watersheds, such as a child's transition from elementary into middle or junior high school. In addition to making vocational goals for a child more salient, issues associated with junior high school may affect the whole family (Eccles and others, 1993; Goodnow and Collins, 1990). For example, if adolescents fail exams, become pregnant, or drop out of school, then family goals and aspirations for the adolescents may be reevaluated and reconfigured in terms of the goals of other family members.

The Match-Mismatch Project

Our program of research explores linkages between family and school contexts of development during middle childhood and adolescence (see, for example, Azmitia and others, 1993; Cooper, Azmitia, and Garcia, 1993). As part of that exploration, we have been investigating the match-mismatch hypothesis, which posits that the educational failure of low-income students from diverse ethnic groups is due to mismatches between students' home and school cultures (Cazden, 1988; Heath, 1983). Proposed sources of family-school mismatches include discrepancies in goals and aspirations and in scripts, including guidance and learning patterns. More broadly, this hypothesis reflects the view that developmental competencies and vulnerabilities can be explained by the goodness of fit between the family or child and cultural contexts and institutions (Eccles and others', 1993; Thomas, Chess, Sillen, and Mendez, 1974). Early discussions of the match-mismatch and the goodness-of-fit hypotheses tended to ignore variability within cultural groups and, especially in the case of the match-mismatch hypothesis, to pay little attention to potential developmental shifts in sources of competence and vulnerability. The approach we take in this chapter is consistent with the more recent formulations of these two hypotheses, which take into account between-group as well as within-group variability (for example, Eccles and others, 1993; Schmitt-Rodermund and Silbereisen, 1993).

As part of our study, we asked low-income Mexican American and European American parents of third-, fifth-, and seventh-grade children to describe their own educational, vocational, and personal/moral aspirations for their children and to say how they were helping their children attain these aspirations. In an earlier study (Azmitia, Cooper, and Garcia, 1993), we mapped parents' aspirations across the educational, vocational, and personal/moral domains and showed how their perceptions of their own expertise in a domain influenced their strategies for helping their children attain these aspirations. In what follows, we briefly summarize these domain-related patterns and then examine differences in parental aspirations and guidance in relation to children's ages, paying special attention to the transition between middle childhood and adolescence. Differences in parents' strategies related to children's ages may be influenced by parental theories about child and adolescent development (Goodnow and Collins, 1990). For example, Smetana (1988) has documented a shift in the amount of responsibility parents give to adolescents in decisions about their educational and vocational future. Here, we explore whether such a shift is evident among low-income families who are accommodating to a new culture or to a poverty niche.

Another goal of our research was to explore variability in parents' aspirations and guidance patterns within Mexican American and European American groups, as well as examining similarities and differences between them, since relying solely on comparisons between groups may foster misperceptions that one is deficient relative to the other (McLoyd, 1991). In our earlier study (Azmitia, Cooper, and Garcia, 1993), we reported quantitative analyses of our data. In this chapter, we describe qualitative features of our data that illuminate developmental processes that may be involved in the reassessment and renegotiation of parents' aspirations for their children's educational, vocational, and personal/moral development during middle childhood and adolescence. Finally, to explore potential hierarchies among goals, we also examine child age-related patterns in aspirations and guidance across domains.

Research Participants, Procedures, and Measures

Our data are drawn from responses from a sample of seventy-two low-income families (thirty-six Mexican American and thirty-six European American) with children in the third, fifth, and seventh grades. In each age group of each ethnic group, the children were evenly divided among boys and girls; thus, we interviewed the families of six boys and of six girls for each age/ethnic group. Families were considered low-income if their children were receiving free or reduced-price school lunches. They were recruited through elementary and junior high schools and from referrals from other participants in the study, and each family was paid \$25.00 for its participation. All the families lived in the small neighboring cities in central California, one an agricultural community (population approximately 30,000), and the other a small coastal City (population approximately 50,000). Because ecocultural theory calls for an analysis of the history and social context in which families are embedded (Tharp & Gallimore, 1988), we supplement the typical demographic information that follows with material about the families' history and social context, particularly as it reveals the etiology of their poverty.

Eighty-three percent of the Mexican American families were headed by two parents. One participating child was an only child; the rest had between one and ten siblings (mean = 3.19). In twelve Mexican American families other relatives (typically parents' siblings) lived in the home. Eighty-six percent of the fathers and 74 percent of the mothers were employed, typically farm laborers or in canneries. Most were concerned because area canneries and food processing plants were then closing and moving to Mexico. Most parents described themselves as literate in Spanish but not in English and had not gone beyond elementary school (mode for fathers was third grade; for mothers, sixth grade). The poverty of these Mexican American families appeared to be long standing. For example, many had lived for several years in trailers or labor camps, and their homes were generally small and sparsely furnished. Many parents spontaneously expressed concern about the presence of drug dealer and gang violence in their neighborhoods; several had invested in Nintendo games to keep their children indoors. They also reported they could not afford many recreational activities but enjoyed visiting relatives and attending the local flea market.

Eighty-one percent of the European American families were headed by single parent, in all but two cases, the mother. Six participating children were only children; the rest had between one and four siblings (mean = 1.69). Eleven European American families had other adults, typically housemates or partners, living in the home. Parents reported that 81 percent of the fathers and 33 percent of the mothers were employed; the primary employment categories were skilled manual worker, craftsperson, clerical or sales worker, and menial houseworker. All European American parents reported that they were literate in English; most had completed high school, and many had some junior college experience. From all indications, for 81 percent (N = 29) of the European American families the onset of poverty was recent, typically the result of divorce. These families lived in middle-class or working-class neighborhoods and remarked that they frequently had to remind their children that they could no longer afford many amenities. Many indicated that except for traffic, their neighborhoods were relatively safe. The remaining 19 percent of the families (N = 7) appeared to have been experiencing pervasive poverty; five of these families had been long-time

residents in a neighborhood known for affordable rents but made dangerous by drug traffickers, prostitutes, and gangs, and two families indicated they been homeless several times over the past few years. Like the Mexican American parents, this latter group of European American parents reported that they tried to keep their children inside to protect them from the dangers of drug trafficking and being approached by strangers.

All parents were interviewed in their homes, in separate rooms whenever possible if there were two parents. If only one parent was available, one interviewer asked the questions while the other recorded the parent's responses. One Mexican American parent preferred to be interviewed in English, but all the rest of the Mexican American parents were interviewed in Spanish by a team of native Spanish speakers, including three of the authors. Each interview lasted about one hour and was recorded on audiotape.

The interview, developed for the purpose of the study, was piloted on a sample of low-income European American parents with children in the third, fifth, and seventh grades. The Spanish version was developed and piloted by Mexican-born staff members from low-income backgrounds, one of whom worked as a translator. The interview covered demographic information about household members and included questions regarding personnel involved in chores and homework activity settings; instructional scripts for those settings; and parents' long-term aspirations for and guidance of their child's educational, occupational, and personal maturity. Only the parents' long-term aspirations and strategies for helping their children attain these goals are addressed in this chapter. Parents were asked open-ended questions about these long-term aspirations. For each type of aspiration, parents were first asked about their goals. For example, how much education do you want your child to Complete? What job or profession would you like your child to attain? What type of person I for example, qualities, values] would you like your child to be when he or she grows up? Then parents were asked how they were helping their child attain these aspirations.

Interview- Results

In this section, we first review and illustrate our findings regarding overall similarities and differences between Mexican American and European American parents' aspirations and guidance, and then we examine differences Within each group of families. In general, the data support our hypothesis that, at least in educational and vocational domains, parents' aspirations and guidance patterns appear to differ according to whether the child is in middle childhood or adolescence. However, aspirations and guidance patterns appear stable across age groups in the moral domain, perhaps reflecting parents' expertise within that domain (Azmitia and others, 1993), their hierarchy of goals, or their response to a poverty niche in which there is greater potential for straying away from the good path or buen camino.

Between-Group Patterns Across Domains. Our findings about educational aspirations were consistent with those of Reese, Balzano, Gallimore, and Goldenberg (1991): both the Mexican American and European American groups of parents held high educational aspirations for their children. As one Mexican American parent said, "We aren't here [in the United States] because we like working here or like to live here.... We live better in Mexico. But I make this sacrifice because I want them to study, to learn English." However, more of the Mexican American parents indicated that they would be content for their children to finish high school, whereas more of the European American parents expressed hopes that their children would attend graduate school, although these parents were also more likely to allow the child to choose his or her ultimate level of education. As one European American parent stated, "I don't want to impose anything on him, but I do tell him he has to study. I don't tell him he has to study such and such because I like it.... I just want him to study a short (attainable) career so that he has a future." Mexican American parents were more likely than European American parents to report using indirect strategies, such as providing encouragement or support, using their own lives as examples of the costs of a poor education, or enlisting the help of siblings and relatives to help children attain their aspirations; whereas European American parents

were more likely to-report using direct strategies, such as providing tutoring or advice on course selection and study- skills, It is likely that [he Mexican American and European American parents' aspirations and guidance strategies reflect the parents' own educational differences. For parents with little schooling, finishing high school may represent a great achievement, but those ' with college experience may have higher expectations. Also, by the time they had reached fifth grade, many Mexican American children had exceeded their parents' schooling, and thus, many parents had to rely on more indirect guidance strategies.

As in other studies (for example, Matute-Bianchi and Alvarez, 1990), Mexican American parents in our sample held high occupational aspirations for their children; many hoped their children would become doctors, lawyers, or teachers. European American parents in the sample typically reported that their occupational aspirations would be the choices of their children. Although parents in both groups saw themselves helping their children attain their occupational aspirations by offering encouragement, help, advice, and tutoring, there were some differences. Mexican American parents again were more likely to mention using themselves as negative role models, telling their children not to work as farm laborers or in the cannery. One parent remarked that "anything" was acceptable "as long as it isn't in the fields.... When I was very young, I started to pick strawberries, and I wouldn't want him to do that." Although European American parents also used their lives as models for their children, the tone of their examples was more positive. For example, many told their children that despite making mistakes, such as dropping out of school or getting married too young, they were now attempting to correct these mistakes (for example, they had gotten their high school equivalency degrees and were enrolled in community college), so they could get the training needed for their own vocational aspiration. Many also remarked that their good study habits served as a model for their children.

However, we also saw potential vulnerabilities in low-income parents' educational and vocational aspirations. Like Reese, Balzano, Gallimore, and Goldenberg (1991), for example, we found that even though low-income parents held high occupational aspirations for their children, some did not know that their children's vocational goals required a college education, while others who did seek college educations for their children were unsure about application and financial aid procedures. Other vulnerabilities were indicated by the fear or ambivalence towards school expressed by some Mexican American and European American parents in our sample, particularly parents of adolescents. Many Mexican American parents held hopes for education as a way out of poverty and wanted their children to be successful yet also expressed concerns about the hazards of drugs, sex, and violence in junior high school or concerns about children's advanced education making the children distant from their families and communities. Said one parent, "I have seen other people-that their children spend years in school, and for what? All they learn are vices, and in the end, they no longer feel comfortable in our community and then they aren't comfortable anywhere, at home or at school." In contrast, European American parents expressed high aspirations, but some were skeptical that schools could help their children acquire skills needed to succeed while Others worried whether they had the financial or emotional resources to guide their children towards maturity One parent advised, "See if they want to go to college, 'cause you never know if one of them wants to do a trade.... If (my child) can stay out Of trouble, he may want to be a mechanic." Some recently divorced parents also mentioned that they were more preoccupied with such immediate concerns as paying the rent, completing homework, or dealing with their children's misbehavior than with the -children's long-term vocational and educational future.

Parents in both Mexican American and European American groups had personal and moral aspirations for their children and expressed hopes that their children would be moral persons, respect others and themselves, and Stay away from drugs, gangs, and other "vices." As detailed in Azmitia and others (1993), parents in both groups provided tutoring and advice in this domain in which they saw themselves as experts, often using their own lives as positive examples of values they hoped their children would exhibit in adulthood. Said a European American parent, "I am helping her by being who I am as a mother, . . . also by learning for myself to love and to serve people, I talk to her

a lot, and I am honest with me about what is happening in my life." Especially striking was parents' determination to keep children on the good path, the *buen camino* (Reese, Balzano, Gallimore, and Goldenberg, 1991). As one Mexican American parent said, "Right now (my child) is a very serious and good girl. I try that she is always busy so she does not go out and hang around and pick up vices). I want things to stay this way until she is grown up," Similarly, a European American parent said, "I try to talk to [my daughter), you know, about things that I see in the world that I don't like, that I wouldn't like a kid to do, I talk to [her] about it."

Like the work of Reese, Balzano, Gallimore, and Goldenberg (1991), our study illustrated the substantial moral capital that low-income parents have available to help children attain the parents' personal and moral aspirations. The lack of variability in these aspirations and guidance patterns suggests that moral values occupy a high priority in parents' hierarchy of goals. For many parents, the forces that can lead children away from the good path lie outside the home in the neighborhood or the school, and protecting children from these dangers takes precedence over other goals. The threat to which these parents were trying to respond is illustrated by the fact that during the course of our study, several drive-by shootings occurred in the low-income communities, and the older sister of one of our participating children was assaulted and killed in a schoolyard.

Age-Related Patterns Among Mexican American Families. Interviews of Mexican American parents of third graders revealed that the salient parental educational and vocational goals for these children derived from the parents' hopes that an education and career were a way out of poverty. The most salient moral goal was respect for others, especially elders, and for oneself. Parents reported helping their children attain these aspirations by telling them to stay in school and out of trouble and by giving moral lessons about what would happen if they did not, using the parents themselves and others as examples. For example, one parent recalled that "once [when] it was ... 4:30, so the men were [still] in the fields picking artichokes, . . . I said, 'You see mijo [my son), that's a tough job, day after day until the sun goes down they have to be out there if it's hot or cold. Yes, mijo, that is why you guys need an education, because if you guys don't get enough education, you won't qualify for another job, and you will be doing that for a living.'...I don't know if at his age it will stick, but hopefully it will."

Despite the undercurrent of hope and dreams running through parents' educational and vocational aspirations, like Goldenberg, Reese, Balzano, and Gallimore (1993), we found that a few parents had adjusted their aspirations, based on feedback about their children's school performance or on a realistic assessment of their own ability to help their children achieve educational and vocational goals. For example, three parents said they hoped their children would become doctors or lawyers, but then added that they did not know if that was really possible. One said, for example, "I'd like him to be a lawyer... well, really, that is the dream that one has, that one's children succeed, that they are, how can I say it, better. That they do the things one was not able to do.... We say, 'We hope this boy continues studying and has a small career.' Not a doctor or a lawyer, because who knows?"

Mexican American parents of fifth graders also emphasized staying in school, but some indicated both ambivalence about their educational goals and despair as to how they might help their children achieve them. These parents were also less likely to mention professional occupations for children of this age, and if they did describe such aspirations, they might indicate that they would also be content with their children's becoming secretaries, mechanics, or store clerks. Finally, some parents indicated that, by fifth grade, children should take some responsibility for achieving goals and aspirations saying for example, "Well, I have the dream that he be somebody, but he still needs to put his share into this." The difference connected with age was especially evident in the domains of educational and occupational aspirations. The key age-related difference in the moral domain among Mexican American parents appeared in guidance strategies-, parents of fifth graders mentioned that they gave explanations of issues and engaged their children in discussions about those issues, whereas

parents of third graders were more likely to use more unilateral strategies, such as directives, praise, and punishment, to guide their children.

In educational and vocational domains, Mexican American parents of seventh graders tended to express lower aspirations than parents of third and fifth graders. Only a few mentioned college as a possibility for their children, and for some, even high school was in doubt. The theme that children should forge their own dreams and choose their own occupations was even more marked, suggesting that these parents may expect their adolescents to take responsibility for developing an educational and occupational identity. Many parents now simply said that as long as their children did not end up working in the fields or the cannery, any job would be fine. Unlike parents of younger children, parents of seventh graders did not disclose much planning or detail as to how they were helping their children attain their vocational goals: perhaps this finding is another indication of a shift in the jurisdiction of responsibility for achievement. One parent said, "I would like [my daughter] to get to college, . . . but the way things are now, who knows?" Another, when asked what job she wanted for her daughter, said, "Well, not a job like mine [field worker] - that she works in a store or something that is not so heavy." When the interviewer asked what this parent was doing to help her daughter achieve that goal, the parent asked, "What do you mean?" And when the interviewer then asked if the parent had made any plans to help her daughter end up working in a store, the answer was no. However, this lack of planning may also reflect the lack of fit between parents' and children's competencies (Eccles and others, 1993); parents with an elementary school education may feel unqualified to plan their adolescents' vocational and educational futures, particularly when these parents find themselves in a new culture with unfamiliar schools and occupations,

Although our finding that Mexican American parents of adolescents held lower vocational and educational aspirations than Mexican American parents of elementary school children parallels findings of Reese, Balzano, Gallimore and Goldenberg's longitudinal study (1991), the cross-sectional design of our study does not allow us to determine whether these lower expectations of parents of seventh graders represent an age-related shift. Because our study concerned immigrant families, the pattern of lower expectations could reflect a cohort effect; for example, the older children may have been less fluent in English or may have had more responsibilities for work and child care than younger children, and such differences could have affected their schooling. We are currently examining the school achievement data of participating children to determine whether the adolescents were doing more poorly in school than the elementary school-aged children. If so, their poorer performance may have contributed to their parents' lower educational and vocational aspirations for them.

In contrast to age-related differences in educational and occupational domains, in the moral domain, parents of adolescents resembled those of younger children in emphasizing having respect and being honest, responsible, and a good person despite being poor, and in providing modeling and direct guidance. Said one parent, "We are people who are very poor, but we don't give [our children] bad examples about anything. We behave well, hoping that they will learn to behave. If they see that we behave and are good persons, hopefully they will do the same."

Age-Related Patterns Among European American Families. European American parents of third graders expressed a wide range of educational and vocational aspirations, but their moral aspirations were consistently high, with respect for self and others being valued most highly. Like Mexican American parents, some European American parents had devoted much effort to planning their children's futures, yet others indicated that they had not given much thought to such planning but were concentrating on helping their children attain personal and moral aspirations. As one parent remarked: "I haven't thought about it too much. Education is not a big priority. It is more important that kids be emotionally healthy and happy... I'm looking at the possibilities (for educational and vocational goals) and helping them learn to choose for themselves." Even parents who expressed high aspirations tended to express reservations or add more modest goals also, conveying the view

that control over the future was beyond their or their children's control, a finding consistent with the work of Rodman and Voydanoff (1988).

European American parents of fifth graders also expressed a wide range of aspirations. Like European American parents of third graders, they viewed educational and occupational aspirations as their children's choice, but unlike the parents of third graders, some expressed doubts about their own ability to guide their children to maturity. Notably, they did not link education to vocational aspirations but rather linked both educational and, vocational domains to moral goals, perhaps because of the value they placed on moral and personal development or perhaps because of their own personal struggles. For example, one parent said, "I'm not one who dreams about my child's future. I still feel lost in trying to rind my future. But I hope that he'll value education. And that he'll become educated just because ... that's what you need in life, whether it applies to your job or not." Parents of fifth graders also were unlike parents of third graders in the concern they expressed about the adequacy of their children's schooling, particularly its ability to teach skills the children needed to succeed in the broader world, As one parent said, "We're real ... pro-school, pro-family. We try and let [our child] know this is the way our society works, you go to school for so many years.... I don't think that's where learning takes place particularly ... [but] I don't voice this negativity to him."

Despite the concerns and doubts expressed by some European American parents, others expressed confidence in guiding their fifth-graders towards the future, at least in general terms. Said one mother, I would like her to complete high school, and at least four years of college.... When I grew up a high school diploma was a real important thing. Now, in this day and age, a high school diploma doesn't mean beans. You've gotta have college.... The fact that I went back to school is a big help for her, [I] also take her going on some cleaning jobs with me [the mother cleaned houses for a living) and actually knowing how hard it is-. . . , I told her the more education you get, the more money you get and the easier the job is."

Like European American parents of younger children, European American parents of seventh graders held high aspirations for their children's moral and personal development and were consistently concerned about their children's safety and their staying on the good path. Many saw education as a way to enhance children's safety, protecting them from drugs and from becoming prostitutes, and some parents took their children to the parents' Alcoholics Anonymous meetings. Although there were exceptions, most parents of seventh graders, in contrast to parents of younger children, were active in helping their children attain their educational and vocational goats. This engagement appeared to have been triggered by the young adolescents' formulating initial vocational interests to which parents' could respond by finding opportunities for the adolescents to explore and develop these interests. For example, one parent reported -purchasing anatomy coloring books for a daughter who was interested in a medical career, and another mentioned finding volunteer opportunities at the local SPCA for a son aspiring to be a veterinarian. It is notable that the vocational experiences sought were not arranged within the school. Unlike the low-income families in Heath's study (1983), these parents were not questioning the value of education but rather the quality of the schools. The parents who expressed such doubts may have been those who moved into conditions of poverty and enrolled their child in a school in a lower-income neighborhood the most recently This pattern of parental involvement may also reflect parents' views of occupational identity as primarily a task of adolescence and young adulthood (Goodnow and Collins, 1990),

Conclusions

Our findings supported our hypothesis that the role of parental goals for children and of the linkages from family to community contexts of development differs between the children's middle childhood and adolescence. However, chi, age-related difference was evident only in vocational and educational domains across the age span we studied parents' moral aspirations and level of involvement remained uniformly high, although their mode of involvement shifted in ways reflecting their children's growing developmental competencies.

In the Mexican American group, parents of fifth and seventh graders held lower educational and vocational aspirations than those of third graders. They also were more likely to view academic and vocational success as partly their children's responsibility. This pattern may reflect parents' developmental timetables for children or that many children in the fifth grade had exceeded their parent's schooling and parents felt unable to help them. In the European American group, the major age-related difference occurred between elementary school (third and fifth grade) and adolescence (seventh grade). Unlike parents of third and fifth graders, parents of seventh graders were actively involved in guiding their children's educational and vocational aspirations, a pattern that may have been triggered by young adolescents' formulating their educational and vocational interests.

In this chapter, we have focused on parents' aspirations and strategies for guiding children towards maturity, but both groups of parents also saw their children's roles as crucial, especially in the children's educational and vocational development, as seen in parents' transferring responsibility for these two domains to children as early as fifth grade. In contrast, parents' continued involvement in children's personal and moral guidance suggests that they viewed responsibility over the moral domain as either too important to be delegated or as a prerogative that their expertise enabled them to retain.

In our current work, we are interviewing children and adolescents to assess their goals and aspirations and to determine how they are integrating the different goals and contexts of their lives. The complexity of developing an adaptive coordination across developmental contexts is reflected by the accounts of Phelan, Davidson, and Cao (1991) of the struggles of high school students to integrate their views of themselves with their experiences across the multiple worlds of family, school, and peer relationships. Our study suggests that an important issue is parents' maintaining their high aspirations for their children's educational and vocational attainment from the early elementary school years through adolescence. Because our work was cross-sectional, we cannot draw definitive conclusions about what factors contributed to the age-related differences we found in parents' vocational and educational aspirations. For example, as we mentioned earlier, patterns for the Mexican American group may have been influenced by cohort effects. Nevertheless, it is likely that children's school performance provides parents with feedback about the likelihood that their children will attain parental aspirations (Goldenberg, Reese, Balzano, and Gallimore, 1993). However, because academic gatekeeping begins in the late middle childhood and early adolescent years (Henderson and Dweck, 1990), it will be important to determine if parents are receiving accurate feedback about their children's progress. Parental aspirations may also decline as children exceed the parents' educational level and the parents can no longer offer guidance or must confront the costs of a college education. We are pursuing these longitudinal questions in a study of the transition from middle childhood to adolescence in a sample of low-income Mexican American and European American fifth graders. In another project (Cooper, Jackson, Azmitia, and Lopez, 1993), we are investigating how participation in academic outreach programs can keep students in the academic pipeline toward college and vocational success. In this research, African American and Latino adolescents have described adult mentors and peers in their academic outreach programs as sources of both emotional and instrumental support in bridging what can be a bewildering array of goals and expectations across the multiple worlds described by Phelan, Davidson, and Cao (1991).

Overall, the findings we have discussed regarding stability and change in parents' goals and guidance patterns demonstrate how ecocultural analyses of activity settings can help researchers unbundle global or stereotypical characterizations of diverse cultural groups and point to important sources of within-group as well as between-group variability. We do not claim that our samples are representative of all Mexican Americans or European Americans living in poverty, but rather than pursue mythical representative samples, we consider it more useful to provide ballpark descriptions of parameters of samples linked to key ecocultural dimensions, such as communities of origin, generation and goals of immigration, family structure, and languages spoken (Schofield and Anderson, 1986). Finally, we continue to be struck by the variability within each ethnic or social

class group we have studied, and we are exploring such within-group variability more systematically, in hopes of identifying sources of both competence and vulnerability in the linkages of the multiple worlds of children and adolescents.

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CATHERINE R. COOPER is professor of psychology and education at the University of California, Santa Cruz.

MARGARITA AZMITIA is associate professor of psychology at the University of California, Santa Cruz.

EUGENE E. GARCIA is professor of education and psychology at the University of California, Santa Cruz.

ANGELA ITTEL is a doctoral student in developmental psychology at the University of California, Santa Cruz.

EDWARD LOPEZ is a doctoral student in developmental psychology at the University of California, Santa Cruz.

LOURDES RIVERA is a graduate student in education at the University of California, Santa Cruz.

REBECA MARTINEZ-CHAVEZ is a research associate in the Center for Research in Cultural Diversity and Second Language Learning at the University of California, Santa Cruz