"CON RESPETO" - FACTORS RELATED TO THE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF MEXICAN AMERICAN FOURTH GRADERS IN SELECTED FLORIDA ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

MARY L. MOSLEY

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by

Mary L. Mosley

A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of
the College of Education
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Education

Florida Atlantic University
Boca Raton, Florida
May, 1998

***"Con Respeto"* - Factors Related to the Academic Performance of Mexican American Fourth Graders in Selected Florida Elementary Schools**

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Mary L. Mosley

This dissertation was prepared under the direction of the candidate's dissertation advisors, Dr. Mary Gray, Department of Educational Leadership, and Dr. Dan Morris, Department of Educational Research and Technology, and has been approved by committee member Dr. Wayne Hill, Department of Student Services. It was submitted to the faculty of The College of Education and was accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education.

SUPERVISORY COMMITTEE:

Chairperson, Dr. Mary Gray

Co-chairperson, Dr. Dan Morris

Committee member, Dr. Wayne Hill

Chairperson, Department of Educational Leadership

Dean, College of Education

Dean of Graduate Studies and Research

4-17-98

Date

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Completing the doctoral degree was both a challenging and rewarding experience. This task would not have been accomplished without the assistance of the following people whose advice, encouragement and support are most appreciated: Dr. Mary Gray, Dr. Dan Morris, and Dr. Wayne Hill for their service as committee members throughout my doctoral program at Florida Atlantic University; Dr. Bill Owens and Dr. Jayne Hartman for their assistance in the data collection from the two school districts studied in this dissertation; Dr. Alice Meshbane for her assistance with the statistical analysis in Chapter 4; Dr. Betty Hill for her editing expertise; Bernadette Floyd for her support as assistant principal as I worked to complete my degree; Hazel Case who helped care for my mother while I attended classes and completed the dissertation; my mother Viola Lindquist and son Brian Mosley for their love and encouragement; and, most importantly, Peter Donnelly who was always there to provide guidance and moral support over the past five years.

ABSTRACT

Author:	Mary L. Mosley
Title:	*"Con Respeto"* - Factors Related to the Academic Performance of Mexican American Fourth Graders in Selected Florida Elementary Schools
Institution:	Florida Atlantic University
Dissertation Advisors:	Dr. Mary Gray Dr. Dan Morris
Degree:	Doctor of Education
Year:	1998

The purpose of this study was to identify how various student, school, and staff predictors related to the academic performance of Mexican American fourth graders in selected schools as evidenced by their scores on the Florida Writes Assessment as well as on norm referenced achievement tests in reading comprehension and math applications. Three null hypotheses were tested to show if there was a correlation between predictors and these criterion variables: writing skills, reading comprehension, and math applications.

A sample of 64 students from two Florida districts and twelve elementary schools was obtained. Data were collected from archival sources within each school district as well as from surveys distributed to English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) teachers. These were then analyzed to determine correlations with Florida Writes and with Stanford Achievement Test (SAT) as well as California Test of Basic Skills (CTBS) subtests in reading comprehension and math applications. The researcher was most interested in determining the relationship between a language arts pull-out program and achievement of

ESOL students at a focal school which was in danger of being identified by the Florida Department of Education as "critically low" in academic performance because of low test scores.

Correlations of predictor variables including the pull-out program were analyzed to determine statistical significance. Only the third hypothesis - that relating to math applications - was rejected at a probability level of .05. In this case, three predictors were considered significant: number of Limited English Proficient (LEP) students, number of Mexican American students, and the pull-out program.

Because of small sample size and limited applications, no far reaching conclusions were drawn although further study was suggested because the Mexican American population in Florida is growing, and these students have historically not performed well in school. It was also recommended that the Florida Department of Education reconsider the timeline for ESOL student participation in norm referenced testing in writing and reading because most research shows that it takes at least five to seven years for most students to acquire comprehensible second language skills.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated ***"con respeto"*** ("with respect") to the Mexican American students and their families who were at the focal school during the timeframe of my study. It is also dedicated to the staff who worked with these students to help them meet the challenges of second language acquisition and, in many instances, overcome the obstacle of poverty to achieve academically. Finally, this work is dedicated to my father Lars Peter Lindquist who emigrated from Sweden at the age of fourteen, learned a second language, and, through hard work during hard times, achieved the American Dream. My memories of him and his message about the importance of learning were the stimuli for my research. His well remembered challenge to always do my best drove me forward when I no longer knew what goal I was trying to reach. I hope he is proud of my efforts.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

According to most demographic analyses, Hispanic Americans, the second largest minority population next to African Americans in the United States today, will grow to be the largest minority population numbering 40 million people within the next 20 years (Hodgkinson and Outtzk, Hispanic Americans: A Look Back, A Look Ahead, 1996). In Florida, one of five states which contains more than 70 percent of immigrant students, Hispanics continue to represent the largest immigrant group in schools (Taylor, 1993). In addition, according to these demographic calculations, Mexican Americans constitute the largest Hispanic subgroup (Arias, 1986). Beatriz Arias points out that "By almost any measure, Hispanics are the most undereducated group of Americans next to Native Americans" ("The Context of Education for Hispanic Students: An Overview," p. 26). Historically, Mexican American Hispanics have been identified, along with Puerto Ricans, as the most undereducated of minorities (Coleman Report, 1966; Ogbu, 1974, 1978, 1986, and 1987; Mexican American Studies, Reports V and VI, 1973 and 1974; Hodgkinson, 1996; Ortiz, 1986; and Valdes, 1996). The reasons cited for this tendency vary, but Ogbu's 1974 and 1978 analyses of Mexican Americans as a "caste minority" and Valdes' support of this concept (1996) stand out as the most plausible.

While Mexican American students are falling behind, business and political leaders are challenging educators to push students ahead in order to meet the demands of the 21st century's "global economy," as pointed out by Secretary of Labor Lynn Martin and the Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills in "Letter to Parents, Employers, and Educators" (June 28, 1991). The National Education Goals, developed by the nation's

governors in Charlottesville, Virginia in September 1989, are most certainly ambitious. The summary guide for The National Education Goals Report (1993) lists them as follows:

By the year 2000:

- *All children in America will start school ready to learn.*
- *The high school graduation rate will increase to at least 90 percent.*
- *American students will leave grades 4, 8, and 12 having demonstrated competency in challenging subject matter, including English, mathematics, science, history, and geography; and every school in America will ensure that all students learn to use their minds well, so they may be prepared for responsible citizenship, further learning, and productive employment in our modern economy.*
- *American students will be the first in the world in science and mathematics achievement.*
- *Every adult American will be literate and will possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.*
- *Every school in America will be free of drugs and violence and will offer a disciplined environment conducive to learning .* (p. 3)

The challenge, as clearly identified in the National Goals, is a great one for all schools and students but more than ever for the Mexican American immigrant child and the school which he/she attends. The global economy of the 21st century demands that both the child and the school "catch up," or both will be overwhelmed by the future.

Problem

Since the Coleman Report (1966) published findings on the equality of educational opportunity for minority students, revealing that Mexican American children along with Puerto Ricans and Blacks performed more poorly in school than other minorities, there has been a growing body of research focusing on the reasons for these minority groups' academic failure (Bond, 1981; Ogbu, 1974, 1978; Castaneda et. al., 1974; Arias, 1986; Valdes, 1996). Much of the debate surrounding the Bilingual Education Act (1968) and later brought into the educational mainstream through Lau v. Nichols (1974) has centered around the use of appropriate educational methodology to overcome barriers that language

minority, low socioeconomic children face. (See works of Santiago, 1986, on bilingual education; and Garcia, 1990, Genesee, 1986 and 1996, and Gersten, 1986 - 1996, on immersion.) During the sixties, bilingual education programs were instituted in many states through the use of federal grants, but the history of bilingual education has been controversial (Orfield, 1986; Arias, 1986; and Lessow-Hurley, 1991).

In the 1980's, federal and state legislatures moved to give more local control to school districts in their attempts to implement "affirmative steps" to help reduce minority students' school failure. Cummins points out in Bilingualism and Special Education: Issues in Assessment and Pedagogy (1984) that, because of the unpopularity and expense of bilingual programs, many schools began using intensive English - only programs to teach second language acquisition even though second language acquisition experts such as Stephen Krashen believe these programs severely limit the child's ability to learn the second language in the most efficient manner ("A Gradual Exit, Variable Threshold Model for Limited English Proficient Children" in National Association of Bilingual Education News, July 1996).

One of five states receiving the majority of immigrants in recent years (Taylor, A11), Florida has been hard-pressed to offer bilingual programs mainly because of financial concerns but also because of a growing "English Only" philosophy spearheaded in both Congress and various state legislatures. (See Zaldivar's article in the March 21, 1996 edition of the Miami Herald which lists Florida as one of 21 states that has declared English as its official language.) Since its inception in 1991, Florida's English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) program has been driven by requirements set forth in the META (Multi-cultural Education, Training, and Advocacy Inc.) Decree, a court-ordered settlement between META and the Florida Department of Education which provides for appropriate assessment of Limited English Proficient (LEP) students, their equal access to educational programs, personnel certification, and program monitoring and

evaluation. The state has basically left program models up to districts as long as they submit an LEP Plan which is in compliance with META guidelines (ESOL Program Quick Reference Guide, 1996-7).

The main school district which this researcher has studied is a mid-sized Florida district with a growing population of LEP students, most of whom are Haitian and Mexican American who would both qualify as Ogbu's "caste minorities." For economic and staffing reasons, this district chose an English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) model that provides for in- class "submersion" ("Definitions," p. 11) while requiring that designated ESOL teachers responsible for language arts instruction obtain the ESOL endorsement over a five year period. The incentive offered to these teachers is payment of tuition costs by the district.

The school chosen as the focus of this study has the highest number of elementary ESOL students in the district. The majority of these students are Mexican Americans (according to the March, 1997 MIS report, the count of active participants is 167). In order to accommodate these students' needs, the school has adopted a "schoolwide ESOL" program whereby all classroom teachers are seeking the appropriate endorsement from the state, and ESOL strategies are used in all classrooms. Three bilingual aides provide program support in the basic subject areas. Embarking on home visits to parents when appropriate, migrant mentors work with kindergarten through second graders. In spite of the attempt to educate teachers and provide program access to ESOL students, these children have not performed well on state required standardized tests, and many have failed to exit the ESOL program in the three year funding period.

Demographically, this school's student population can be characterized as "high poverty" because approximately 91% qualified for free or reduced lunch in the 1996-97 school year. Furthermore, the school is in danger of being identified as a "critically low" school for failing to meet required student performance standards on both Florida Writes

and the Stanford Achievement Test (SAT) at the fourth grade level. The 1996-97 School Improvement Plan addresses ESOL program access as well as the "civil rights" of LEP students under Goal 5 ("Safe and Orderly Environment") while teacher training in ESOL is covered under Goal 6 ("Teachers and Staff"). With technical assistance from the state's ESOL specialist, a school LEP plan was developed in May, 1996. Under this plan, identified LEP second through fourth graders were pulled out of their language arts blocks for ninety minutes of intensive ESOL instruction by an ESOL certified teacher paid for with Title I federal funds under a "schoolwide" grant. Classroom teachers were still required to use ESOL strategies not only during the remainder of the language arts block but also in teaching basic subject areas throughout the day with the assistance of bilingual ESOL aides and reading specialists.

Because the focal school had not fared well on Florida Accountability Report standards as a result of poor test scores on standardized tests and Florida Writes, it was identified as a school needing special assistance by the Title I Region 5 Office for the 1996-97 school year. This identification, called Tier II, indicates impending danger of being labeled a "critically low performing school" by the Florida Department of Education ("Definitions," p. 8). District and school administration as well as the faculty have, therefore, had a concern about the status of this school, and the analyses of disaggregated data indicate that the LEP students' lack of progress is one major reason for the school's poor performance. School administrators and staff had hopes that the introduction of the language arts pull-out program taught by an ESOL endorsed instructor during the 1996-97 school year would prove to be a viable vehicle for improving the performance of Mexican American students on both Florida Writes and the Stanford Achievement Test, the performance measures used by the state and district.

Informal interviews with principals at other school sites as well as in other districts in rural areas of southeast Florida indicate that the low performance of Mexican American

students is an ongoing problem in this region. This is especially true when ESOL students are concentrated in high poverty (Chapter 1 Successful Schools Pilot Project Report, 1993-4). These schools are addressing such concerns through the school improvement process. Therefore, in order to provide a complementary point of view, this researcher has included a school from another district in this region. The selected school has similar demographic conditions to both the district and focal school under study in terms of its Mexican American population.

Purpose of Study

The overall purpose of this study was to identify how various factors related to the academic performance of fourth grade Mexican American LEP students in selected Florida schools as evidenced by their scores on norm referenced tests in reading and math as well as the state required Florida Writes Assessment. The factors studied were: (a) student characteristics such as socioeconomic status, gender, attendance (or mobility) and birth origin; (b) school characteristics such as poverty level and number of LEP and Mexican American ESOL students; (c) teacher characteristics such as years experience and ESOL training; (d) parent involvement; (e) use of support staff; and, finally, (f) program design (regular classroom vs. language arts pull-out).

Fourth graders were selected for study because of how their performance influenced the school's overall rating with Florida's Department of Education in accordance with Blueprint 2000 educational accountability goals ("Definitions," p. 7). A more specific purpose of the study was to test the effectiveness of the school improvement initiatives in the areas of teacher training, use of support staff and the pull-out program, a "structured submersion" instructional delivery model whereby LEP students are taught language arts in a sheltered setting. Other schools provide a framework for comparison.

Definitions

Blueprint 2000: *The state of Florida's response to the National Educational Goals 2000 which contains accountability standards for obtaining eight goals is further defined in the document The Basics of School Improvement and Accountability in Florida, 1996-97. The state goal categories are:*

- ***Goal 1 - Readiness to Start School***
- ***Goal 2 - Graduation Rate and Readiness for Postsecondary Education and Employment***
- ***Goal 3 - Student Performance***
- ***Goal 4 - Learning Environment***
- ***Goal 5 - School Safety and Environment***
- ***Goal 6: - Teachers and Staff***
- ***Goal 7 - Adult Literacy***
- ***Goal 8 - Parent Involvement***

Bilingual Program: *This is any instructional program that uses two languages and is taught by a bilingual teacher. In A Commonsense Guide to Bilingual Education, (1991), Lessow-Hurley identifies four program models - transitional, maintenance, enrichment, two-way (developmental), and immersion. She differentiates between additive (where a bilingual person has learned a second language in addition to his primary language) or subtractive (where a person has replaced a first language with a new one). She shows why transitional programs are additive and does not recommend them (pp. 22 - 23).*

Critically Low Performing School: *The Florida Department of Education identifies a school as "critically low" based on "criteria used to measure whether students are achieving basic skill levels in the areas of reading, writing, and mathematics." A critically low performing elementary school would meet the following criteria:*

- *Fewer than 33 percent scoring above the 50th percentile on Reading Comprehension;*
- *Fewer than 33 percent scoring above the 50th percentile on Mathematics Concepts/Applications;*
- *Fewer than 33 percent scoring 3 or above on Florida Writes.*

(See Monday Report, October 16, 1995, XXX, 28 where 164 schools were identified by Education Commissioner Frank Brogan as "critically low performing.")

Effective School: *An effective school is one which has the five characteristics identified by Ron Edmonds . Called* ***"efective school correlates,"*** *they include: strong instructional leadership by the principal; a sense of focus and mission understood by all stakeholders; high expectations for all students on the part of teachers; positive school climate; and the use of standardized performance measures to monitor instructional progress ("Characteristics of Effective Schools" in The School Achievement of Minority Children, pp. 93 - 104).*

English Speakers of Second Languages (ESOL) Program: *This is the state of Florida's terminology used in the META Decree and Department of Education guidelines. It refers to programs identified in both state and district plans to address the special needs of ESOL students to help them acquire English proficiency. The ESOL program in the focal district does not include a bilingual component (LEP Plan, 1996).*

ESOL Endorsement: *This is the state required certification that teachers of identified Limited English Proficient (LEP) students must have or be working towards. It includes*

five courses or the equivalent in inservice points.. In the focal district, ESOL teachers have been given tuition reimbursements to obtain this endorsement through June, 1997 ("Personnel," LEP Plan, pp. 69 - 81)

ESOL Student: *This is a student who is a participant in the school's ESOL program because he/she qualified under state guidelines. ESOL students are funded for program participation for no more than three years by the state.*

Focal District: *This designation is used to identify the district under study which has been experiencing a significant growth in the number of limited English proficient students.*

Focal School: *This is the school in the focal district with the highest number of Mexican American students. This school has required all classroom teachers to obtain ESOL certification, has added support staff for ESOL students, and has implemented a language arts pull-out program as part of its school improvement initiatives.*

Language Arts Pull-out Program: *This is the instructional delivery model used at the focal school to provide ESOL instruction to LEP students during a ninety minute block wherein students are taught by an ESOL certified instructor in a* ***"sheltered setting"*** *using ESOL strategies and materials. This program is also referred to in the text as* ***"structured submersion."***

Limited English Proficient (LEP) Student: *According to the state approved district plan, a student is initially identified as a potential LEP student if his/her parent answers "yes" on the Home Language Survey question "Is a language other than English used in the home?" Aural-oral testing is completed within 20 days of the potential LEP*

child's entering school. Based on test results, the child can be identified as ***FES (Fluent English Speaker), LES (Limited English Speaker) or NES (Non-English Speaker)****. If the child is identified LES or NES, he/enters the ESOL program ("Identification Procedures," ESOL Program Quick Reference Guide, pp. 1 - 7).*

Immersion Program: *Although some districts purport to have immersion programs within a regular classroom setting where only English is spoken by the teacher but ESOL aides are used to assist students in the basic subject areas of math, social studies, science and computers, Lessow-Hurley expands upon this definition. To her, "Immersion programs are truly bilingual because the teacher is bilingual and the goal is to make students bilingual and biliterate. Immersion programs use a second language as the instructional medium" (A Commonsense Guide to Bilingual Education, p. 24). Lessow-Hurley identifies three kinds of immersion program models - traditional, English or structured, and two-way bilingual immersion. The* ***English or structured immersion program*** *is identified as subtractive because it "fails to produce additive results because of a lack of societal support for the student's first language" (p. 27).*

Management Information System (MIS): *The data collection system used by the state of Florida is given this title. Each school district has a department and/or person responsible for organizing the data collected from each school and for providing this data to the Florida Department of Education.*

Mobility: *Student mobility has long been identified by researchers as a factor relating to academic performance. Mexican Amerians, who are often identified as migrant students, have traditionally had a high mobility or poor attendance rate. (See Valdes' overview of research on Mexican American origins in Con Respeto , pp. 24 - 31.)*

Multi-Cultural Education, Training, and Advocacy, Inc.(META) Decree: *A consent agreement between META and the Florida Department of Education which provides for appropriate assessment of LEP students, their equal access to educational programs, personnel certification, and program monitoring and compliance. It is the legal basis for the state's ESOL program and must be adhered to by each district in its state approved LEP Plan. (As related in an interview with Dr. Gordon Archer, Director of the focal district's Human Resource Development Department, November 12, 1996. Dr. Archer is in charge of teacher training for the ESOL program.)*

Submersion Program: *This researcher has used Lessow-Hurley's definition of "submersion" in the study as follows: "All too often LEP students are placed in English-only classrooms that are then described as immersion programs. Placing LEP students in classrooms where the language of instruction is incomprehensible, where they cannot be understood, and where there is no support for their primary language has been more appropriately called a 'sink or swim' or 'submersion' program" (p. 25). State and district criteria require that ESOL teachers in the selected schools are trained in the use of ESOL strategies through the ESOL endorsement program; nevertheless, these teachers are not required to be bilingual, a characteristic that Lessow-Hurley believes to be crucial to immersion. The language arts pull-out program at the focal school is called a* ***"structured submersion "*** *or* ***"sheltered pull-out program"*** *to differentiate it from the regular classroom instructional program becauses the teacher of the pull-out class is not bilingual.*

Zone 1: *The district under study is divided into three zones for "controlled choice" attendance purposes. Zone 1 is located in the northern part of the district and has the highest poverty rates of the three zones.*

Significance

Mexican American students have not performed well academically for many reasons as discussed in the Literature Review section of this study. Because Mexican Americans are a rapidly growing population in Florida, it is imperative that, if schools are to be effective, they address the needs of these students.

As in most districts throughout the state, the focal district's ESOL program does not include a bilingual or immersion component. The language arts pull-out program was added at the focal school in an attempt to reinforce the ESOL strategies taught to LEP students in a "sheltered" setting where they would have the opportunity to experiment with language acquisition in a non-threatening environment serviced by a trained, experienced ESOL teacher (other ESOL teachers in the schoolwide program are in the process of training). If the "structured submersion" pull-out program works with the focal school's Mexican American students, it may be exportable to other schools as a fairly cost effective (price of one teacher and specialized ESOL materials) and efficient means of delivering ESOL services to LEP students. If the program does not prove effective, and the focal school's Mexican American students continue to fall below the academic performance levels of other comparable students in other school settings, there is further evidence to suggest that, as the Coleman Report (1966), Ogbu (1974, 1978, and 1986), Valdes (1996), and a recent Chapter 1 Successful Schools Pilot Project Report (1993) point out, the reasons for these students' academic failure may lie beyond the realm of cost effective program designs, state mandated teacher training and additional staff support. The factors of second language acquisition coupled with low socio-economic status of the student and the high poverty level of the school may need to be addressed in other ways. The factor of parent involvement is an interesting component to analyze because, historically, Mexican American parents have not been viewed as actively involved in the traditional sense (Valdes, 1996). If, however, parent involvement is seen as contributing to program

success, as effective schools research (Edmonds, 1986), Epstein (1984) and What Works (U. S. Department of Education Study, 1987) report, then schools can work harder to add this component to school improvement initiatives.

The Florida Department of Education's Chapter 1 Successful Schools Pilot Project Report (1993-4) identifies the use of support staff as a factor of interest for future study. Traditionally, Chapter 1 (now called Title I) schools have had more support staff than regular schools because of the increased needs of their students and increased federal funding based on those needs. The focal school in this study is a typical Title I school where the bulk of federal dollars is spent on support staff. This component is worth addressing because of the frequently debated issue of providing extra federal dollars for supposedly "disadvantaged" students. The Chapter 1 study suggests that, with appropriate use of support staff, academic progress can be achieved. If this study suggests that support staff has an effect on student progress, it will confirm the need to use Title I dollars for additional staff.

The Null Hypotheses

There are **three null hypotheses** for this study which relate to the following predictor variables analyzed in the research: student factors such as socioeconomic status, gender, birth origin and mobility; school characteristics such as poverty level, LEP population and number of Mexican American students; teacher experience and ESOL training; parent involvement; use of support staff; and use of the pull-out program at the focal school. The null hypotheses are: (a) none of the identified variables predict the academic performance of Mexican American fourth graders studied on the Florida Writes Assessment; (b) none of the identified variables predict the academic performance of Mexican American fourth graders studied on either the Stanford Achievement Test (SAT) or California Test of Basic Skills (CTBS) in reading comprehension; and (c) none of the

variables predict the academic performance of Mexican American fourth graders studied on either the SAT or CTBS subtest in math applications.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Effects of Poverty: Student and School Characteristics

There is evidence to suggest that the poverty level of the Mexican American students at this school and throughout the district is an overwhelming factor in their lack of academic achievement. The Coleman Report and subsequent research conducted in the early 1970's, which led to the compensatory education movement upon which Title I funding through the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) is based, claimed that the socioeconomic status of students and their home environments outweighed school related factors in determining academic success (Mosteller and Moynihan, On Equality of Educational Opportunity: Papers Deriving from the Harvard University Faculty Seminar on the Coleman Report, 1972).

The research explaining reasons for the school failure of "at risk" or "disadvantaged" children has been divided ino three categories by G. C. Bond: ***genetics*** - where the work of Jensen and later Hernstein and Murray in their controversial book The Bell Curve (1994) showed that inherited traits were blamed for these children's lack of performance; ***culture*** - where such researchers as Lewis (1966) saw poor children as being trapped in a "culture of poverty" and "locked in a cycle of failure" unless schools provided "compensatory education" to make up for the deficit of the students' backgrounds; and ***class analysis*** - where the school's role is viewed as that of maintaining class differences and structure in a capitalist society ("Social Economic Status and Educational Achievement: a Review Article," 1981).

John Ogbu (1974, 1978, 1986) has sought to identify important differences between groups of minorities in modern American society through an analysis of three sub-groups. In Ogbu's view, the first group, called ***"autonomous,"*** includes minorities such as the Jews, Mormons, and Amish who "have cultural frames of references that encourage and demonstrate success" and who do not show "disproportionate school failure." The second category, the ***"immigrants,"*** are composed of groups such as the Chinese, Japanese, Filipinos, and Koreans who came to America "voluntarily" to "improve their economic, political, or social status." This group compares its lot in life to those whom they left behind, seeing itself as capable of upward social mobility. Ogbu labels the third minority group as a ***"castelike minority"*** which is composed of Black Americans, Native Americans, Native Hawaiians, Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans. This group has, traditionally, been relegated to the lower strata of American society, and Ogbu notes that its members perceive themselves as victims with no chance for social and economic acceptance because of racism. Ogbu claims that this latter minority group is treated and acts differently than the other two groups, thereby causing its lack of success both in school and in the socioeconomic world of the "haves" versus "have-nots" ("The Consequences of the American Caste System," pp. 27 - 30).

Traditionally, Mexican Americans entering America have either found their way into the "migrant stream" or have settled in areas close to their native land such as border towns in Texas and California. Mobility to and from Mexico for work or for family visits is common, and, often, school absenteeism is a result. In her longitudinal study of ten Mexican American families living along the Mexican border near El Paso, Texas, Valdes differentiates between Mexican American (born in the United States) and Mexican immigrant families, noting that, "as opposed to the Ellis Island immigrants, all the adults in the 10 families did not say good-bye to their country of origin. They did not see themselves as leaving, never to return" (Con Respeto: Bridging the Distances Between

Culturally Diverse Families and Schools, p. 59). In Florida, many Mexican Americans work in the citrus or vegetable industries, moving during the year as the seasons and crop harvests change. In the school district under study, the citrus industry has attracted an ever increasing number of Mexican Americans, both legal and illegal immigrants, who are identified as migrant workers. In the focal school, over 100 Mexican American children were identified as migrant children by the district's Migrant Office in October, 1996 (Management Information System Report). However, second generation families exist as well, and some of these have become shop owners or crew foremen and/or managers in the area.

Another important factor in the lack of academic success of Mexican American children is the much researched problem of second language acquisition. According to acknowledged experts in the field of bilingual education such as Krashen (1996) and Cummins (1981 and 1984), it takes five to seven years for an individual to acquire the necessary reading comprehension and writing skills to do well academically in a second language. Debates surrounding the means by which such acquisition occurs are highly charged with various reasons for each method, but this does not diminish the role of time and practice in the student's lingustic development throughout his or her schooling.

Compounding the issues of low socioeconomic status, mobility, and second language acquisition in the school failure of Mexican Americans is that of the high poverty and generally segregated school. Since the "white flight to the suburbs" in the 1970's, inner city and "barrio" schools have found themselves dealing with a high concentration of minority and poor, "at risk" students. Findings from the reports of the Mexican American Education Study (1973 and 1974) commissioned by the Office of Civil Rights showed that Texas schools housing Mexican American students reflected this scenario. Furthermore, Espinosa and Ochoa (1986) found that there was a concentration of Hispanic students in schools with low achievement. As the researchers note, "Whatever the causes of this

pattern may be, it means, of course, that a student of above-average potential in a Hispanic neighborhood would be very likely to attend a school with less challenging classmates and lower than average expectations for a similar Anglo student" ("Concentration of California Hispanic Students in Schools with Lows Achievement: A Research Note," p. 95). In 1993, Florida Department of Education researchers for the Chapter 1 Successful Schools Pilot Project Report found that the higher the poverty level of the school the greater the chance for low achievement from students. As they concluded, "Coming from a low income background is one thing; attending a high poverty school is quite another. Research studies point out that high concentrations of poor students in schools, not the poverty status of individual students, is the major problem" (p. 3).

On the other hand, research on effective schools conducted by Ron Edmonds and Lawrence Lezotte during the 1970's and 1980's showed that there are certain school characteristics that can outweigh the barriers faced by low income students attending high poverty schools. These factors, known as the ***"effective school correlates,"*** have been identified as: strong instructional leadership by the principal; school focus or mission understood by all "stakeholders"; school climate where effective schools are "relatively" safer, cleaner, more orderly, and quieter than their ineffective counterparts; high expectations for all students from their teachers; and, finally, the use of performance on standardized achievement tests as a basis for program evaluation ("Characteristics of Effective Schools," pp. 93 - 105). Edmonds defines the effective school quantitatively as *"one where the proportion of low income children demonstrating academic mastery is virtually identical to the proportion of middle class children who do so" (p. 95). Edmonds also notes that, although effective schools working with at risk minority children can be* found, "the proportion of American public schools that even approach our standard of effectiveness is minuscule" (p. 96).

Florida's Blueprint 2000 educational accountability program is based on the precepts developed by Edmonds as a result of his research. Although this research shows that schools which purportedly demonstrate a combination of the five correlates examined above can achieve positive academic results with at risk students, nevertheless, there is a growing body of recent literature that shows the effects of increasing poverty can be overwhelming for the majority of high poverty schools. A recent Chapter 1 Successful Schools Pilot Project Report (1993-4) sponsored by the Florida Department of Education analyzed Chapter 1 (now referred to as Title I) schools in a research and development effort aimed at:

- Identifying characteristics that distinguish **successful,** *high poverty* elementary schools;
- Sharing research findings that will support school improvement, especially in areas that have large numbers of children from low-income families; and
- Developing training and technical assistance strategies for schools that are operating (or plan to operate) Chapter 1 schoolwide projects. ("Overview")

A footnote in the Chapter 1 report defines **"successful** *high poverty* schools" as "schools that exceed state averages on a majority of reading, math and writing assessment **and also** have 65% or more of their students receiving Free or Reduced Priced meals" ("Overview").

Using data from the 1992-93 Florida School Reports and related sources, researchers found that "despite comparable resources, student achievement in high poverty schools lags far behind what is typical for low and medium poverty schools" (p. 2). The focus then narrowed to include a review of the data relating to the 368 elementary schools having the highest concentrations of children from low income families in order to "examine conditions that are related to higher achievement among high poverty schools" (p. 2). A major conclusion of the report was that "the Florida School Reports and the data bases upon which they are built can offer clues but cannot definitely point to solutions for raising student achievement" (p. 2).

Compiling data from the 1992-93 Florida School Reports (Technical Version), researchers examined a total of 20 variables to determine evidence of significant differences between low, medium and high poverty schools. They used a benchmark study on school poverty by Kennedy, Jung, and Orland (1986) for the definitions of the poverty levels based on numbers of students on Free or Reduced Price Lunch. In the Pilot Project Report, **low** poverty was identified as 353 schools that had zero to 29.2% of their students on Free or Reduced Price Lunch; **medium** poverty included 737 schools with Free or Reduce Lunch students ranging from 29.3% to 64.7%; **high** poverty schools were those 368 schools with 64.8% to 98.9% of their students participating in the Free or Reduced Price Lunch program (p.4). The impact of poverty on each of the 20 variables "was determined by analyzing the number of low, medium, and high poverty schools that were above and below the overall state median. When results were considered to be statistically significant (at the .01 level), the analysis went on to estimate practical significance for program managers, principals, teachers or anyone else trying to understand and reduce the impact of poverty on schools" (p.5). The results of the study showed that in all 20 data base variables, there is statistically significant evidence of a relationship with increasing levels of school poverty (p.5). Project writers summarized the results as follows:

> ...when uniform measures are used to gauge student achievement, it is clear that the lowest performing schools will most likely be those with the highest concentrations of students from low income families. Without careful attention to these schools, the influence of poverty may overwhelm the good intentions of school reform. (p. 6)

Interestingly, however, some of the high poverty schools did prove effective based on standardized test results. Sixty high poverty schools (about 16%) had reading scores above the statewide median with 32 of these schools (9%) scoring at or above the median for low poverty schools. There were 75 high poverty schools (20%) that had total math scores at or above the statewide median with 34 (9%) scoring at or above the median

for low poverty schools. Finally, there were 41 high poverty schools (11%) whose writing performance was at or above the state median with six schools (2%) scoring at or above the median for low poverty schools (p. 7).

Data also indicated that student mobility is "somewhat dependent on school poverty level" and "Though statistically significant, the relationship between the Limited English Proficient (LEP) students in a school and its poverty level is weak. Regional differences probably account for more difference among schools than does poverty, hence its negligible effect size" (p. 8). One of the strongest set of relationships across achievement measures was the percent of students on Free or Reduced Price Lunch. It was noted by Project writers that, in high poverty schools, "when the percent of student Free or Reduced Price Lunch was above the median (79%), achievement was lower. This correlation suggests that the effect of increasing poverty concentration does not level out; it remains a potent influence even in 'high poverty' schools" (pp. 12-13). Project writers cautioned school policy makers that this factor should be considered when considering school zoning and transfers (p. 13).

Although increasing poverty was considered to be a significant factor in lower student achievement, there was "compelling evidence" in the report to suggest that some Chapter 1 schools were doing an effective job as explained below:

> Successful schools were clearly distinguished from their lower achieving comparison group by having fewer minority students/fewer minority teachers, more support staff and lower suspension rates. Successful schools were somewhat distinguished from comparison schools by smaller numbers of students on Free or Reduced Price Lunch, smaller total number of students, more general funds/fewer federal funds, fewer first year teachers/more experienced teachers, and slightly higher teacher salaries. (p. 16)

Furthermore, in on site interviews with staff at successful Chapter 1 school, the following occurred:

- They described discipline in a positive way...more often...
- They discussed the principal's leadership in a positive way more often...

- They discussed staff development activities in high achieving schools, but not in low achieving schools.
- They discussed "change" four times as often in low achieving schools.
- Teams frequently described high achieving schools as having a unified staff. (p. 25)

Ten of the twelve schools in this study can be identified as "high poverty" with 65% or a higher percentage of students on free or reduced lunch. The remaining two schools had a 60% and 57% free or reduced lunch student population according to figures obtained from Spring, 1997 MIS data reports. The focal school under study in this dissertation can be characterized as an "unsuccessful" high poverty school based on recent test scores. A staff survey conducted in the fall of 1995 indicated that there were problems with morale due to recent restructuring efforts in developing a multimedia attractor program as well as pressure placed upon staff because of low test scores. With a 91% Free or Reduced Lunch population (see 1996-97 MIS report), the school most definitely fit into the category of "increasingly high" school poverty. Additionally, 75% of the students attending the school were what Ogbu calls "caste minorities" - Black and Mexican Americans. Of the schools studied, the focal school had the highest number of LEP students (167) as well as students who were identified as Mexican Americans (1996-97 MIS report). Since 1995, concern about the lack of performance growth by ESOL students who were perceived not to be acquiring skills fast enough for fourth grade testing have been identified in staff needs assessments. Since then, school improvement efforts have been directed at setting up strategies under State Goals 3 ("Student Performance"), 5 ("School Safety and Environment") and 6 ("Teachers and Staff") to address these concerns (The Basics of School Improvement and Accountability in Florida, 1996-97).

Effects of school poverty on ESOL students have not been formally studied by focal district staff. The majority of Mexican American, ESOL elementary students attend the focal school with the remaining numbers spread throughout the district primarily in

Title I schools who bear the bulk of ESOL students. (MIS, October, 1996 reports) Ten of the twelve schools studied have been identified as Title I with an eleventh school identified in the 1997-98 school year based on its 60% free and reduced student population. A twelfth school will likely be identified as Title I during the next school year if its poverty level continues to grow past its current 57% free and reduced student percentage rate. Based on the Chapter 1 Successful Schools Pilot Project results, it appears that increasing school poverty, especially that evidenced by Free and Reduced Price Lunch data reported at Zone 1 schools, can be a definite variable related to students' academic progress. This variable, combined with the fact that most Mexican American students in both the district and focal school are classified as migrants and also participate in the Free and Reduced Lunch program, may have a strong correlation with their academic performance.

Teacher Characteristics: Experience and Training

Teacher characteristics can have great bearing on students' academic achievement. Report V of the Mexican American Education Study, "Teachers and Students: Differences in Teacher Interaction with Mexican American and Anglo Students," (1973) showed that teachers in classrooms of the Southwest behaved differently towards Mexican American and Anglo students as reflected by responses to ten categories on the Flanders Interaction Analysis System. This report, fifth in a series of six commissioned by the Office of Civil Rights, summarizes findings from a study of 494 classes where English was being taught at fourth, eighth, tenth, and twelfth grades in 52 randomly selected schools in California, New Mexico, and Texas. Interaction data were adequate for 429 of the visited classrooms (p. 14). Using average measures of per pupil interaction for individual Mexican American and Anglo students as documented by trained observers, researchers calculated overall disparities in teacher-pupil interaction to reflect an Anglo bias that was determined to be statistically significant in six categories: praising or encouraging; acceptance or use of

student ideas; questioning; positive teacher response; all noncriticizing teacher talk; and all student speaking. Researchers concluded that "Mexican American pupils in the survey area receive considerably less of some of the most educationally beneficial forms of teacher behavior than do Anglos in the same classroom" (p. 17). The report explains that teachers had not received training so that they could "incorporate the interests and experiences of Chicano children into classroom discussions. In effect, the language and cultural background of Mexican American students is virtually excluded from the school programs in the Southwest" (pp. 43-44).

As a result of this study and other reform efforts, teachers in the Southwest were given additional training in the use of multiculturally appropriate methodology. The recognition of the importance of teacher training in the instruction of multiculturally diverse student populations is one of the cornerstones of Florida's META decree. In the section of the agreement relating to school personnel, the decree outlines requirements for teachers to receive what is known as the ESOL Endorsement as follows:

> **6A-4.0244 Specialization Requirements for the Endorsement in English to Speakers of Other Languages - Academic Class**
>
> (1) A bachelor's or higher degree with certification in another subject, and
>
> (2) A minimum score of two hundred twenty (220) on the Test of Spoken English (TSE), and
>
> (3) Fifteen (15) semester hours in English to speakers of other languages (ESOL) to include credit in each of the areas specified below:
>
> (a) Methods of teaching English to speakers of other languages (ESOL),
> (b) ESOL curriculum and materials development,
> (c) Cross-cultural communication and understanding,
> (d) Applied linguistics, and
> (e) Testing and evaluation of ESOL (LEP Plan, p. 147)

Provisions were made in the decree for "grandfathering in" those teachers who, prior to July 1, 1990, had had "at least two years of successful teaching of Basic ESOL to LEP students, as verified in writing by the Superintendent...Such teachers shall complete 3

semester hours or 60 inservice points from A.1.a.(3)(a)(b)(c) or (e)...The school district shall maintain records on how teachers were evaluated as being successful" (p. 147).

In the school district under study, the state approved LEP Plan stipulates that, at the elementary level, "A teacher with an ESOL endorsement or a teacher enrolled in classes to obtain an ESOL endorsement in accordance with timelines specified in the ESOL Agreement will be provided for each grade level (K-5)..." and that "The ESOL endorsed teacher will provide English language instruction and basic subject matter instruction which is understandable and equal and comparable in amount, scope, sequence, and quality to that provided to English proficient children" (p. 19). At most elementary schools in the district, one teacher per grade level has been identified as the ESOL instructor. At the focal school, all teachers have committed to obtain ESOL certification as part of the Schoolwide ESOL Plan. As an incentive for teachers willing to work towards the endorsement, the district has offered a tuition reimbursement program over the five year period since the implementation of the META decree in 1991. Teachers beginning the program at that time should have completed their coursework by the end of the fiscal year in 1997 when the district's tuition reimbursement commitment ends. Florida Atlantic University has been working with district staff to provide a continuing endorsement program for teachers, and several district teachers with existing ESOL endorsements have been selected to teach those who wish to obtain the endorsement through inservice points.

Parent Involvement

Since the advent of the "cultural deficit" explanation for school failure of "at risk" students in the 1960's and 1970's, there has been a growing emphasis on involving parents in school activities via the compensatory education model. Citing studies by Becker and Epstein, 1982, Bennett, 1986, Henderson, 1987, Diaz-Soto, 1988, and Epstein, 1991, Valdes (1996) views these programs as an attempt to find small solutions to a bigger

problem, explaining that "Simply bringing parents to schools will not change the racist or classist responses that teachers may have toward them and their behaviors. Parenting classes alone will not equalize outcomes" (pp. 38 - 39). However, following the lead of What Works (United States Department of Education, 1987), parent involvement researchers contend that it is vital for schools and parents to work together to ensure student success. Indeed, parent involvement is the eighth Florida educational goal and a major component of Title I school improvement plan requirements.

What should the role of parents be in the education of their children, and how should schools encourage this involvement? Epstein (1984) shows that, when teachers are "leaders" in the realm of parent involvement, gains in reading achievement can occur although there were no effects on math achievement in her study. According to Epstein, "Parents with more education and parents who report that they have learned more this year than previously about their child's instructional program, positively influence change in the reading achievement of their children" ("Effects of Teacher Practices of Parent Involvement Change in Student Achievement in Reading and Math," p. 7). In this and other studies, Epstein points out the importance of the teacher's perception of how parent involvement produces student related outcomes as to whether or not they actively seek to include parents in educational practices ("Parent Involvement: Implications for Limited English Proficient Students," 1986a).

Typically, Mexican American parents are not noted for their involvement in school affairs. Language barriers often prevent them from understanding communications from the teacher, and cultural differences can sometimes interfere with parent involvement efforts. Valdes (1996) points out that typical parent education programs designed to teach Mexican origin mothers how to help their children succeed in school (i.e. Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy, 1989) focus on developing literacy skills for both parents and children without attempting to understand the family culture of Mexican Americans.

She goes on to explain that, in the Mexican household, the role of the mother is to instruct children on manners and morals through spontaneous homilies called ***"consejos"*** and the role of children is to show ***"respeto"*** ("respect") for their elders in a cooperative group setting. Children are not encouraged to express opinions, and discipline has clear limits with punishment by the father being the "ultimate solution" (Con Respeto, pp. 123 - 132). Valdes claims that the Mexican American parent's family values are often in contradiction with the expectations of the school which has a white middle class bias towards the role of parents (pp. 140 - 168). Ogbu also supports this claim of white middle class bias in schools ("Variability in Minority School Performance: A Problem in Search of an Explanation," pp. 319 - 325).

Another factor related to the lack of educational involvement on the part of Mexican American parents may be their cultural background. As Valdes explains, the typical Mexican American family comes from a culture where the distribution of wealth is "most unequal" with the wealthiest 30% earning 73% of the country's total income (p. 178). In this type of society, there is little room for social mobility and education for ***"marginados"*** (underemployed or occasionally employed workers) and ***"trabajadores pobres"*** (poor workers), whom the majority of Mexican immigrants represent. Education is not seen as a tool of progress in a country where the following demographics are reported in a study authorized by President Carlos Salinas de Gortari in 1989:

- In Mexico, there are 4.2 million illiterates over age 15 with approximately 20.2 million adults not completing ***"primaria"*** or elementary school
- Nearly 880,000 students drop out of primary school every year
- Approximately 500,000 children drop out of primary school within the first three years
- 700,000 children between the ages of 10 and 14 are not enrolled in school
- 22% of all schools have only one teacher for all grades
- The average level of schooling among the Mexican population is six years
- In 1983, there were only 331 public libraries in the entire country

(Cited in Valdes, p. 174)

Thus, as Valdes concludes, the views held by adults in her study do not "support the kinds of micropractices that researchers have described as supportive of high academic achievement" (p. 189). Recommending ways to "empower" Mexican American parents, Valdes suggests that schools use the notion of ***"conscientizcao,"*** proposed by Freire (1970) whereby "'participants'' are brought to an awareness of the "realities of the structural inequalities in which they live" so that family intervention programs "liberate" new immigrants and their children from "the positions they now occupy" and "involve them in a dialogue that would result in their becoming conscious of themselves as members of an oppressed class" (p. 194). Valdes goes on to say that, if schools are serious about using parent involvement as a means to move caste minority students from the lower to the upper strata of society, then family intervention programs "must be based on an understanding and an appreciation and respect for the internal dynamics of these families and the legitimacy of their values and beliefs." She also cautions educators of the "serious costs to tampering with families" (p. 203).

At the focal school, parent involvement is taken seriously. Not only are parent involvement activities such as an annual Learning Festival part of the School Improvement Plan, but much effort is made to ensure adequate home-school communications. Spanish translations in both oral and written form are provided, and home visits are made by a Spanish speaking migrant mentor or ESOL paraprofessional. On the whole, parents seem satisified with the efforts the school has made to involve them as evidenced by a recent parent survey where over 90% of the more than 200 respondents indicated highly positive satisfaction with the school. As the 28th Annual Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll results show, however, parents tend to highly rate their child's public school but not public schools in general, reflecting a possible bias towards that with which they are familiar

Mexican American parents at the focal school is characterized as "limited" by most teachers who responded to surveys conducted in November, 1996. On the other hand, the school has received the Florida Department of Education's "Five Star School Award" for three consecutive years for its active parent and community involvement, one of five percent of schools statewide to receive this award during the 1995-96 school year. (See letters from Education Commissioner Frank Brogan, 1995, 1996, and 1997.)

As explained before, parent involvement is part of the state's Blueprint 2000 educational goals as well as Title I requirements. Therefore, most schools in Florida are required to be involved in this effort. Whether these attempts can be translated to improved academic gain for Mexican American students remain to be seen.

Use of Support Staff

The Chapter 1 Successful Schools Pilot Project Report mentioned the need for further study on the use of support staff as a means of promoting academic achievement (p. 13). Indeed, with the flexibility provided by Schoolwide Title I programs, many Title I schools have chosen to use federal funds to provide additional staff to enhance reading instruction with positive results (Slavin, 1994 and Winfield, 1992). At the focal school, efforts are made to use both certified teachers and paraprofessionals to assist the classroom teacher in meeting instructional needs. Two reading specialists (primary and intermediate), a curriculum specialist, drop-out prevention teachers, an Exceptional Student Education (ESE) mainstream cost factor teacher, two multimedia specialists, a multicultural and ESOL teacher who have the ESOL endorsement, an on-site Genesis Academy for Teaching Excellence (GATE) coordinator who assists with inservice planning and student teaching assignments through Florida Atlantic University, three bilingual ESOL aides, two migrant mentors, and a parent educator serve this purpose. During the language arts block of instruction, some of these support staff are used to reduce class size and provide flexible

grouping for reading, thereby providing the most help to those most in need as Slavin recommends ("'Whenever and wherever we choose' - the Replication of 'Success for All,'" pp. 639 -647).

Program Design: an Overview of Bilingual Education Theory and Practice

In his book entitled Bilingual Schooling in the United States: A Sourcebook for Educational Personnel, Francesco Cordasco provides an overview of the history of bilingual education in America. As explained in the introduction, the "heyday" of bilingual schooling occurred prior to the Civil War when German, French and Spanish were accepted as the "medium of teaching" (p. xviii). After 1880, French and Scandinavian schools were founded along with an abundance of parochial schools whose purpose was to accommodate Catholic newcomers from Eastern and Southern Europe (p. xviii). Citing Lawrence A. Cremin's The American Common School, Cordascu points out that the American public school movement "did not encourage the preservation of language other than English" explaining that "Assimilation, as a national policy, ostensibly meant the repudiation of the native languages that the children of immigrants brought to American schools" (pp. xviii - xix). As Joshua Fishman's treatise Language Loyalty in the United States reveals, American public schools have not been kind to immigrants who were unable to "de-ethnitize" and thereby "Americanize" their speech and cultural mannerisms (Cordasco, p. xx).

As the great waves of immigration continued on into the twentieth century and the array of languages spoken in public schools became more abundant in certain states and regions of the country, policymakers began to address the concerns of the new immigrants through both court decisions (i.e. Lau v. Nichols, 1974; Aspira v. Board of Education, City of New York, 1972) and federal legislation. In 1967, Senator Ralph Yarborough (D. - Texas), introduced S.428 which proposed "'To amend the Elementary and Secondary

Education Act of 1965 in order to provide assistance to local educational agencies in establishing bilingual American education programs and to provide certain other assistance to promote such programs'" (Cordasco, p. 63). Because Yarborough was responding to the needs of his Mexican American constituents and other students with Spanish surnames in his bill, Cordascu notes that "The very proposal of the bill was tantamount to the recognition that Mexican American children had been neglected by American schools" (p. 63). Companion bills in the House were also proposed, chief among them H.R. 9840 presented by James H. Scheuer (D. - New York), who chose not to limit the provisions to Spanish speaking students and to increase "five-fold" the allocations Senator Yarborough had requested along with opening participation to full-time nonpublic school students (Cordasco, p. 63).

The Bilingual Education Act of 1968, also known as Title VII, opened the door of oppportunity to non-English and limited English speaking children. Further amendments to the Act in 1974 expanded these opportunities, providing federal funding through grants to local school districts who chose to avail themselves of additional dollars by introducing bilingual education programs into their schools. The questions for bilingual educators became "Which districts would apply for the grants?" and "How would the funds be used, depending on the interpretation of the law?" Texas, of course, took the lead in seeking funding, along with other states with large numbers of immigrants such as Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, and California. In 1963, Florida's Dade County School District introduced one of the nation's first completely bilingual programs in grades one, two, and three at the Coral Way School in Miami as a means of serving its growing Cuban population. At first the program was voluntary, and some parents elected to stay with the all-English program; however, by the end of the first year, the program became so popular that the unilingual option was no longer necessary (Cordasco, p. 5). Evaluations of the

program have shown that it is as effective in teaching language arts and mathematics as regular English programs (p. 5).

What characterizes effective bilingual education programs? This has been the subject of much debate among theorists over the past 25 years. As Lessow-Hurley explains, "The emotional quality of the debate surrounding bilingual education in the United States is rooted to some extent in our attitudes about language and about bilingualism" (A Commonsense Guide to Bilingual Education, p. 9). In her handbook for educators, Lessow-Hurley discusses various viewpoints which center around the following issues: language parochialism (English as a dominant language with no need to learn others), language elitism (French and German considered "more prestigious" than Spanish), language restrictionism (with the English-only legislation mainly targeting biglingual voting and bilingual schooling), and past practices of Americanization as reasons for language policy decisionmaking (pp. 9 - 12).

Much second-language instruction is based on recent developments in second-language acquisition theory as proposed by Stephen Krashen (1981) who makes a distinction between second language acquisition and language learning, seeing language learning as "formal" and "rule focused" whereas acquisition is less formal and more spontaneous. Krashen suggests that acquisition is more important for real communication and that students acquire a second language when they are presented with comprehensible sounds and symbols in an understandable manner in a non-threatening learning environment (Lessow-Hurley, p. 36). Advocating a "natural approach" to language acquisition which involves four stages - preproduction, early production, speech emergence, and intermediate production -, Krashen emphasizes communication over correctness when working with young children in order to have them become "intermediate-level" speakers of the second language and to help them develop oral proficiency (Lessow-Hurley, pp. 37 - 38). As Krashen explains, "It is extremely efficient

to develop literacy first in the child's first language; the transfer to English is rapid, even when the alphabets used are very different" ("A Gradual Exit, Variable Threshold Model for Limited English Proficient Children," 1996, p. 1). The key to successful bilingual programs is the use of what Krashen calls "comprehensible input in English provided directly in the form of ESL and sheltered subject matter classes...with subject matter teaching done in the first language without translation...and literacy development in the first language, which transfers to the second language" (p. 15). He recommends a "gradual exit" from the primary language program in order to prepare LEP students for the mainstream by developing their "academic language ability," a term coined by Jim Cummins (1980), another second language acquisition expert. Krashen recommends the "gradual exit" approach for submersion programs as well with the use of team teaching in a pull-out situation where LEP students receive extra support at a time of day when the subject matter "requires the most abstract use of language..least comprehensible for the new second language acquirer: language arts and social studies" (p. 15). In addition, in discussing the use of paraprofessionals to assist in second language acquisition, Krashen explains that this type of helper should be used to "provide background knowledge and literacy in the child's first language" where the help will be most effective "in those subjects requiring the most use of abstract language: social studies and language arts" (p. 15), or what META Decree requirements identify as the "content areas."

The work of Jim Cummins complements that of Krashen. Citing studies by Lambert (1962), Cummins analyzes under achievement among minority children by referring to theoretical principles of language development and providing an explanation of additive versus subtractive bilingual theory. According to Cummins, who refers to the child's first language as "L1," "In addition to children from dominant language backgrounds, children from subordinate language backgrounds can also develop an additive form of bilingualism when their L1 is strongly promoted within the school"

(Bilingualism and Special Education, p. 107). Furthermore, citing Ogbu's work on "caste minorities" and Feurstein's views on "cultural deprivation," Cummins proposes a general hypothesis that "children's cognitive and academic development are direct functions of their interaction with adults both in the home and school and whatever can be done to validate and strengthen this process of cultural transmission is likely to contribute to children's overall personal and intellectual growth" (p. 127).

In analyzing the time it takes for language minority students to acquire "English proficiency," Cummins explains that there are two levels of language proficiency: surface features (i.e. conversational skills) and common underlyling proficiency (academic skills). (See pp. 130- 491.) He shows how research has found that it takes five to seven years to approach grade norms in second language academic skills, yet it is possible for the second language learner to acquire conversational skills in two years (p. 149).

While Cordasco defines bilingual education as "instruction in *two* languages, the use of both English and the child's native tongue as media of instruction in the school's curriculum" (Bilingual Schooling in the United States, p.xxi), Lessow-Hurley's definition is more complex. She uses figures to explain the differences between bilingual program models such as transitional, maintenance, enrichment, and two-way (developmental) versus immersion programs such as traditional, structured, two-way, and submersion (pp. 26 - 27). In analyzing the outcomes of the programs, Lessow-Hurley differentiates between additive and subtractive results, recommending the former where the student's native tongue is promoted as well as the second language. In the case of the "submersion" version of the immersion model, she comments that not only are the results subtractive, but there is no program for LEP students (p. 27).

Citing the California State Department of Education summary of the research (1990), Lessow-Hurley lists the following as effective program characteristics:

- Content-based instruction, comparable to material covered in English-only classrooms
- Primary-language instruction for subject matter
- Multicultural instruction that recognizes and incorporates students' home cultures
- Clear goals
- Dedicated administrative and teaching staff with a commitment to bilingual education
- High expectations for all students
- Frequent monitoring of student performance
- Flexibility in instructional approach, which provides students with alternative routes to learning
- Parent and community involvement
- Open communication among all sectors of the school community. (pp. 27 - 28)

Recent findings cited by Lessow-Hurley in A Commonsense Guide to Biglingual Education (1991) report the results of the United States Department of Education longitudinal study conducted in 1984-85 and 1987-88. The study included 2,000 Spanish-speaking enrolled in bilingual programs in California, Florida, New Jersey, New York and Texas who were enrolled in one of three types of programs:

- ***Structured English Immersion***. All instruction in content areas is presented in English, but the teacher is bilingual and uses the native language for clarification.
- ***Early-Exit Transitional***. About 30 percent of initial instruction is in the child's native language. Native-language instruction is phased out during 2nd grade and children enter all-English classrooms in 3rd grade.
- ***Late-Exit Transitional***. Students are taught in their native langauges at least 40 percent of the time. Students stay in the program through 6th grade. (p. 28)

As Lessow-Hurley explains, results of this study showed that "LEP students in all three programs achieved better than at-risk students in the general population in reading, mathematics, and language development. Students in structured immersion and early-exit programs, however, lost ground when native-language support was discontinued. Late-

exit students, on the other hand, actually gained ground, and appeared to be gaining on students in the general population" (p. 28).

One of the major proponents of the "immersion" concept of bilingual education is Fred Genesee, who has conducted research in Canada. According to Genesee, characteristics of effective immersion programs include: integration of language and academic instruction, negotiated international language use, and intrinsically motivating curriculum ("The Baby and the Bathwater or What Immersion Has to Say About Bilingual Education," 1986). Claiming that the major incentive for students in the immersion method is understanding or being understood, Genesee relies on Krashen's second language acquisition theory (1985) in his analysis which claims that immersion programs that promote discourse are better than teacher-centered classrooms, especially when the learning and cultural styles of the students are considered when designing instruction ("Second Language Learning in School Settings: Lessons from Immersion," 1991).

Russell Gersten, another "immersion" proponent, recommends a "structured" approach using "direct" instructional techniques (1984, 1985, and 1996). Arguing in favor of this model as opposed to the transitional bilingual approach, Gersten uses studies in Canada as a source of support for his findings where he claims that, although all instruction is conducted in the common school language (i.e. French or English when applied to the United States), nevertheless, *"all instruction is conducted at a level understood by all students"* ("A Case for Structured Immersion," 1985, p. 75). Gersten cites two United States programs where this approach has worked: the Uvalde, Texas direct instruction model where the Distar Reading, Language and Arithmetic Program forms the background for instruction; and the Pacific City Project, using the same model with a small number of Asian students. In both of these programs, direct instruction by the teacher was provided with supplemental training and curriculum modifications as needed.

In Learning in Two Worlds: An Integrated Spanish/English Biliteracy Program (1992), Bertha Perez and Maria E. Torres-Guzman base their recommendations on the work of Krashen and Cummins, again contending that the "most effective route to English language literacy for language minority students is through their first language" ("Introduction," p. xxiii). Perez and Torres-Guzman go on to explain that the task of teaching literacy is more than teaching skills in decoding and encoding, claiming that "The role of educational programs in helping students develop pride in who they are as well as improving their academic skills is critical to developing alternative social relations between groups and a better world for all" (p. 12).

To Perez and Torres-Guzman, promoting cultural diversity is an important classroom policy with the goal of developing a *"cultural repertoire"* for language minority students so that they can acquire an understanding of and develop competency in different linguistic and cultural systems. In order to achieve this goal, teachers must "validate the child's experience, acknowledge cultural and linguistic differences, and integrate the community as a resource in development" (p. 15). Encouraging learning environments that develop "biliteracy," the authors suggest methods that teachers can use such as varying instruction to meet the needs of visual, auditory, and kinisthetic learners, using an integrated approach "based on the assumption that children need to use their language (local and standard Spanish and English) and literacy skills to communicate with varied audiences for varied purposes" (p. 62). They recommend organizing lessons in thematic units, providing time for writing through interactive journals and using literature and trade books to help children "develop diversity in their purpose and use of language and literacy skills" (pp. 65 - 81). Furthermore, they recommend the use of technology (i.e. Polaroid cameras, video cameras and recorders, video cassettes, and computers) as a source of language models. Even the use of television as a supplement to the reading program is recommended. Citing studies done by Davies (1986), Perez and Torres-Guzman contend

that "television does not directly compete with reading in real time but may actually serve to stimulate reading" (p. 82). These researchers advise teachers who use basal readers that they "will need to look at ways of adapting and integrating basal texts to the experiences of their students" and recommend "flexible grouping" techniques to encourage "diversity of experience" (p. 84). Finally, it is clear that, in their recommendations to teachers, Perez and Torres-Guzman are in favor of a maintenance bilingual program model whereby the minority language student is involved in continuous and consistent participation in Spanish literacy instruction with the use of second language instructional techniques which enhance rather than subtract from their first language, the goal of "true" bilingual education according to many theorists.

In Meeting the Needs of Culturallly and Linguistically Different Students: A Handbook for Educators (1989), Sandra Fradd recommends a "proactive system" for ESOL educators whereby their efforts occur at two levels: "primary, addressing all learners; and secondary, defining at-risk children for special interventions" (p. 29). Citing the work of Ortiz (1988), Fradd claims that "Successful schools incorporate students of diverse languages and cultures into the ongoing life of the society that funds and forms the schools, acknowledging the pluralistic composition of the student body and providing ways for all students and their families to participate in the programs and activities... When schools provide an environmental context in which students acquire these multicultural competencies, then school personnel are preparing students for successfully living and working in the real world" (p. vii).

In Chapter 4, Fradd discusses how entry and exit criteria for LEP students are a central part of program development. In determining program entry, she explains the importance of using a comprehensive language evaluation consisting of both academic and social language skills in both oral and written form (p. 65). Referring to a growing body of research that indicates how linguistically different students can benefit from instructional

support in developing language skills to help them move beyond lower quartile scores on norm referenced achievement tests, Fradd still maintains that "at least 4 years is required in order for LEP or non-English language background students to achieve about the fiftieth percentile on nationally normed standardized achievement tests" (p. 66). She explains that "low exit criteria" may be detrimental to LEP students if they are prematurally withdrawn from the instructional support and placed in regular classroom settings, putting them "at risk" so that their proficiency level in their first language "decreases at a rate that is disproportionately greater than the progress they make in English" (p. 66 and 68). For Fradd, this is why a monitoring and support system is critical.

Fradd recommends developing a curriculum for LEP students that meets their needs in both language development and content area instruction, making sure that the ESOL curriculum is aligned with the regular curriculum (pp. 96 - 97). In a section explaining how to develop a framework for specialized language instruction, Fradd promotes a language arts curriculum "that enables students to move from concrete, high context experiences to abstract, academic concepts" (p. 97). The categories she includes in her model are environmental print, print in daily life, literacy forms, experiential print, and content-area print (pp. 97 - 100). Final sections of the handbook include recommendations for instructional collaboration through the use of cooperative learning centers as well as professional collaboration through cooperative planning and coaching so that LEP students will be prepared to integrate into the mainstream of the educational system (pp. 107 - 128).

As can be seen by the previous literature review on bilingual programs, there are many approaches to educating LEP students which are good for all learners. The META Consent Decree and ensuing Florida Department of Education guidelines for district ESOL programs use this assumption as a basis for program requirements. (See ESOL Program Quick Reference Guide, 1996-7.) Districts are free to choose the type of program that best

suits their needs, although not many choose the more expensive approaches which require large numbers of bilingual staff. As long as the training and program access requirements of META are met, there is much flexibility provided each district in its LEP Plan.

The district studied in this dissertation has selected a programmatic design which is cost effective, at least at the elementary level. Each school designates one teacher per grade level to serve LEP students. That teacher is required to pursue the state mandated ESOL endorsement. Other teachers and the principal receive the minimum amount of training depending on their subject area. At the focal school, because of the large number of LEP students, the school improvement team has decided that all classroom teachers should seek the ESOL endorsement, and these teachers are in the process of receiving that training. According to Lessow-Hurley's analysis, the school district under study has a "submersion" program because it is not specified that ESOL teachers be bilingual, and LEP students' native language is not used for supplemental instruction. However, state ESOL guidelines require that additional support is given to classroom teachers in the form of training and bilingual ESOL aides when there are 15 or more students of a certain language in the school. Furthermore, multiculturalism is promoted by the focal district and school through staff development and curriculum support.

Instructional program reform as well as teacher training are essential elements in restructuring efforts at the focal school. In August, 1996, a language arts pull-out block was added to the schedule for the purpose of assisting second through fourth grade LEP students. During the language arts block, identified students receive 90 minutes of instruction in a "sheltered" classroom where a certified ESOL teacher uses special materials and intensified ESOL methods to deliver instruction. Students were placed in the program based on teacher recommendation and/or individualized reading inventory and standardized test results. A language arts series called Amazing English (Addison - Wesley, 1996)

provides an integrated ESOL curriculum, and the ESOL resource teacher uses recommended ESOL strategies to promote reading and writing skills.

In the district under study, there has been a growing increase in LEP students over the past several years, but, on the whole, these students have remained localized in the northwest section called Zone 1. (See 1996-97 MIS reports.) This zone also has a higher level of poverty concentration as evidenced by free and reduced lunch reports which indicate the lowest percentage of poverty in the zone to be 69% where the highest in both the zone and the district is 91% at the focal school. (See MIS data obtained in the spring of 1997.) Zone 1 contains not only the focal school but also three other Title I elementary schools, including 68% of the Mexican American ESOL elementary student population in the district. With a 33% Mexican American population, most of which is classified as LEP, the focal school has by far the most Mexican American ESOL elementary school students (145) with the next highest number (49) found in the school from the other district as identified in Chapter 1 of this study. It is also important to note that, not only do Zone 1 schools fit the profile for the Chapter 1 study of high poverty schools, but they also contain most of the lowest test scores in the district with the focal school recorded at the bottom of the list in 1995, second to last in 1996, and fourth to last in 1997. Programmatic intervention can, therefore, be seen as "critical" for this particular school. Furthermore, the dentified needs for its large LEP Mexican American student population appear to be greater than most of the other schools in the district as well as in this study when comparing test results.

The sheltered model for the language arts pull-out program was selected for both cost effectiveness and efficiency in instructional delivery. The program incorporates one ESOL endorsed teacher who also had a degree in bilingual education to teach language arts within a 90 minute period for students and grades two through four. These grades were chosen as they encompass most of the LEP student population at the focal school. ESOL

strrategies are used in both the regular and sheltered classrooms. However, only English is spoken during language arts instruction as required by the META decree guidelines (META Decree, p. 8).

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Subjects

The subjects of this study are fourth grade Mexican American students in a midsize school district in Florida as well as fourth grade Mexican American students in a school in another smaller district which has similar concerns with its growing population of Mexican Americans. These students have completed a three year ESOL plan of study or have exited the program based on standardized test scores and/or teacher recommendation through the LEP Committee at each school site. The students were identified through each district's Management Information System (MIS) data reports. Elementary schools were selected for study based on the numbers of Mexican American fourth graders at their school sites. All but two of the schools in the study were designated as Title I Schools for the 1996-97 school year.

Procedures

A total of 64 Mexican American fourth graders were identified from the selected elementary schools through an analysis of January, 1997 MIS records. These students are characterized as having been in a state approved ESOL program for at least three years and/or having exited the program in order to be eligible for testing according to state requirements. Student test scores on the Florida Writes Assessment administered in January, 1997 as well as their reading comprehension and math applications subtest scores on either the Stanford Achievement Test (SAT), 8th edition or the California Test of Basic

Skills (CTBS) administered in April, 1997 were compared. The Florida Writes Assessment is given to Florida fourth graders each winter. Norm referenced achievement tests are administered annually in accordance with state accountability directives. The Stanford and CTBS achievement tests may be considered statistically comparable because they were based on national norms using similar data obtained in the spring of 1988. Both tests are accepted by the Florida Department of Education as standardized measures of student performance in reading and math and are generally used by many Florida school districts.

Factors addressed in the analysis are in six categories as follows: (a) student characteristics such as socioeconomic status, gender, attendance, and country of origin (United States vs. Mexican birth); (b) teacher characteristics such as ESOL training and years of experience; (c) school characteristics such as school poverty level, number of LEP students, and number of Mexican American ESOL students; (d) parent involvement (according to teacher surveys); (e) use of support staff by minutes of instructional support; and (f) program characteristics (regular classroom or pull-out for language arts). The pull-out program is of special interest to this researcher. It was added at the focal school because it was in immediate danger of being placed on the Florida Commissioner of Education's "critically low performing" school list. Its purpose was to alter program design in order to meet the special needs of ESOL students.

Assumptions

Low socioeconomic status (Low SES) students are identified as those participating in the Free and Reduced Lunch program. It was found that all of the 64 Mexican American students fit in this category. Mobility and attendance are considered to be synonymous in accordance with the Florida Department of Education's recordkeeping procedures. In addition, because Mexican migrant students usually do not enter school until October and

sometimes leave in the spring prior to achievement testing, it is assumed that their attendance records provide a reliable guide to their consistency in being in school during test preparation time. Guidelines for identifying poverty level at the schools are those used by Title 1 with "increased" high poverty schools identified as having 75% or more students on Free or Reduced Lunch. Five schools in the study fit this category. ESOL endorsement includes five ESOL certification courses or the equivalent in inservice points as per state ESOL guidelines. It is assumed that Spanish is spoken in the home on the basis of a Home Language Survey completed by the parent. State performance guidelines are considered evidence of academic achievement.

Limitations

Such factors as teaching style and effective school correlates are not addressed quantitatively because of the timeframe of the study and the subjectivity required in the analysis. Poverty level of the students could not be compared because all students in the study qualified for the Free and Reduced Lunch program according to student records. Parent involvement surveys were completed by the ESOL teachers, possibly reflecting bias. Academic progress is defined by using norm referenced tests and state standards as identified in Goal 3, "Student Performance," and outlined in The Basics of School Improvement and Accountability in Florida (1996-97). Other relevant information has been collected from the districts' Management Information System (MIS) reports and from surveys distributed to ESOL contact persons and ESOL teachers at each school site.

The number of students selected for the study is limited. Only 64 Mexican American students were eventually identified as "eligible" according to ESOL programmatic criteria. Since the timeline of the study was limited to the 1996-97 school year and the hypotheses to be tested were of prime importance to the focal school for the 1997-98

school year, it was decided to proceed with the data collection and analysis. Correlations were, therefore, compiled from data collected in the summer of 1997.

Delimitations

The subjects are Florida fourth graders in two Florida districts who took the Florida Writes Assessment and Stanford Achievement Test (SAT) or California Test of Basic Skills (CTBS) reading comprehension and math applications subtests in 1997. Mexican American students were studied since this was a large minority population at the focal school and the emphasis of school improvement efforts at this site was on these students during the 1996-97 school year. All schools in the focal district that had eligible Mexican American fourth graders are included in the study. In order to broaden and enhance the sample, the twelfth school was selected from a district whose demographic make-up related to Mexican American students was similar to that of the focal school.

Method of Study

This study is a quantitative research design. Students were initially selected through the use of MIS data reports and surveys distributed to each school's ESOL contact person. However, final data collection results from the analysis of district test reports indicate that fewer students than those initially selected actually completed the Florida Writes Assessment and norm referenced achievement tests. Parent involvement surveys pilot tested for reliability as well as teacher surveys were distributed to identified ESOL teachers at each school site. All surveys were completed except those involving two students whose teachers relocated. The relationship between predictors and criterion variables were correlated to determine statistical significance using the .05 probability level.

Instruments

Instruments used in the study include norm referenced achievement tests and the state's Florida Writes Assessment for fourth graders. In addition, a parent a involvement survey using a Likert scale as well as a teacher survey were distributed to ESOL teachers at each of the twelve schools. (See Appendix, pp. 64 - 66.)

The Stanford Achievement Test (8th edition) was analyzed for eleven of the twelve schools in the study. The twelfth school was selected from another district with similar demographics related to Mexican American students. This district uses the California Test of Basic Skills (CTBS) which is statistically comparable to the Stanford 8 since both use national norms obtained in the spring of 1988 and both are accepted as standardized measures by the Florida Department of Education in the analysis of statewide achievement test results. In addition, the Florida Writes Assessment for fourth graders developed by the Florida Department of Education was used to assess acceptable academic performance in writing.

Two surveys were distributed to ESOL teachers at each selected school site. The parent involvement survey contains seven questions which were tested in advance for reliability with a comparable sample of 20 ESOL teachers at the focal school. The results of the reliability analysis conducted in December, 1996 indicate that the coefficient alpha reliability level of the survey is .9041. ESOL teachers were also asked to complete a survey which elicited responses indicating their level of experience and status of their ESOL training. (See "Appendix," pp. 64 - 66.)

Data Analysis

Data were collected by examining MIS reports furnished to schools through the focal district's Planning and Research Department as well as information obtained from the

other district's MIS staff. Results from the two surveys collected from the ESOL teachers at the twelve selected schools were also compiled. Data analysis determined the correlation between predictor and criterion variables for both the focal school and the other eleven schools in the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

Student mobility proved to be a limiting factor on the size of the sample collected at the end of the 1996-97 school year. Of the originally identified 64 students, only 59 students' Florida Writes scores were obtained in May because of attendance as well as exemption criteria used by test administrators in January. The number of eligible students was further reduced to 43 by the time achievement test results were reported in June. Because of the small sample size and the large number of predictor variables, the risk of capitalizing on chance or falsely rejecting a true null hypothesis is quite high. However, this researcher decided to proceed with the correlation analysis because of the time constraints of the study and the impending school improvement needs of the focal school for the upcoming school year. The question of immediate concern was whether or not the pull-out program appeared to be working at the focal school.

The Null Hypotheses

There were three null hypotheses examined in this study relating to the following predictor variables: (a) student factors such as socioeconomic status, gender, birth origin, and mobility; (b) school characteristics such as poverty level, number of limited English potential (LEP) students, and number of Mexican American students; (c) teacher experience and English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) training; (d) parent involvement; (e) use of support staff; and (f) use of the pull-out program at the focal school. The null hypotheses are: (a) none of the identified variables predict the academic performance of Mexican American fourth graders in the Florida Writes Assessment; (b) none of these

variables predict the academic performance of Mexican American fourth graders in the Stanford Achievement Test or California Test of Basic Skills (SAT/CTBS) subtest in reading comprehension; and (c) none of the variables predict the academic performance of Mexican American fourth graders in the SAT/CTBS subtest in math applications.

Only one of the three null hypotheses was rejected - that which related to math applications achievement. In this case, three predictor variables had significant relationships to achievement. They were number of LEP students, number of Mexican American students, and the pull-out program. Correlations between predictor variables and the criterion variables relating to Florida Writes and reading comprehension were not found to be significant (Table 3, p. 54).

Statistical Analysis: Tables 1 and 2

Predictor variables were analyzed separately to test correlations for the focal school and the other schools which did not use the language arts pull-out program. Table 1, which is illustrated on page 51, shows the means and standard deviations for ordinal predictor variables at the focal school. Table 2, illustrated on page 52, shows the means and standard deviations for the other eleven schools where the pull-out program was not used. As Table 1 indicates, the overall mean scores for Mexican American students at the focal school are as follows: (a) Florida Writes, 1.6 (on a six point scale); (b) reading comprehension, 20th percentile; and (c) math applications, 35th percentile. In Table 2, page 52, the overall mean scores for Mexican American students at the other schools are: (a) Florida Writes, 1.9 (out of six); (b) reading comprehension, 22nd percentile; and (c) math applications, 56th percentile.

Table 1

Means and Standard Deviations of Predictor Variables for the Focal School With the Language Arts Pull-out Program

Predictor Variables	Criterion Variables: Florida Writes			SAT/CTBS Reading			SAT/CTBS Math		
	n	M	SD	n	M	SD	n	M	SD
					%			%	
Country of Origin:									
U.S.	15	1.4	1.04	15	17	.210	15	30	.307
Mexico	18	1.7	.911	12	24	.246	12	43	.368
Total	33	1.6	.972	27	20	.225	27	35	.335
Gender:									
Male	19	1.4	1.13	13	23	.247	13	45	.347
Female	14	1.8	.668	14	17	.206	14	26	.308
Total	33	1.6	.972	27	20	.225	27	35	.335
Days absent	32	1.6	.944	26	20	.227	26	36	.339
School poverty	33	1.6	.972	27	20	.225	27	35	.335
Number LEP students	33	1.6	.972	27	20	.225	27	35	.335
Number Mexican students	33	1.6	.972	20	20	.225	27	35	.335
Parent involvement	28	1.6	.969	20	17	.210	20	31	.334
Use of support staff	32	1.6	.985	27	20	.225	27	35	.335
Teacher experience	33	1.6	.972	25	21	.230	25	38	.338
ESOL Endorsement	33	1.6	.972	25	21	.230	25	38	.338

Note. Both SAT and CTBS reading comprehension and math applications subtests are reported as percentiles and listed as such for the means in the above table.

Table 2

Means and Standard Deviations of Predictor Variables for Eleven Other Schools Without the Pull-out Program

Predictor Variables	Criterion Variables: Florida Writes			SAT/CTBS Reading			SAT/CTBS Math		
	n	M	SD	n	M	SD	n	M	SD
					%			%	
Country of Origin:									
U.S.	12	2.1	1.03	9	27	.188	9	67	.309
Mexico	14	1.8	.826	7	15	.136	7	42	.212
Total	26	1.9	.924	16	22	.172	16	56	.291
Gender:									
Male	14	1.7	.890	7	20	.234	7	56	.399
Female		2.2	.916	9	22	.120	9	57	.198
Total	26	1.9	.924	16	22	.120	16	56	.291
Days absent	26	1.9	.924	16	22	.172	16	56	.291
School poverty	26	1.9	.924	16	22	.172	16	56	.291
Number LEP students	26	1.9	.924	16	22	.172	16	56	.291
Number Mexican students	26	1.9	.924	16	22	.172	16	56	.291
Parent involvement	26	1.9	.924	16	22	.172	16	56	.291
Use of support staff	26	1.9	.924	16	22	.172	16	56	.291
Teacher experience	26	1.9	.924	16	22	.172	16	56	.291
ESOL Endorsement	26	1.9	.924	16	22	.172	16	56	.291

Note. Both SAT and CTBS reading comprehension and math applications subtests are reported as percentiles and listed as such for the means in the above table.

Statistical Analysis: Table 3

Correlations between the three criterion variables (Florida Writes, SAT/CTBS Reading Comprehension, and SAT/CTBS Math Applications) and each predictor variable are displayed in Table 3 (p. 54). With an alpha level of .05, the *r* 's ranged from .003 to .246 ($N = 59$) for the Florida Writes Assessment; from .002 to .212 ($N = 43$) for the reading comprehension portion of the SAT/CTBS exam; and from .009 to .362 ($N = 43$) for the math applications portion of the SAT/CTBS exam. Only three statistically significant correlations were found. In each case, the criterion variable was the math applications portion of the SAT/CTBS exam. The predictors involved in these significant correlations were number of LEP students ($r = .336$), number of Mexican American ESOL students ($r = .362$) and the pull-out program ($r = .307$).

Although not statistically significant, gender and number of Mexican American ESOL students had the most positive correlations with Florida Writes scores with days absence having the most negative correlation as illustrated on Table 3 (p. 54). The use of support staff most negatively correlated with reading comprehension as well as math applications scores. Number of Mexican American ESOL students had the most positive correlation with reading comprehension. As Tables 1 and 2 (pp. 51 - 2) show, females performed better than males on Florida Writes, and LEP and Mexican American students performed better at the other schools than at the focal school on all three performance measures.

Comparisons between predictor and criterion variables in Table 3 show that the pull-out program at the focal school did predict performance on the SAT/CTBS subtest in math applications. It did not predict performance on either Florida Writes or reading comprehension on the SAT/CTBS as hypothesized.

Table 3

Zero-Order Correlations Between Predictors and Criterion Variables

	Criterion Variables		
	Florida Writes	SAT/CTBS Reading	SAT/CTBS Math
Predictor Variables			
Birth origin	.003	.002	.017
Days absent	-.111	.007	-.186
	.246	-.002	-.163
Parent involvement level	.160	.159	.141
Support staff minutes per week	-.061	-.205	.009
Number LEP students	.166	.104	.336*
Number Mexican ESOL students	.224	.119	.362*
School poverty level	.164	.008	.218
Teacher experience	.029	.130	.286
Pull-out program	.047	.046	.307*
Teacher ESOL endorsement	.131	.140	.035

*p < .05

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS

Far reaching conclusions cannot be drawn because of the small sample size and because the applications of this study involved only twelve schools in two Florida districts. Indeed, it appears that further research with a larger sample is necessary in order to predict correlations between the predictor and corresponding criterion variables measured by the Florida Department of Education in its public accountability reports. However, data analysis did present some interesting findings relative to the three null hypotheses, two of which were rejected in Chapter Four.

Analysis of the Null Hypotheses

The first null hypothesis examined in this study proposed that none of the predictors would have a significant correlation with Florida Writes scores. This hypothesis was not rejected as illustrated in Table 3 (p. 54). As Table 3 shows, gender and ethnicity had the highest correlations with Florida Writes scores with females and number of Mexican American students correlating most positively. Days absence had the most negative correlation. Research indicates that girls perform better in writing than boys and that absence from school, in particular with migrant students, negatively impacts academic performance (Chapter 1 Successful Schools Pilot Project Report, 1993-4 and Valdes, 1996). The focal school had more Mexican American students than other schools studied, and its migrant population was the highest of all the elementary schools in the focal district. Florida Writes scores at this school improved overall from the previous year. In 1996-7, fourth graders averaged a 1.9 on a 6 point scale; whereas 1997-8 fourth graders averaged

2.3. In 1997, of the 33 Mexican American students taking the writing assessment at the focal school, five females and one male obtained a score of 3, and one female received a 3.5. In the previous year, no Mexican American students scored above 2.5 (MIS Report, 1995-96). Because of these gains, it may be reasonable to postulate that the use of the language arts pull-out program with ESOL students homogeneously grouped in a sheltered setting will show positively significant results over time.

The second null hypothesis proposed was that none of the predictors would have a significant correlation with reading comprehension scores on the SAT/CTBS achievement tests. Results illustrated in Table 3 (p. 54) show that this null hypothesis could not be rejected because of the low correlations between predictors and this criterion. Although use of support staff in minutes per week had the most negative correlation (-.205), no predictor was determined to be significant in impacting reading comprehension scores. Nationally, reading comprehension is an area where all students appear weak in comparison to math; therefore, it makes sense that Mexican American fourth graders with their limited English backgrounds would not perform well on this achievement measure because of the restricted three year time period they are given to acquire comprehensible English before testing. The possible negative correlation with use of support staff is worth exploring because these additional personnel have been a traditional part of Title I projects as illustrated in the Chapter 1 Successful Schools Pilot Project Report (1993-4).

Finally, the third null hypothesis proposed was that none of the predictors would significantly correlate with math applications scores on the SAT/CTBS achievement tests. This hypothesis was rejected. As Table 3 (p. 54) shows, three statistically significant correlations were found with the math applications criterion variable: number of LEP students (r = .336); number of Mexican American ESOL students (r = .362), and the pull-out program for language arts (r = .307) At the focal school, much work was completed to prepare all students for this subtest. Because math applications scores were significantly

higher than reading comprehension scores throughout the district and the state according to 1996-97 MIS reports, it can be concluded that the Mexican American students are typical in following this pattern although their limited reading proficiency may deflate their scores.

It appears that, with this particular sample, math applications scores were the only predictable results from the predictor variables studied. Whether or not the pull-out program impacted this progress is debatable because only language arts was taught during this time. What seems likely is that the Mexican American fourth graders at the focal school are improving because there is a focus on their achievement through program design. It is noteworthy that teacher training in ESOL strategies as well as use of support staff did not impact performance in this study because the META decree requirements, and, consequently, the statewide ESOL program, emphasize these components. Subsequently, school improvement strategies at the focal school included ESOL training for all teachers as well as the provision of additional staff to work with LEP students. However, as stressed before, these two factors should be examined further. Perhaps, over time, with experience and ongoing training, staff working with Mexican Amerian ESOL students will make a difference in these students' academic performance.

Application to the Literature

In this study, the researcher analyzed predictors relating to several student characteristics and school factors, teacher experience and training, parent involvement, and use of support staff in combination with the focal school's pull-out program to determine their relationship to three criterion variables related to student performance in writing, reading comprehension, and math applications. Historically, Mexican American students have not performed well in school because of perceived "deficiencies" in the areas analyzed in this study. A review of these areas and an application to the findings in the literature follow.

In the area of student characteristics, the research contains many references to the negative affects of poverty upon student performance in school. Overwhelmingly, as the Coleman Report (1966) and subsequent studies conducted by such researchers as John Ogbu suggest, when students are representative of caste minorities (as are Mexican American students), they do not tend to achieve academically. The students in this study can be described as poor or low in socioeconomic status because they all qualified for the Free and Reduced Lunch program ("Limitations," p. 45). In addition, Mexican American children experience the much researched problems of second language acquisition and excessive mobility because many of their parents are migrants. The focal school's language arts pull-out program was an effort at overcoming these problems. Unfortunately, this effort did not appear to significantly impact writing and reading comprehension scores during this one year study. These results were to be expected as the research of bilingual education experts such as Krashen (1987, 1996) and Cummings (1981) indicates that it takes five to seven years (not three as the state of Florida requires in its ESOL program) to attain "comprehensible" English when first language proficiency is not achieved.

School characteristics affecting academic performance of students have been studied by Ron Edmonds (1986) who found that certain school factors could overcome the effects of poverty. However, as the 1993-4 Chapter 1 Pilot Project Report showed, the greater the poverty level of the school, the more difficult it was to overcome these effects. At 91%, the focal school had the highest poverty level of all the schools studied, although all but one of the twelve schools can be described as "high poverty" because they qualified for Title I funds. Interestingly, this study shows that the focal school's programmatic effort to reduce the effects of poverty was a factor in the area of math applications when combined with the number of Mexican American LEP students (the focal school had the highest number at 167). Could math scores have improved because of the quality of peer

interaction in a natural (i.e. regular classroom) setting such as suggested by proponents of gradual immersion programs? Such results have been demonstrated by Genessee (1984), Lessow-Hurley (1991), Krashen (1996), and Cummins (1981). Further study of math performance comparisons with other high poverty schools with large Mexican American student populations might reveal positive results supporting the gradual immersion model.

The research of Perez and Torres-Guzman (1992) shows that promoting cultural diversity is an effective means of helping language minority students develop competency in different linguistic and cultural systems. In the area of writing, it appears that the focal school, with its large number of Mexican American students, did achieve some programmatic results because test scores rose in this area although not enough to achieve the state required performance results. Math applications scores improved significantly enough to meet the state required performance level. At the focal school, math applications was taught within a heterogeneous classroom setting.

Multiculturalism is a concept that was stressed throughout the year at the focal school within both the regular classroom and language arts pull-out classes. Lessons were organized in thematic units with time provided daily for journal writing as well as more formal writing instruction as recommended by Perez and Torres-Guzman (pp. 61 - 88). Furthermore, the focal school used Magnet School Grant Assistance funds to implement a multimedia attractor program. With emphasis on technology and manipulatives, classroom teachers developed lessons combining computers and closed circuit television with curricula designed by a company providing services via satellite, strategies encouraging the development of high order thinking in a modern world as recommended by bilingual experts such as Fradd (1989). Finally, the language arts pull-out program, with its use of special bilingual materials (i.e. Amazing English) was aligned with regular classroom instruction, a practice suggested by Fradd.

The focal district has made an effort to facilitate ESOL inservice and coursework opportunities for classroom teachers. In addition, the focal school developed a schoolwide ESOL program to include the requirement that all classroom teachers would work towards obtaining the ESOL endorsement. Data analyses in this study show that this endorsement combined with the pull-out program did not produce statistically significant results. However, because teacher experience did prove to be somewhat predictive in the teaching of math applications. it may be postulated that teacher training in ESOL strategies should impact reading and writing performance over time.

Parent involvement was another non-significant predictor. According to survey results, the focal school, as well as others studied, had made efforts to interact with non-English speaking parents through translations of written and oral communications as well as to involve them in parent education activities. The effects of this communication system as well as the attendance of parents in PTO meetings and conferences did not appear to correlate with results on the criterion variables. A larger sample size may have produced different results; however, as Valdes' research shows, educators have a long way to go bridging the cultural gap between Mexican American parental values and current parent education practices (1996).

Finally, the use of support staff, something the Chapter 1 pilot project researchers recommended for further study, did not have a significant correlation when compared to academic achievement results in the study. The focal school had many support personnel including bilingual aides and reading specialists to assist in the instruction of Mexican American students each day. Informal comments from teachers at the focal school indicated that there were scheduling as well as training concerns involved in the allocation of personnel. Perhaps these issues can be addressed in a later study because, in such successful reading programs as Slavin's "Success for All," support personnel have been used to reduce class size and allow for flexible grouping with training provided to ensure

optimum results. (1994) In most Florida districts, including the focal district, support paraprofessionals are only required to have a high school diploma and are provided with limited on the job training. Because staff development is considered crucial for school improvement, it would appear that support personnel working with LEP students should receive adequate training in ESOL instruction.

Results from 1997 statewide assessments show that none of the selected schools was designated as "critically low" in academic achievement. The focal school's math applications scores improved to such a degree that it met minimum state testing requirements in this subject area. Florida Writes scores at the focal school also improved, although not significantly enough to meet state requirements. Reading performance did not improve; scores still remained significantly below the state average. Efforts are being made to address reading achievement both programmatically and through additional staff development. The pull-out program, with some modifications, has remained at the focal school for the current school year.

There is new leadership as well as continuing staff turnover at the focal school which has moved to a new location while construction takes place. For another year, the staff and school improvement team will be challenged by the disadvantages of poverty and limited language proficiency for Mexican American students. Because of changes in funding and personnel, it is not clear whether the pull-out program will remain. The Mexican American population in the school, as well as the district and state, will most certainly grow, and the challenges of helping them acquire comprehensible English will continue.

Recommendations

Although the sample size of this study is small, results support existing research on the poor performance of Mexican American students in high poverty schools. Because the

Mexican American student population in Florida is expanding, especially in the southern and rural counties, it is encumbent upon educators to study this research and to provide recommended changes in both curricula and instruction of LEP students. The message of Krashen and Cummins is clear: Even with teacher training and curricula modification, without costly bilingual programs, it will most likely take five to seven years of schooling for Mexican American students to acquire comprehensible English.

Testing requirements proposed by the state's Sunshine Standards are rigorous especially for students with only three years experience in an ESOL program. Thus, it is recommended that Florida's current practices be revised to extend this timeline to better prepare LEP students for norm referenced testing in reading and writing, thereby providing them with the opportunity to develop their language skills sufficiently.

Given the educational climate emphasizing accountability in preparing for 21st century change, the current testing philosophy will probably remain for the near future. Furthermore, costly bilingual programs recommended in the research are not an economically plausible solution to the ongoing problem of low achievement among Mexican American students. Therefore, local educators must continue to search for better practices in educating diverse student populations. Although ESOL teacher training did not show statistical significance in this small study, it is advisable to expand this training to support paraprofessionals as well as to encourage bilingualism among staff. Finally, programs such as the pull-out model used at the focal school should be explored, modified, and expanded to include practices recommended in the research.

As Valdes has noted, only when Mexican American students and their families are "empowered" to understand and apply the benefits of education as a tool for upward mobility, will they, along with other caste minorities, reap the rewards of the American Dream (1996, p. 194). Educators like those at the focal school are charged with this task which must be handled ***"con respeto."***

APPENDICES

Appendix A: ESOL Teacher Survey.....64

Appendix B: Parent Involvement Survey...66

Appendix A

ESOL TEACHER SURVEY FOR MEXICAN AMERICAN 4TH GRADE ESOL STUDENT STUDY

School:_____ (identified by number 1-12)

ESOL Teacher:_____ (identified by letter and school number)

TEACHER/CLASSROOM CHARACTERISTICS

Please complete the following to the best of your knowledge:

1. Are you a certified ESOL teacher with the five course endorsement? (Yes or No)

2. How many complete years of experience will you have had by June, 1997?

3. Is/Are your Mexican American ESOL student(s) served by a bilingual, Spanish speaking paraprofessional? (Yes or No)

4. If "yes," how many minutes per week and in what way are these students served?

5. Describe the ESOL strategies used in your classroom.

-Go on to the next page-

School_____

ESOL Teacher_____

ESOL STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS/PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENTS

Please complete the table as follows:

(1) List students by identification number.
(2) Write "US" for United States birthplace, "M" for Mexico, and "O" for other place of birth.
(3) Identify gender as "M" for male and "F" for female.
(4) Fill in Florida Writes scores using the 1-6 scale on MIS print-out.
(5) Record reading comprehension and math application scores as percentiles using MIS print-out.

Student ID#	Birthplace	Gender	Florida Writes (1-6)	Reading Comp. (%)	Math App. (%)

Appendix B

PARENT INVOLVEMENT QUESTIONNAIRE FOR MEXICAN AMERICAN 4TH GRADE ESOL STUDENT

School_____ (identified by number)

ESOL Teacher_____ (identified by school number and letter)

Student_____ (identification number)

Directions: The ESOL teaher identified above is asked to complete the following questionnaire for each Mexican American ESOL student in his/her fourth grade class.

Rating scale:
1 (almost never)
2 (seldom)
3 (occasionally)
4 (most of the time)
5 (always)

Fill in the appropriate numbers in the blanks provided below:

_____1. The parent(s) return(s) written requests for information in a timely fashion.

_____2. The parent(s) attend(s) PTO meetings and other school activities.

_____3. The parent(s) attend(s) parent conferences upon request.

_____4. The parent(s) show(s) a positive interest in the child's learning.

_____5. The parent(s) is(are) supportive of school and classroom policies.

_____6. Written communications are provided to parents in the home language (i.e. Spanish).

_____7. Translators are available for parent conferences.

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VITA

Mary L. Mosley attended Florida State University where she graduated magna cum laude with a Bachelor of Arts Degree in English Education in 1969. The following year she received her Master of Arts in English Education from the same university. She then taught high school English in a Florida school district for seven years. Granted a sabbatical leave in 1976, Mosley was accepted in the College of Education's graduate school at Florida Atlantic University where she obtained a Specialist Degree in Curriculum and Instruction as well as certification in Administration and Supervision, K-12, in 1980. During this time, she had her first administrative experience as Director of St. Andrews Episcopal Parish School.

Returning to the public school system after serving three years as Director of St. Andrews, Mosley worked first as a middle school English teacher and then was appointed Administrative Assistant for Personnel and Chief Negotiator for the St. Lucie County School Board. After approximately three years in this assignment, she returned to school based administration where she has been principal at three elementary schools over the past ten years. Mosley is an experienced magnet school principal who has directed the writing of several grants. Her schools have received both federal and state funding for innovative programs, and she has also developed Schoolwide Title 1 plans for two schools under her supervision.

Mosley returned to Florida Atlantic University in 1993 and was accepted as a doctoral student in the College of Education's Educational Leadership Department. She is a member of two honor societies, Phi Kappa Phi and Kappa Delta Pi.

Currently a resident of Port St. Lucie, Florida, Mosley has taught as an adjunct instructor for both Indian River Community College and Barry University. She has traveled throughout western Europe and the middle east. Upon graduation from Florida Atlantic University, she hopes to return to university teaching and to expand her traveling to include other parts of the world, especially South and Central America.