

Occupational Aspiration Change Patterns of Male and Female High School Hispanics

Maximino Plata, Ph D
Texas A&M University—Commerce
Trace Pirtle, Ed. D.
Texas A&M International University

Abstract

Levels of occupational aspirations (LOA) for 278 Hispanic adolescents (131 boys; 147 girls) in grades 9 through twelve were obtained using an adapted version of the Occupational Aspiration Scale. MANOVA results revealed LOA differences between gender groups and among grades. Post hoc comparisons showed higher Short Range Realistic (SRR) LOA for females than males between grades 9-10, 9-11, and 9-12, in Short Range Idealistic (SRI) and Long Range Realistic (LRR) LOA between grades 9-10, and in SRI LOA between grades 10-11. Tenth grade males and females had higher LOA than 9th-graders in SRI and SRR LOA, respectively. Possible reasons for LOA fluctuation patterns are discussed. Implications for counselors and suggestions for future research are provided.

According to Gottfredson (1981), individuals' occupational aspirations are the results of a developmental process, starting at a very young age and continuing through late adolescence. She proposes that individuals abandon or retain occupations based on images of occupations shaped over time according to sex type and the individuals' developing self-concept through a circumscription process, creating a zone of acceptable alternatives. Gottfredson (1981, p. 558) also believes that "although the [circumscription] process is the same for all individuals, the "zone of acceptable alternatives" will differ according to their judgments of their own abilities and motivations, the definition of success in their community, and the expectations others have for 'someone like them,' as well as other personal and environmental factors."

These arguments are congruent with researchers who promote cultural context as an important variable in the career development of Hispanics and other ethnic minorities (Arbona, 1995; Blustein, 1997; Fouad & Arbona, 1994; Fouad & Byars-Winston, 1995; Kerka, 2004; Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 2000; Trusty, 2002. Fouad and Byars-Winston (2005) believe that, in sum, "cultural context makes a major difference in the way people make decisions and choose their work" (p. 223).

In their pursuit of desired education and career options, ethnic minorities and women have historically had to negotiate factors such as discrimination (Cohn, 1997), inequities in accessing employment (Gati, 1993), differential opportunity structure (Pryor & Taylor, 1989; Schoon & Parsons, 2002), limited financial resources with which to overcome barriers (Swanson, Daniels, & Tokar, 1996), and/or gender role attitudes (Gushue & Whitson, 2006). Thus, it is reasonable to expect their "zones of acceptable alternatives" to differ from those of mainstream peers. Diemer and Hsieh (2008) believe that sociopolitical factors such as racism, sexism, discrimination in the workplace, and social injustice may lead students of color to believe that it is unlikely they will actually obtain occupations to which they aspire, and, consequently expect to obtain low prestige occupations.

Leung and Harmon (1990, p. 153) propose that the circumscription framework “operates in such a way that the zone of acceptable alternatives becomes smaller as occupations are eliminated over time.” These researchers found that “instead of a gradual narrowing of the zone, there was actually an expansion of the zone until around age 18, when the size of the zone began to narrow,” (p. 156). In addition, there are question about the stability of occupational aspirations during the circumscription process in adolescents. Available research about whether or not shifts occur in adolescents’ occupational aspirations is mixed. Gassin, Kelly, and Feldhausen (1993) in their study of gifted students, found that females’ occupational aspirations dropped sharply around grade ten compared to that of males. Watson, Quatman, & Edler (2002), on the other hand, found a sudden drop in occupational aspirations between 10th and 12th grades for both gender groups. In their study of Hispanic females residing along the Mexican border, Plata and Pirtle (2006) noted that occupational aspirations increased between eighth and ninth grades, decreased between 9th and 10th grades, and then stabilized.

In the present investigation we had two goals: First, we wanted to determine the patterns of occupational aspirations within the zone of acceptable alternatives at each grade between 9th and 12th grades for Hispanic males and for Hispanic females in a geographic region where Hispanics comprised over 95% of the population. Second, we wanted to determine if occupational aspirations differed between Hispanic males and females across grades. To achieve these goals, the Occupational Aspiration Scale (OAS) adapted by Plata and Pirtle (2006) was used to obtain data on males’ and females’ realistic and idealistic levels of occupational aspiration (LOA) at two career points—after schooling is completed (short range aspirations) and at thirty years of age (long range aspirations). The following research questions guided our exploratory investigation.

1. Do Hispanic high school males’ and females’ short-range realistic (SRR) occupational aspirations, as measured by the OAS, fluctuate across grades?
2. Do Hispanic high school males’ and females’ short-range idealistic (SRI) occupational aspirations, as measured by the OAS, fluctuate across grades?
3. Do Hispanic high school males’ and females’ long-range realistic (LRR) occupational aspirations, as measured by the OAS, fluctuate across grades?
4. Do Hispanic high school males’ and females’ long-range idealistic (LRI) occupational aspirations, as measured by the OAS, fluctuate across grades?
5. Do Hispanic high school males’ LOA, as measured by the OAS, differ across grades from females’ LOA?

Methods

Participants

Participants for the study included 278 Hispanics (131 males and 147 females) enrolled in grades nine through twelve in a school district located in a city adjacent to the Mexican border with a population of over 200,000. The ninth-grade sample comprised 61 students (26males, 35 females), the tenth-grade sample comprised 53 students (25 males, 27 females), the eleventh-grade sample comprised 131 students (61 males, 69 females), and the twelfth-grade sample comprised 35 students (19 males 16 females). Participants ranged in ages 14 to 19 (Mean Age = 15.80 years). Males’ age range was 14 to 19 (Mean age = 15.98); females’ age range was 14 to 18 (Mean Age = 15.65). Although our sample was 100 percent Hispanic, this apparent overrepresentation is reflective of the community in which the investigation was conducted, which identified 95.51% of the population as Hispanic.

Instrument

Haller and Miller (1963) believed that the LOA variable had practical importance for those concerned with educational achievement, vocational and educational counseling, and social mobility, thus, they saw the need to operationally measure individuals' levels of occupational aspiration (LOA). In developing an LOA instrument, they relied heavily on research on the "level of aspiration" concept developed by Lurie's (1939) and expanded by Gardner (1940), and Lewin, Dembo, Festinger, and Sears (1944). In this regard, Haller and Miller used occupations of various prestige levels as established by the National Opinion Research Center (NORC, 1947).

The construct of the OAS was predicated on the belief that an individual's range of aspirations varied according to whether a person was concerned with his/her goals for the immediate future (end of schooling) or for a more distant time (at age 30) while simultaneously distinguishing between what they hoped they could do (idealistic LOA) and what they were sure they could do (realistic LOA). Conceptually, the OAS adheres closely to Gottfredson's guidelines that individuals' occupational aspiration should be obtained by asking them to respond to a set of occupational alternatives of different sex types, prestige levels, and fields of work. But, the OAS does not ensure a sample of occupational alternatives of different sex types; it does include a list of occupations of differing prestige level and fields of work. A positive aspect of the OAS is that it expands the occupational aspiration concept described by Gottfredson by measuring realistic and idealistic aspirations at short and long-range time-dimensions.

Description of the OAS. The OAS is an eight-item, multiple-choice instrument, which may be administered individually or to groups. In each of the eight items, participants are asked to choose one occupation from a list of ten occupational alternatives that span the total prestige hierarchy. The OAS permits responses at both the realistic and the idealistic expression levels of occupational aspirations, each at two time-dimension periods, called career periods—short range (end of schooling) and long range (at age 30). Four possible combinations of expression levels and time-dimension periods are possible. See Table 1 for specific wording for stimulus questions specific to each of the four question types—SRR, SRI, LRR, and LRI. A specific stimulus question type is presented twice, thus giving a total of eight questions. Each stimulus question precedes a set of occupational titles, which are the question's response alternatives. Any one occupational title is presented as a response alternative only once. Occupational titles are placed in random prestige order in each of the eight stimulus questions, and the same order is maintained for each question. Scores for alternative responses range from zero to nine, with a score of nine awarded the occupational alternative of highest prestige. The total score across the eight questions constitutes an individual's LOA. There are no "right" or "wrong" answers and respondents are not bound by time limits. Respondents are not allowed additional information on the meaning of either the questions or the response alternatives, as lack of knowledge of the occupational structure or occupational titles is considered part of an individual's LOA. Respondents are encouraged to do their best when they express concerns about or difficulty in responding to the OAS instrument. The administration time of the OAS, including instructions and response time for participants is under thirty minutes. The OAS may be scored in one to three minutes.

Table 1

OAS Format: Wording of Four Question Combinations to Obtain Occupational Aspirations at Two Career Periods and Two Expression Levels

Levels	Goals	
	<u>Short Range (SR)</u>	<u>Long Range(LR)</u>
<u>Realistic (R)</u>	(Initial Career Point: Q 1 & 3) Of the jobs listed in this question, which is the BEST ONE you are REALLY SURE YOU CAN GET when your SCHOOLING IS OVER?	(Mature Career Point: Q 5 & 7) Of the jobs listed in this question, which is the BEST ONE you are REALLY SURE YOU CAN HAVE by the time you are 30 YEARS OLD?
<u>Idealistic(I)</u>	(Initial Career Point: Q 2 & 4) Of the jobs listed in this question, which ONE would you choose if you were FREE to CHOOSE ANY of them you wished when your SCHOOLING IS OVER?	(Mature Career Point: Q 6 & 8) Of the jobs listed in this Question, which ONE would you choose to have when you are 30 YEARS OLD, if you were FREE TO HAVE ANY of them you wished?

Source: Miller and Haller (1964, p. 449)

Procedures and Design

High school teachers enrolled in a graduate career-counseling course obtained the occupational aspiration data from students in their classes. Student participants were asked by their teachers to respond to the OAS instrument during class with no imposed time restrictions. Documentation of time for completion for a random student sample indicated that the OAS was completed within the anticipated 30 minutes. Students participating in the investigation were English-proficient; therefore, no modifications were required to compensate for language barriers.

Data were analyzed using the MANOVA statistic to determine if fluctuations in each of the four levels of occupational aspiration occurred between grades for each gender group and to determine if LOA differences occurred between gender groups across grades. The Games-Howell multiple comparison test was used in post hoc analyses to determine significance in LOA mean differences. An alpha level of .05 was applied in all statistical tests.

Results

MANOVA results revealed significant differences among grades and gender groups in the Short Range Realistic LOA [$F(7, 270) = 5.370, p = .000$], Short Range Idealistic LOA [$F(7, 270) = 4.502, p = .000$], and Long Range Realistic LOA [$F(7, 270) = 4.829, p = .000$]. There were no significant differences among grades or gender groups in the Long Range Idealistic LOA [$F(7, 270) = 1.400, p = .205$]. Eta² statistics indicated that differences explained 12.2% of the variability in Short Range Realistic scores, 10.5% in the Short Range Idealistic scores, 11.1% in the Long Range Realistic scores, and 3.5% in the Long Range Idealistic scores.

Results of post-hoc analyses to determine where significant LOA mean differences occurred between grades for Hispanic males and females are found in Table 2. Results determining LOA mean differences within groups across grades are found in Table 3. Significant LOA mean differences are highlighted in each table for easy detection.

LOA mean differences within gender groups across grades.

Results of the Games-Howell pair wise comparison test in Table 2 show significant mean differences between 9th grade males' (M = 9.96) and 10th grade males' (M = 13.80) Short Range Idealistic (SRI) LOA, (M Difference = 3.84, $p = .004$). For females, significant mean differences occurred in the Short Range Realistic LOA between 9th grade (M = 7.23) and 10th grade (M = 11.78) and between 9th grade (M = 7.23) and 11th grade (M = 10.29), (M Differences = 4.55, $p = .000$; and 3.06, $p = .028$), respectively.

Table 2
Between Grades LOA Mean Score Comparisons for Hispanic Males and Females

		HISPANIC MALES		
		10 th Grade	11 th Grade	12 th Grade
		SRI Means		
		13.80	12.00	12.16
GRADES	SRI Means	SRI Mean Differences		
9 th Grade	9.96	3.84 ^a	2.04	2.20
10 th Grade	13.80	-----	1.80	1.64
11 th Grade	12.00	-----	-----	.16
		HISPANIC FEMALES		
		SRR Means		
		11.78	10.29	10.06
GRADES	SRR Means	SRR Mean Differences		
9 th Grade	7.23	4.55 ^b	3.06 ^c	2.83
10 th Grade	11.78	-----	1.49	1.72
11 th Grade	10.29	-----	-----	.23

^a $p = .004$; ^b $p = .000$; ^c $p = .028$

LOA mean differences between gender groups across grades.

Table 3 shows mean differences between gender groups across grades in the SRR, SRI, LRR and the LRI levels of aspiration. Comparisons of LOA between gender groups indicate that, with the exception of 11th grade LRI LOA, Hispanic females' LOA means were higher than those of males at every grade.

Comparison of SRR LOA means resulted in significant differences between 9th grade males (M = 6.54) and 10th grade females (M = 11.78), between 9th grade males and 11th grade females (M = 10.29), and between 9th grade males and 12th grade females (M = 10.06), (M Differences 5.25, $p = .000$; 3.75, $p = .006$; and 3.52, $p = .039$), respectively. Significant differences also occurred between 11th grade males (M = 8.30) and 10th grade females (M = 11.78), and between 12th grade males (M = 8.00) and 10th grade females (M = 11.78), (M Differences 3.48, $p = .000$ and 3.78, $p = .017$), respectively.

Contrasts in SRI LOA showed that significant mean differences occurred between 9th grade males (M = 9.96) and 10th grade females (M = 14.74), between 9th grade males and 11th grade females (M = 12.99), and between 9th grade males and 12th grade females (M = 13.56), (M Differences 4.78, $p = .000$; 3.03, $p = .029$; and 3.60, $p = .007$), respectively. Lastly, a significant difference occurred between 11th grade males (M = 12.00) and 10th grade females (M = 14.74), (M Difference = 2.74, $p = .004$).

Finally, significant mean differences occurred in LRR LOA between 9th grade males (M = 9.27) and 10th grade females (M = 13.96), between 9th grade males and 11th grade females (M = 13.54), and between 9th grade males and 12th grade females (M = 13.31), (M Differences = 4.69, $p = .004$; 4.27, $p = .001$; and 4.04, $p = .01$), respectively.

Table 3
High School Hispanic Males' and Females' LOA Mean Scores Across Grades

		MALES			
		9 th Grade	10 th Grade	11 th Grade	12 th Grade
		SRR Means			
		6.54	8.48	8.30	8.00
FEMALES	SRR Means	SRR Mean Differences			
9 th Grade	7.23	.69	1.25	1.07	.77
10 th Grade	11.78	5.24^a	3.30	3.48^a	3.78^a
11 th Grade	10.29	3.75^d	1.81	1.99	2.29
12 th Grade	10.06	3.52ⁱ	1.58	1.76	2.06
		SRI Means			
		9.96	13.80	12.00	12.16
FEMALES	SRI Means	SRI Mean Differences			
9 th Grade	12.46	2.50	1.34	.46	.30
10 th Grade	14.74	4.78^a	.94	2.74^c	2.58
11 th Grade	12.99	3.03^h	.81	.99	.83
12 th Grade	13.56	3.60^a	.24	1.56	.14
		LRR Means			
		9.27	12.76	11.46	10.74
FEMALES	LRR Means	LRR Mean Differences			
9 th Grade	11.74	2.47	1.02	.28	1.00
10 th Grade	13.96	4.69^b	1.20	2.50	3.22
11 th Grade	13.54	4.27^b	.78	2.08	2.80
12 th Grade	13.31	4.04^f	.55	1.85	2.57
		LRI Means			
		13.12	12.44	13.31	11.84
FEMALES	LRI Means	LRR Mean Differences			
9 th Grade	13.26	.14	.82	.05	1.42
10 th Grade	14.41	1.29	1.97	1.10	2.57
11 th Grade	13.29	.17	.85	.02	1.45
12 th Grade	13.06	.06	.62	.25	1.22

^ap = .000; ^bp = .001; ^cp = .004; ^dp = .006; ^ep = .007; ^fp = .010; ^gp = .017; ^hp = .029; ⁱp = .039;

Discussion

Results for Hispanic males' and females' levels of occupational aspiration in the present study must be interpreted by applying levels of aspiration norms, that is, LOA must conform with general level of aspiration theory and research findings that, on the average, levels of aspiration at the idealistic level are higher than those at the realistic level, and that levels of aspiration in terms of long range goals are higher than short range goals (Miller & Haller, 1964). In addition, interpretations of LOA results in the present investigation must be done with the understanding that norms for the OAS were established from research with middle to high SES White samples.

Haller, Otto, Meier, and Ohlendorf (1974, p. 115) predicted that “lower SES youth may respond quite differently to idealistic and realistic items [on the OAS].” Indeed, data in the present investigation showed that Hispanic males’ and females’ LOA do not conform to expected LOA hierarchies. Neither do they agree with findings by Haller et al. (1974) and Otto, Haller, Meier, & Ohlendorf (1974) that no noticeable LOA variations occurred across grades between males and females in their studies. In the present investigation the LOA fluctuated across grades, with a significant increase occurring in males’ SRI LOA and females’ SRR LOA between 9th and 10th grades. Even though no significant differences were found in other LOA differences between grades, there are other noteworthy findings: (1) with the exception of males’ LRI LOA, all LOAs increased between 9th and 10th grades, (2) with the exception of males’ LRI LOA, all LOAs decreased between 10th and 11th grade, (3) with the exception of males and females’ SRI LOA, all LOAs decreased between 11th and 12th grades, and (4) males’ and females’ LRI LOAs were diametrically opposite—females’ LRI LOA increased, males’ LRI LOA decreased between 9th and 10th grades. The general LOA pattern for Hispanic males and females in the present investigation are in agreement with findings by Watson, Quatman, and Edler’s (2002) that students adjust their levels of occupational aspiration downward to more realistic levels as they near graduation.

Significant LOA increases between 9th and 10th grades may be related to adolescents’ advances in skill development or mental ability (Gottfredson, 1981; Gottfredson & Lapan, 1997) or they may be due to “adolescent egocentrism” (Feldman, 2000, p. 389). According to Feldman, during the early adolescence stage, adolescents tend to unrealistically assess personal skills, capabilities, and aptitudes above their true level. In sum, these adjustments suggest that Hispanic students recognize or are forced by educational experiences to recognize that their skills and aptitude differ from those required by different occupation. Finally, these adjustments may also suggest that Hispanic adolescents are “responding to a variety of family, school, peer-group, and sociocultural circumstances that make some types of work more attractive and available than others” (Kimmel & Weiner, 1995, p. 415).

Hispanic females’ LOA higher than males’ LOA

Results in Table 3 clearly show that, in comparison to males, Hispanic females’ occupational aspirations are higher. We did not anticipate these results based on known characteristics of cultures that promote differential masculine-feminine roles (Matsumoto & Juang, 2008; Mayo, 1997). Given the ethnic homogeneity of participants in the present investigation, we anticipated that traditional cultural values (Arbona, 1995; Foud & Arbona, 1994; Reyes, Kobus, & Gillock, 1999; Sue & Sue, 1990) and Hispanic’s traditional beliefs about sex role (Bowman, 1993; Marin, 1993; Mayo, 1997; Reyes, 1993) would result in lower LOA for Hispanic females. Obviously this was not the case. Higher LOA for Hispanic females in the present investigation is in agreement with available research that females in the general population (Apostal & Bilden, 1991; Mau and Bikos, 2000; Mello, 2008; Powers & Wojtkiewicz, 2004; Watson, Quatman, & Edler, 2002) and Hispanic females (Apostal & Bilden, 1991; Mau & Bikos, 2000) possess higher occupational aspirations than males. Mello (2008) believes that LOA differences are compatible with trends in educational attainment between gender groups. Females attained more associates, bachelors, and masters degrees than men in 2003-2004 and are projected to attain more doctorates than men by the year 2015 (National Center for Educational Statistics, [NCES], 2006). The increased number of females pursuing and attaining higher education seems to foster their occupational aspirations.

Another possible explanation for higher LOA for females than for males is the influence of role models (Quimby & DeSantis, 2006). Hispanics are the prominent ethnic group in the region and provide ample Hispanic female role models in the workplace. For example, if a school-age female aspires to become a doctor, there is nearly a 100% certainty that she will see a female doctor. Similarly, if a school-age female aspires to become a teacher, lawyer, banker, barber, etc., she has female role models to emulate. In responding to the OAS, this belief may have translated into students' broad-based belief that occupations in the OAS were within their "zone of acceptable alternatives," even though some of these occupations may not be commonly found within their geographic region.

According to Reyes (1993), youngsters in poverty-level families are motivated to contribute to the welfare of the family. Therefore, differential LOA between Hispanic males and females may also reflect sex differences in value placed on occupations (Bridges, 1989; Brown, 2002; Maxwell & Cumming, 1988), especially as they related to providing financial support for the family (Marin & VanOss-Marin, 1991; Reyes, Kobus, & Gillock, 1999). Females may have aspired toward occupations with the goal of helping parents without regard to potential barriers to their occupational aspirations, while Hispanic males may have selected occupational alternatives on the OAS more cautiously based on their perception of barriers to education and careers for ethnic minorities (Albert & Luzzo, 1999; Flores & O'Brien, 2002; Kenny, Blustein, Chaves, Grossman, & Gallagher, 2003; Luzzo, 1993; McWhirter, 1997). Thus, Hispanic males may have expected to attain occupations of lower prestige than those expected by Hispanic females.

Implications, Limitations, Recommendations

Implication for counselors.

Unequivocally, counselors play strategic roles in helping Hispanic adolescents maneuver the vocational choice process (Bachhuber, 1992; Leung & Harmon, 1990) and to develop realistic career plans (Mau, Hitchcock, & Calvert, 1998). Results of the present investigation suggest that career counselors need to focus attention on 9th and 10th grades when Hispanic students SRR and SRI LOA seem to increase significantly. On the other hand, counselors may provide more appropriate help to Hispanics if they extend their high school counseling role to include career development counseling at the lower grades when students are developing images of occupations. By helping Hispanic in the lower grades, it increases the likelihood they would understand the relationship between education and occupational requirements and become motivated to excel in school so their abilities will match training and educational requirements of occupations to which they aspire. Ultimately, however, Hispanic students' career development success can be enhanced by counselors who believe in developing pragmatic and culturally responsive counseling programs that address factors and issues that have historically thwarted Hispanics' career goal attainment (Cohn, 1997; Diemer & Hsieh, 2008). To succeed in efforts with Hispanic students, counselors must accomplish three goals: First, they must be informed about Hispanic cultural values, beliefs, and practices regarding gender roles as possible reasons why Hispanic student's career-related interests, occupational aspirations, and occupational expectations might be different from those of the mainstream group (Fouad & Byars-Winston, 2005; Kerka, 2004) or why Hispanic females' LOA exceeds males' LOA (Mau & Bikos, 2000; Mello, 2008; Watson, Quatman, & Edler, 2002). Second, they must be responsive to Hispanic students' educational and social developmental, especially as it relates to self-concept, occupational efficacy, and occupational requirements. Counselors must be prepared to work with Hispanic students that match Gottfredson's (1981, p. 565) description of

students with “foreshortened horizons” [high ability, low SES children with low expectations and have more options than they are likely to realize or pursue] or with students caught in an “effort-acceptability squeeze” [low ability, middle- and upper SES children with expectations and aspirations exceeding their ability to satisfy them]. Third, they must be willing to use appropriate conceptual frameworks and practices that have applicability to career development counseling with Hispanics (Trusty, 2002). Within these practices counselors must frame career lessons using information from the Hispanic students’ perspective. By doing so, career lessons become pragmatic, culturally responsive (Bachhuber, 1992; Bowman, 1993; Wahl & Blackhurst, 2000) and address issues that challenge Hispanics in a multicultural society, but, most importantly, a competitive workplace milieu (Bowman, 1993; Sue & Sue, 1990).

Limitations of the present investigation.

There are several limitations associated with the present investigation. First, the overall sample was small, especially in some grades, limiting the generalization of results. Second, occupational alternatives on the OAS may be biased toward males (Hotchkiss, Curry, Haller & Widaman, 1979). Third, the investigation was restricted to an “ethnically homogeneous” group in a Mexican Border community, thus, limiting generalization of results to a similar ethnic group residing in communities outside this region. Fourth, post-hoc analyses outside the aims of the present investigation revealed that internal consistency of the OAS may be more appropriate for Hispanic males than for females. For example, the estimate of reliability (Cronbach’s alpha) for Hispanic males was .5426 while the Cronbach’s alpha for Hispanic girls females was .4063. Correlation coefficients for paired items comprising each LOA level (SRR, SRI, LRR, and LRI) for Hispanic males were each significant beyond the .001 alpha level. In contrast, paired item correlation coefficients varied widely for Hispanic females: SRR = .456, $p < .000$; SRI = .274, $p < .001$; LRR = .165, $p < .05$; and LRI = .022, $p = .793$. Correlation coefficients between parallel halves, each half comprising one item per question type (SRR, LRR, SRI, and LRI), were obtained for males ($r = .56$, $p < .01$) and females (.44, $p < .01$).

Recommendations.

Hispanic adolescents’ LOA obtained in our investigation should be considered estimates until the OAS has been more widely used as a research instrument with Hispanics in different geographic regions and with samples varying in acculturation, education, and socioeconomic levels. In addition, the OAS should be administered to cross-cultural samples in order to compare LOAs between Hispanics and comparable age peers from other cultural groups, especially the mainstream group which is considered the standard comparison group (Coutinho, & Oswald, 2000). Findings that females’ LOA is higher than males’ LOA should trigger future research with a focus on determining whether or not Hispanic males and females place similar value on occupations. This research focus should also be extended to determine the value placed on occupations by Hispanics in comparison to other ethnic minorities and mainstream peers. Results of such research would help explain the occupational hierarchies comprising students’ “zone of acceptable alternatives,” which would result in valid LOA interpretation, resulting in culturally relevant career counseling.

References

- Albert, K.A., & Luzzo, D.A. (1999). The role of perceived barriers in career development: A social cognitive perspective. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 77, 431-436.
- Apostol, R., & Bilden, J. (1991). Educational and occupational aspirations of rural high school students. *Journal of Career Development*, 18, 153-160.
- Arbona, C. (1995). Theory and research on racial and ethnic minorities: Hispanic Americans. In F.T.L. Leong (Ed.), *Career development and vocational behavior of racial and ethnic minorities*, (pp. 37-66). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Bachhuber, T. (1992). Thirteen ways to pass along real information to students. *Journal of Career Planning and Employment*, 27, 67-70.
- Blustein, D.L. (1997). A context-rich perspective of career exploration across the life-roles. *Career Development Quarterly*, 45, 260-274.
- Bowman, S.L. (1993). Career intervention strategies for ethnic minorities. *Career Development Quarterly*, 42, 14-25.
- Bridges, J.S. (1989). Sex differences in occupational values. *Sex Roles*, 20(3/4), 205-211.
- Brown, D. (2002). The role of work and cultural values in occupational choice, satisfaction, and success: A theoretical statement. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 80, 48-56.
- Cohn, J. (1997). The effects of racial and ethnic discrimination on the career development of minority persons. In H.S. Farmer (Ed.), *Diversity & women's career development* (pp. 161-171). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Coutinho, M.J., & Oswald, D.P. (2000). Disproportionate representation in special education: A synthesis and recommendations. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 9 (2), 135-156.
- Diemer, M.A., & Hsieh, C. (2008). Sociopolitical development and vocational expectations among lower socioeconomic status adolescents of color. *The Career Development Quarterly*, 56, 257-267.
- Feldman, R.S. (2000). Chapter 11: Adolescence: Physical and cognitive development. In R.S. Feldman, *Development across the life span*, (2nd ed., pp. 376-405). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Flores, L.Y., & O'Brien, K.M. (2002). The career development of Mexican American adolescent women: A test of social cognitive career theory. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 49, 14-27.
- Fouad, N.A., & Arbona, C. (1994). Careers in a cultural context. *Career Development Quarterly*, 43, 96-104.
- Fouad, N.A., & Byars-Winston, A.M. (2005). Cultural context of career choice: Meta-analysis of race/ethnicity differences. *The Career Development Quarterly*, 53, 223-233.
- Gardner, J.W. (1940). The use of the term "level of aspiration." *Psychological Review*, 47, 59-68.
- Gassin, E.A., Kelly, K.R., & Feldhausen, J.F. (1993). Sex differences in the career development of gifted youth. *School Counselor*, 41, 90-95.
- Gati, I. (1993). Career Compromises. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 40, 416-424.
- Gottfredson, L.S. (1981). Circumscription and compromise: A developmental theory of occupational aspirations. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 28, 545-580.
- Gottfredson, L.S., & Lapan, R.T. (1997). Assessing gender-based circumscription of occupational aspirations. *Journal of Career Assessment*, 5, 419-441.
- Gushue, G.V., & Whitson, M.L. (2006). The relationship of ethnic identity and gender role attitude to the development of career choice goals among Black and Latina girls. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 53(3), 379-385.

- Haller, A.O., & Miller, I.W. (1963). *The Occupational Aspiration Scale: Theory, Structure, and Correlates*. East Lansing, Michigan: Michigan State University Agricultural Experiment Station, Tech. Bulletin 288. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 016 712)
- Haller, A.O., Otto, L.B., Meier, R.F., & Ohlendorf, G.W. (1974). Level of occupational aspiration: An empirical analysis. *American Sociological Review*, 39, 113-121.
- Hotchkiss, L., Curry, F., Haller, A.O., & Widaman, K. (1979). The Occupational Aspiration Scale: An evaluation and alternative form for females. *Rural Sociology*, 44(1), 95-118.
- Kenny, M.E., Blustein, D.L., Chaves, A., Grossman, J.M., & Gallagher, L.A. (2003). The role of perceived barriers and relational support in the educational and vocational lives of urban high school students. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 50, 142-155.
- Kerka, S. (2004). Career development of diverse populations. *Australian Journal of Career Development*, 13(2), 62-65.
- Kimmel, D.C., & Weiner, I.B. (1995). Forming a sense of identity. In D.C. Kimmel and I.B. Weiner, *Adolescence: A developmental transition*, (2nd ed., pp. 385-431). New York: John Wiley.
- Lent, R.W., Brown, S.D., & Hackett, G. (2000). Contextual supports and barriers to career choice: A social cognitive analysis. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 47, 36-49.
- Leung, S.A., & Harmon, L.W. (1990). Individual and sex differences in the zone of acceptable alternatives. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 37(2), 153-159.
- Lewin, K., Dembo, T., Festinger, L., & Sears, P.S. (1944). Level of aspiration. In J. McV. Hunt, Ed., *Personality and the behavior disorders*, Vol I, (pp. 333-378). New York: The Ronald Press Company.
- Lurie, W.A. (1939). Estimating the level of vocational aspiration. *Journal of Social Psychology*, 10, 467-473.
- Luzzo, D.A. (1993). Ethnic differences in college students' perceptions of barriers to career development. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development*, 21 (4), 227-236.
- Marin, G. (1993). Defining culturally appropriate community interventions: Hispanics as a case study. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 21, 149-161.
- Marin, G., & VanOss-Marin, B. (1991). *Research with Hispanic populations*. Newbury Park: Sage.
- Matsumoto, D., & Juang, L. (2008). Culture and organization. In D. Matsumoto and L. Juang, *Culture and psychology* (4th ed., pp. 396-439). Belmont, CA: Thompson Wadsworth.
- Mau, W., & Bikos, L.H. (2000). Educational and vocational aspirations of minority and female students: A longitudinal study. *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 78, 186-194.
- Mau, W.C., Hitchcock, R., & Calvert, C. (1998). Career plans and perceived counselors' and other influential persons' expectations of high school students. *Professional School Counseling*, 2, 161-166.
- Maxwell, G.S., & Cumming, J.J. (1988). Measuring occupation aspiration in research on sex differences—An overview and analysis of issues. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 32, 60-73.
- Mayo, Y. (1997). Machismo, fatherhood, and the Latino family: Understanding the concept. *Journal of Multicultural Social Work*, 5(1 & 2), 49-61.
- McWhirter, E.H. (1997). Perceived barriers to education and career: Ethnic and gender differences. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 50, 124-140.
- Mello, Z.R. (2008). Gender variation in developmental trajectories of educational and occupational expectations and attainment from adolescence to adulthood. *Developmental Psychology*, 44 (4), 1069-1080.
- Miller, I.W., & Haller, A.O. (1964). A measure of level of occupational aspiration. *Personnel and*

- Guidance Journal, 42 (5), 448-455.
- National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education (2006). Projections of education statistics to 2015 (NCES Publication No. 2006-084). Washington, DC: Government Printing Office.
- National Opinion Research Center (1947). Jobs and occupations: A popular evaluation. *Opinion News*, 9, 3-13.
- Otto, L.B., Haller, A.O., Meier, R.F., & Ohlendorf, G.W. (1974). An empirical evaluation of a scale to measure occupational aspiration level. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 5, 1-11.
- Plata, M., & Pirtle, T. (2006). Occupational aspirations of middle and high school Hispanic females in a U.S. city bordering Mexico. *Journal of Border Educational Research*, 5, 14-28.
- Powers, R.S., & Wojtkiewicz, R.A. (2004). Occupational aspirations, gender, and educational attainment. *Sociological Spectrum*, 24, 601-622.
- Pryor, R.G., & Taylor, N.B. (1989). Circumscription and compromise: Some problems and possibilities. *Australian Psychologist*, 24, 101-113.
- Quimby, J.L., & DeSantis, A.M. (2006). The influence of role models on women's career choices. *The Career Development Quarterly*, 54, 297-306.
- Reyes, O. (1993). Follow up study on low- and high-risk Hispanic high school students. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 21, 218-226.
- Reyes, O., Kobus, K., & Gillock, K. (1999). Career aspirations of urban, Mexican American adolescent females. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences*, 21(3), 366-382.
- Schoon, I., & Parsons, S. (2002). Teenage aspirations for future careers and occupational outcomes. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 60, 262-288.
- Sue, D.W., & Sue, D. (1990). *Counseling the culturally different: Theory and practice*. New York: John Wiley.
- Swanson, J.L., Daniels, K.K., & Tokar, D.M. (1996). Assessing perceptions of career-related barriers: The Career Barriers Inventory. *Journal of Career Assessment*, 4, 219-244.
- Trusty, J. (2002). Counseling for career development with persons of color. In S.G Niles (Ed.), *Adult career development: Concepts, issues, and practices* (3rd ed., pp. 191-213). Tulsa, OK: National Career Development Association.
- Wahl, K.H., & Blackhurst, A. (2000). Factors affecting the occupational and educational aspirations of children and adolescents. *Professional School Counseling*, 3 (5), 367-374.
- Watson, C.M., Quatman, T., & Edler, E. (2002). Career aspirations of adolescent girls: Effect of achievement level, grade, and single-sex school environment. *Sex Roles*, 46 (9/10), 323-335.