

AN ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION OF

Sireesha Pamulapati for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Human Development and Family Studies presented on May 2, 2003.

Title: Even Start Family Literacy Program: Similarities and Differences Between Hispanic and Non-Hispanic Participants.

Abstract approved: **Redacted for privacy**

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This study used a mixed method approach (quantitative and qualitative) to examine the commonalities and differences between Hispanic and non-Hispanic participants of the Even Start Family Literacy Program. Using a life course perspective, this study examined the educational background and life history of Hispanic and non-Hispanic participants, their reasons and goals for program participation, and changes experienced due to Even Start participation. The sample for the qualitative analysis consisted of 32 Hispanic and 25 non-Hispanic female participants. Quantitative latent growth curve analysis was conducted on 96 (75 Hispanic and 21 Non-Hispanic) participants to measure change over time and to estimate the differences in rate of change between Hispanic and non-Hispanic participants.

Results of this study indicate that wide commonalities yet vital differences exist between Hispanic and non-Hispanic participants. Poverty was the significant determinant factor in Hispanic as well as non-Hispanic participants' school failure. The experiences and implications of poverty, however, varied for Hispanic and non-Hispanic parents. The reasons and goals for Even Start participation were to achieve

self-sufficiency for Hispanic and non-Hispanic parents. Achieving self-sufficiency involved acculturation to the American society for Hispanic participants. For non-Hispanic parents achieving self-sufficiency involved attaining GED and getting off of welfare.

No effect of ethnicity was identified on the five outcome measures quantitatively examined in this study, which include knowledge of child development, parenting confidence and support, depression, self-esteem, and life skills. Initial differences existed between Hispanic and non-Hispanic participants in knowledge of child development and life skills, with non-Hispanic participants reporting higher knowledge of child development and greater life skills. Non-Hispanic participants, however, did not make greater gains than their Hispanic participants after being in the program. Qualitative results indicate that skills gained by Hispanic participants helped them acculturate in the American society, whereas for non-Hispanic participants the program helped achieve a sense of purpose and direction in life and create a better life for themselves and their family.

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**Even Start Family Literacy Program: Similarities and Differences Between Hispanic
and Non-Hispanic Participants**

by
Sireesha Pamulapati

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I understand that my dissertation will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University libraries. My signature below authorizes release of my dissertation to any reader upon request.

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Sireesha Pamulapati, Author

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EVEN START FAMILY LITERACY PROGRAM: SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN HISPANIC AND NON-HISPANIC PARTICIPANTS

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The issues of race, class, and culture are central to family literacy programs (Gadsden, 1996). The literacy training intervention of family literacy programs motivate non-English families to seek assistance in developing their English language proficiency thus enabling them to participate effectively in social settings. The unique cultural values, beliefs, and ideologies that these participants hold frame the ways they value literacy and understand the processes involved in literacy learning and program participation. Gadsden argues that family literacy programs must recognize the differences and commonalities among individuals and families and thus build activities that meet the needs of the participants. Much of the research on family literacy, however, has overlooked the importance of studying the literacy perceptions and values held by parents of different cultural groups, and/or assessing the differential impact of family literacy programs on these families. This research study is an attempt to understand how the issues of ethnicity and cultural background are linked to participants' involvement and success in a family literacy program. Specifically, this study will focus on identifying the similarities and differences between Spanish speaking Hispanic and English speaking non-Hispanic participants of 13 Even Start Family literacy programs in Oregon.

While the size of the non-Hispanic White, African American, and American Indian populations has only increased moderately in the U.S. over the last 30 years, the Hispanic population has grown considerably during this period (Zambrana, 1995). According to March 2000 census estimate, the Hispanic population in the United States was 32.8 million, around 12 percent of the total population (Therrien & Roberto, 2000). Nearly two-thirds (66.1%) of all Hispanics living in the U.S. were of Mexican descent.

Because Hispanic families are a rapidly growing population in the United States, a great amount of research has been conducted to understand and study unique characteristics of these families. Several research studies on Hispanic families focused on studying the interaction and social support patterns among these families. Hispanic families are usually described as an interactive and interdependent kin network that allow for mutual support and help (Sotomayor, 1991). They have been found to use family as a resource for solving problems and thereby promote reciprocal behavior among family members (Vega, 1995). Nevertheless, Vega contended that poverty, illiteracy, immigrant adjustment, acculturation stresses, and minority status have been endemic in the social history of Hispanic families.

According to the 2000 census report (Therrien & Roberto, 2000) Hispanics are the least educated immigrant population in the United States. Compared to non-Hispanic Whites, Hispanics are far less likely to have a high school diploma. While only 4.2 percent of non-Hispanic Whites had less than a 9th grade education, more than 27 percent of Hispanics over 25 years of age had less than 9th grade education

(Therrien & Roberto, 2000). In addition, Hispanics are more likely to be unemployed than non-Hispanic Whites and poverty is three times as common among Hispanics compared to non-Hispanic Whites (Therrien & Roberto, 2000).

The financial constraints experienced by Hispanic families, their limited proficiency in English, and lack of familiarity with the United States' culture and education system hinders their effective participation in their children's education (Mulhern, Rodriguez-Brown, & Shanahan, 1994). Although Hispanic parents have high expectations for their children, most of them are uncertain about how to promote their children's school success (Mulhern et al. 1994). As a result, Hispanic children at all grade levels were found to lag behind their non-Hispanic White peers in academic achievement (Rodriguez-Brown, Li, & Albom, 1999).

Research has revealed that literacy skills of parents and parental attitudes towards education have a crucial role to play in a child's development (Glover, Jones, Mitchell, & Okey, 1991). Although parents with limited literacy skills and low socio-economic background may place high value on education, they are less likely to be involved in their children's education due to financial constraints or lack of support. For instance, Teale (as cited in Rodriguez-Brown et al, 1999) stated that low-income Hispanic families are less likely to engage in shared book reading and other activities that contribute to literacy development among children. There is evidence to suggest that in order for parents to provide literacy rich environments for their children, efforts need to be taken to enhance their own literacy skills.

Previous efforts to deal with literacy problems among family members centered primarily on either educating parents or providing early childhood education to children. It was soon recognized that in order to guarantee lasting changes and improvements in families' well-being, a need for family-focused, rather than child- or parent-focused programs were needed. The seeds of this new approach were sown in the early 1980s when several family literacy programs were initiated (St.Pierre & Swartz, 1995).

Family literacy is based on the premise that literacy, because it is social and cultural in nature, is best developed within the context of the family (Mulhern et al., 1994). Family literacy programs differ from other traditional literacy programs in that they are designed to maximize the probability that adults who receive literacy education will successfully transfer aspects of their new beliefs, attitudes, knowledge, and skills to their children (Sticht, 1995). Auerbach (1989) broadly defines family literacy to include direct parent-child interactions centered around literacy tasks as well as opportunities for parents to develop their own literacy abilities that focus on pertinent issues such as family and community problems, child-rearing concerns, home language and culture, and interactions with the school system.

Even Start is a federally funded family literacy program that aims to meet the educational needs of parents and children of low-income families. This family centered education project is designed to help break the cycle of poverty by providing literacy training and parenting skills for both parents and children and assist children in reaching their full potential as learners (Dwyer, 1995). The Even Start program was

first authorized in 1988 under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (U. S. Department of Education, 1998) and was later reauthorized in 2000. According to this legislation, the Even Start program should be implemented through cooperative projects that build on existing community resources to create a new range of services, should promote achievement of the National Education Goals, and assist children and adults from low-income families to achieve challenging State content standards and student performance standards (U.S. Department of Education, 1998).

The Even Start program is required to provide four basic services: a) Adult Literacy and Basic Education (ABE) b) Parenting Education and Support (PES) c) Early Childhood Education (ECE) and d) Parent and Child Time Together (PACT). To be eligible for Even Start, a family must be low income, have a parent who is eligible for adult education services under the adult education act, and at least have one child under the age of eight.

A large majority of Even Start participants in the nation are women and are in the age group of 20-29 years (U.S. Department of Education, 1998). In addition, according to the 1998 National Even Start Evaluation Report, roughly 80 percent of the families enrolled in the program have family income of less than \$15,000.

Although Even Start participants come from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds, since 1992-93 the program has noticed a substantial increase among Hispanic participants, from 22 percent to 39 percent. The distributions of racial/ethnic groups vary across the country, with Hispanic families constituting the largest group in the western and southern region, while Caucasian families represented the largest group in

the northeast and midwest (U.S. Department of Education, 1998). In 2002 more than 50 percent of Even Start parents in Oregon were Hispanic.

Despite the increased number of Hispanics in the Even Start program, research and evaluation that would assist in identifying the characteristics, needs, and achievements of these participants has been very limited. Previous evaluation studies on the Even Start program looked at the effectiveness of the program in providing literacy and other pertinent services to parents and children. Several studies revealed that Even Start participation resulted in positive outcomes such as, improved literacy skills, positive parent-child relationships, improved job skills, and employment status (Bailey, 1996; Karther, 1996; Gamse, Conger, Elson & McCarthy, 1997). Generalization of these outcomes to the entire Even Start population is questionable, as participants' needs, skills, and achievements are often determined by their racial and ethnic background. Duran (1996) suggested that families participating in the family literacy programs have diverse needs. In his research on Latino immigrant families Duran found that families revealed varied learning needs and expressed their constant struggle in adjusting to the life in the United States. For instance, non-English speaking families were found to experience cultural conflicts with their role of raising children. One common complaint of Hispanic immigrant parents was that they found it difficult to discipline their children in a manner that represented their culture. In addition, parents considered poor knowledge of English as an impediment to obtaining employment as they were unable to understand the kind of work experience and skills needed in order to apply for jobs. Clearly, the challenges faced by Hispanic parents,

their views about parenting, family relationships, and even literacy differ greatly from that of the dominant White culture.

This study is an attempt to examine the similarities and differences between Spanish speaking Hispanic and English speaking non-Hispanic participants in Oregon Even Start Family Literacy programs. In order for programs to provide effective services to participants it is important to understand the differences and commonalities among them. Gadsden (1996) suggests that an essential factor to promote effective program implementation is to understand the issues of diversity among the participants. This study will utilize the data from 13 Even Start Family Literacy programs in the State of Oregon to identify the diverse needs, challenges, and achievements experienced by Hispanic and non-Hispanic participants. The goal of this study is to provide information for program staff, policy makers, and other stakeholders about the similarities and differences that exist among Hispanic and non-Hispanic families and thus help them understand the specific concerns of the participants from diverse ethnic background.

Theoretical Perspective

This study used the life course perspective (Bengtson & Allen, 1993) as a theoretical base to illustrate the differences between Hispanic and non-Hispanic participants. The life-course perspective studies changes in the lives of individual family members over time. Change is examined by focusing on the diversity and differences among individuals. According to the heterogeneity assumption of the life course perspective there is increasing diversity over time with aging, social change,

and socioeconomic characteristics (Bengtson & Allen, 1993). In addition, families also differ based on their race, ethnicity, and cultural background. The cultural values and beliefs of the individuals shape their understanding and perception of various issues such as work, caregiving, parenting, and literacy. The Hispanic and non-Hispanic participants in the Even Start program bring diverse experiences, characteristics, and needs to the program. These families may also show considerable variation in terms of how they experience and respond to the program due to their diverse social and ethnic background. The life-course theoretical perspective allows us to understand the diverse needs of the participants and examine variations in how they respond to the program.

The life-course perspective also examines the influence of previous life experiences of individuals and family members on their present behavior (Bengtson & Allen, 1993). For example, past unsuccessful experiences of parents with the educational system influence their present perceptions of literacy and education. Previous interviews with Even Start parents revealed that participants' experiences with school during their childhoods influenced their ability to learn and attend school, which in turn led to difficulty in learning or wanting to learn as they reached adulthood. The life-course perspective lends itself to understand these individual differences and diversity among participants and examine the changes families' experience as a result of their program participation.

The specific research questions addressed by this study are:

- 1) Are there differences in educational background and life history between Hispanic and non-Hispanic participants?
- 2) Do reasons for participation in the program differ between Hispanic and non-Hispanic participants?
- 3) Does participation in the program lead to different outcomes for Hispanic and non-Hispanic participants in terms of knowledge of child development, parenting confidence, mental health, self-esteem, life skills, relationship changes and more?

CHAPTER 2

Review of the Literature

Family literacy has received considerable attention in the past few years. In 1994, the International Year of the Family offered a new direction for adult and childhood literacy programs in the U.S. and worldwide, one that unites adult's literacy and children's education (Sticht, 1995). Family literacy is an educational approach that treats the family as a learning unit (Goethel, 1995). Families provide an intergenerational transfer of language, thought, and values to their children. Until recently adult education programs have generally aimed at making adults literate while the responsibility of making children literate has been left to the formal school system. Under the family literacy concept, however, it is now realized that, due to the intergenerational transfer of cognitive skills including language and literacy, an investment in the literacy education of adults provides "double duty dollars" (Sticht, 1995). The key components of family literacy programs include some type of adult education, early childhood education, parent and personal growth training, and parent-child interaction activities.

The Even Start Family Literacy program is one of the largest federally funded family literacy initiatives in the United States. An outgrowth and extension of the nation's Head Start program, the Even Start program has been developed to incorporate a wide variety of innovations from successful programs for adult basic

education, parenting education, and early childhood education. The program focuses on three interrelated goals:

- To help parents become full partners in the education of their children.
- To assist children in reaching their full potential as learners and
- To provide literacy training for their parents (Federal Register, 1994).

While there are excellent sources of research-based information on parent education and early childhood education, research studies on family literacy programs remain limited. Several studies on family literacy programs provide insight into effective program implementation and varied approaches to family literacy programs. There is however, very little research on identifying the characteristics of families involved in family literacy programs or studying the effectiveness of these programs in relation to participants' needs and expectations.

Gadsden (1994) confirms this argument by stating that several studies of family literacy programs describe the variety of family literacy models that have been developed. Very few studies however, have been conducted that reveal the relative impact of these programs: that is whether the learners and their families consider the programs effective, useful, or appropriate; or how adult learners use literacy for their own development to help their children. She further explains that a literacy search recently conducted by the National Center on Adult Literacy found that, with the exception of few studies, most reports provide "how-to" information: for instance, how to develop a program, how to use existing organizational structures to create a program, how to get parents interested, or how to obtain funding and other support.

Gadsden emphasizes the need for research that provides guiding principles and understandings about how families, across cultural and social backgrounds, use literacy to make sense of the world and how literacy assistance can help them do so effectively. Although research on the effectiveness of family literacy programs is limited, some of the research studies do offer an understanding of the nature of the participants, and the overall outcomes of family literacy programs, thus providing us a basic knowledge of the relationship between family development and literacy.

Glover, Jones, Mitchell, and Okey (1991) evaluated the effectiveness of a family literacy program operated in the Weber State University. Although, participants came from similar socio-economic backgrounds, they differed considerably in their cultural and ethnic background. The project addressed the low-level literacy skills possessed by adults and children by offering GED classes, and Parent and Child Together (PACT) time. In terms of program outcomes, women, in general, demonstrated changes in academic skills and personal goals. Goals of the women had shifted from more traditional roles to those which reflected a desire to achieve success in areas of both school and career. Teachers' observations of children revealed evidence of increased interest of children in books, emerging pre-literacy skills in writing, and growth in social skills. The study however, did not include cultural diversity as a predictive factor of participants' success in achieving academic skills or personal goals.

Nickse, Speicher, and Buchek (1988) conducted a study on intergenerational literacy in a multicultural, urban section of Boston. Of the total participants in the

literacy program, 83% represented minority groups (Asian, 23%; Hispanic, 23%; and Black 37%). Preliminary data showed improvement of adults in reading skills and subsequent positive effects on their children. Similar to Glover et al.'s study, this study also failed to provide information about cultural differences that exist among participants and its impact on program outcomes.

Handel (1999) in her study on the effectiveness of a Family Reading Program reported that family involvement is particularly difficult in poverty areas. She interviewed seven African-American women participating in the program and found that the program promoted family togetherness. Parents also employed many ideas about reading that they learned in the program and devoted more time for family reading.

Research on the effectiveness of the Even Start program also indicates positive results. The Oklahoma City Public Schools Even Start Evaluation Project (1992-93) studied the effects of the program on adult perceptions of themselves, parenting practices, and child outcomes (Richardson, 1993). Even Start participants strongly supported the encouraging learning environment created in the adult education classes and reported a positive attitude about themselves. All the participants reported an increase in their own reading and in reading in their families. Parent interviews indicated that parents felt more confident in their parenting abilities. Parents reported that they are more confident and capable of being more positive and supportive to their children. Children in the program demonstrated higher-order communication

strategies, complex sentence structure, variety of language usage, and frequency of language initiations.

The second national evaluation of the Even Start program (U.S. Department of Education, 1998) found that both parents and children made progress in literacy as a result of their participation. Children showed considerable improvement in cognitive development and also showed progress on the Preschool Language Scale (PLS-3), a measure that assesses language development. Parents showed modest gains in their tests of Adult Basic Education. In addition to the educational assessments for children and adults, the home environment was measured using the Home Observation for Measurement of the Environment (HOME) questionnaire. The HOME measures the quality of cognitive stimulation and emotional support provided by parents to children. HOME scores showed moderate improvement at posttest.

Another study conducted on Oregon's Even Start literacy project by Richards, Pamulapati, Corson, & Merrill (1999) focused on issues beyond literacy outcomes such as, knowledge of child development and mental health. Pre- and post-test data was collected from the participants and results showed increased knowledge about children and parenting techniques among participants compared to their scores when they entered the program. Participants who entered the program at risk for clinical depression were considerably less depressed by post-test, and statewide, participation in the program was associated with improved self-esteem scores.

The above research studies indicate that family literacy programs have been successful in increasing the literacy skills and parenting practices of the participants. It

is also evident from the studies that family literacy programs serve a diverse group of population who come from diverse backgrounds and programs. In general, it seems that programs have been successful in solving some of the common problems shared by this diverse population, such as problems of reading and writing and communication. No research studies, however, addressed the social and cultural differences or economic differences that exist among participants. In spite of the research support for the significance of cultural knowledge and our intuitive sense that issues of race, class, and culture matter, neither family literacy research nor practice typically raised these issues (Gadsden, 1996).

With increasing number of ethnic minorities in family literacy programs, there is a need now, more than ever before, for the programs and the researchers to be mindful of the cultural differences and differences in strengths and needs of the family literacy participants. When program staff and practitioners lack knowledge and awareness of cultural differences and ignore, or devalue the importance of these factors, their unfamiliarity may be interpreted as lack of interest or may result in their implementing practices and activities for the program that offend the learners and their families (Gadsden, 1996).

Butler and Molitor's (1995) research on cultural sensitivity in social work found that professional unfamiliarity, unawareness, or lack of understanding of the cultural characteristics of participants is a major barrier for effective service delivery. They assert that the degree to which we know and understand the lives of our clients

directly impacts the effectiveness and efficiency of service delivery and valid research studies.

Gadsden (1996) argues that whether and how researchers and practitioners focus on issues of race, class, or culture is largely determined by how they conceptualize the field of family literacy. Research and practice of family literacy is developed around two varied perspectives that attempt to explain the relationship between parent's literacy level and literacy practices at home and children's performance. The first perspective proposes that parents' literacy has a significant influence on children's ability to acquire, develop, and use literacy (Gadsden, 1994). This view suggests that intergenerational under-education leaves families in a constant crisis within the cycle of poverty (National Center on Family Literacy, 2001). The second perspective argues against this "deficit model" of adult literacy.

Much of the research and practice on parent-child literacy is developed around this first view of families in poverty, a disproportionate number of whom are families of color. Parents living in poverty are described often as not having the skills and knowledge to engage their children in the types of activities that are expected in school (Gadsden, 1994). In addition, children of ethnic-minority origin are perceived to fail academically because it is believed their parents' lack necessary skills to promote literacy at home.

Loasa (1980), in his study on maternal teaching strategies found clear cultural differences in the teaching strategies. The Anglo-American mothers used inquiry and praise more frequently than Hispanic mothers. On the other hand, Hispanic mothers

used modeling, visual cue, directive, and negative physical control more frequently than Anglo-American mothers. Laosa suggested that the observed differences were directly related to maternal educational level. Highly educated mothers are more likely to "imitate" the academic style of the classroom and hence their children are academically successful. Formal education to Hispanic mothers would eliminate the differences in child-rearing practices and create a "match" between home and school. Lesar, Espinosa, and Diaz's (1997) research on maternal teaching behaviors of preschool children in Hispanic families is also based on the assumptions that maternal teaching behavior is determined by socio-economic status and ethnic background. They contend that difference in home culture and school environment would lead to academic and social problems among children.

The second perspective suggests that literacy studies mentioned above have been developed consistently around a deficit model. Taylor (n.d.) argues that sex, race, economic status, and setting cannot be used as significant correlates of literacy. In contrast to Laosa's (1980, 1982) research, Taylor argues that many so-called undereducated parents are highly literate and possess complex problem-solving skills that enable them to survive in difficult circumstances.

Auerbach's (1989) article criticizing the deficit model approach is widely acclaimed by many family literacy researchers and practitioners. She argues that family literacy is defined narrowly where successful literacy acquisition is closely linked to culture of schooling and to mainstream literacy practices. According to Auerbach, the "transmission of school practices" model however, does not correspond

to the realities of participant's lives. She asserts that literacy cannot be meaningful to students if teacher's fail to connect what happens inside the classroom to what happens outside in the society.

Auerbach (1989) asserts that family literacy programs are based on false assumptions that lead to program failure. These include: a) language-minority students come from literacy-impoverished homes where education is not valued or supported b) family literacy involves a one-way transfer of skills from parents to children c) success is determined by parents' ability to support and extend school-like activities in the home d) school practices are adequate and it is home factors that determine academic success e) parents' own problems get in the way of creating positive family literacy contexts.

Auerbach (1989) asserted that family literacy programs should draw from the experience and knowledge of the parents rather than transfer school practices into the home context. The goal of a family literacy program should be to incorporate the cultural and social issues of families coming from diverse backgrounds into the content of literacy activities. According to Auerbach, low-income families often desire to get better education for their children, place high value on education, and encourage literacy practices and activities at home. The social contexts such as family obligations, housing, health care, and employment needs, however, may inhibit parents' from participating effectively in their and their children's education. In addition to the financial factors, cultural differences may act as an impediment to literacy acquisition. According to Auerbach, programs that recognize the social and

cultural factors that influence literacy and encourage parents to perceive these cultural differences as strengths rather than impediments would lead to successful family literacy work.

Shanahan, Mulhern, and Rodriguez-Brown's (1995) Project FLAME (Family Literacy for Language Minority Families) is the only family literacy program I came across that designed its' curriculum based on the social and cultural contexts of the participants. The researchers operated a family literacy program in Chicago's Latino neighborhoods for five years. While talking about developing a culturally centered family literacy program, Shanahan et al. noted that knowledge of Latino culture is insufficient to create a program sensitive to the participants. Cultural descriptions of groups emphasize central tendencies that do not hold true for all the members of the ethnic group. While helping families use their cultural experiences, Shanahan et al. also focused on significant issues tied to specific neighborhood, family, or individual need. They built on the strengths of each participant by providing opportunities for collaborative learning, sharing of personal experiences, and attending to personal needs by having low teacher-student ratios. According to Shanahan et al. Project FLAME is a successful program helping Latino parents support their children's education, while allowing parents to build on their strengths and increase their self-confidence.

Reyes (1992) stated that educators and policy makers are conditioned to ignore the differences among students or learned to treat them as deficiencies. He asserts that program administrators and teachers should overcome the "one size fits all" approach

to literacy when teaching diverse learners and understand that learning is not only shaped by the teaching practices, but also by the experiences and characteristics of the learner.

Although the concept of addressing the needs of the families based on their social and cultural contexts is not new to family literacy, limited research studies have been conducted that attempt to examine how family literacy programs serve diverse learners. Much of the research on cultural differences focused on how ethnic minority families fail to conform to White middle-class society and as a result experience social, educational, and economic hardships. Research must move a step further by attempting to understand the characteristics and needs of ethnic minority families and understand the diverse needs, skills, and expectations of these participants. Family literacy research needs a life-span approach that allows the field to examine how literacy is influenced by life circumstances and how life circumstances influence family literacy (Gadsden, 1994).

This research study attempts to understand the differences between Spanish speaking Hispanic and English speaking non-Hispanic participants of the Even Start Family Literacy program using a life-course perspective. Similar to other family literacy programs, limited empirical research has been conducted on studying the characteristics, strengths, and weaknesses of the Even Start family literacy program. Supporting the perspective that cultural differences shape literacy learning, this study attempts to understand the differences in educational and family background of Hispanic and non-Hispanic participants, examines whether differences exist in reasons

for participation in the program between Hispanic and non-Hispanic families, and differences in program outcomes using both qualitative and quantitative approaches. I believe that this research study will help practitioners take a look at the differences in program outcomes between Hispanic and non-Hispanic participants and more thoroughly understand the strengths and needs of participating families.

CHAPTER 3

Methods and Procedures

This study used a triangulation approach to examine the differences between Spanish speaking Hispanic and English speaking non-Hispanic participants of the Even Start Family Literacy program. Triangulation is a method where the researcher uses multiple data gathering and analysis techniques to investigate the same phenomenon. A triangulation approach counteracts the threats to validity of the data gathered (Berg, 1995). For example, use of both survey and interview data to study parent-child relationships not only provides rich, holistic information, but also strengthens investigators' confidence in the results obtained. As use of multiple data collection and analysis approaches offers a comprehensive and in-depth perspective, this study used the quantitative and qualitative data gathered by the Oregon Even Start Evaluation team to study the differences between Hispanic and non-Hispanic participants. The use of quantitative techniques allows us to measure numerical variables and to understand the interrelationships among variables (Bamberger, 2000). On the other hand, a qualitative approach provides an in-depth understanding of the characteristics of the population that cannot be meaningfully expressed by numbers. It also supports, supplements, and validates the quantitative data.

Since February 1995, the Oregon Department of Education and the Office of Community College Services has contracted with Dr. Leslie Richards of the Department of Human Development and Family Sciences at Oregon State University

(OSU) to conduct an evaluation of the state's Even Start Family Literacy programs. The outcome evaluation measures the extent to which programs are effective in improving literacy skills of parents and their children and in promoting individual and family well-being. As part of the outcome evaluation, participants and staff members are administered quantitative measures every fall (or at entry of the program) and spring (or at exit from the program). Data collected during fall 1995 is referred to as Wave 1 and Wave 2 refers to data collected in the spring of 1996. So far, 14 waves of data (Fall, 1995-Spring, 2002) have been gathered from the participants. Also, qualitative interview data from a sub-sample of parents were collected during 1997 and 1998 to assess how the program has impacted participants, their children, and their family as a whole.

This study used the evaluation data gathered during 1997/1998 (waves 5 & 6), 1998/1999 (waves 7 & 8), 1999/2000 (waves 9 & 10), 2000/2001 (waves 11 & 12) and 2001/2002 (waves 13 & 14) program years. Data collected prior to the program year 1997/1998 are incomplete and less accurate due to challenges such as low participant retention rate and inadequate training of program staff in administering the measures.

Research Design

The evaluation plan designed for the purpose of this study can be associated with the five-tiered program evaluation approach developed by Jacobs (1988). Bailey (1996) used a similar approach in order to examine the effect of Oregon Even Start program on parenting abilities of the participants. According to Jacobs there are five

levels/tiers to program evaluation. Tiers 1, 2, and 3 are helpful in determining the purpose of the program, monitoring program performance, and assessing the strengths and quality of the intervention. Tier 4 evaluates the changes, if any, that have occurred among the participants. The last tier, Tier 5, is referred as the program impact tier, which establishes a causal link between program participation and outcomes. In other words, this tier examines if the changes among the participants are due to the result of program participation.

The current study mainly utilizes tiers 3 and 4 of the five-tiered evaluation approach. Tier 3 aids in assessing the quality of the program and answering the question as to how we can serve the program better? It helps develop a more detailed picture of the program, and provide information to programs on program improvement (Jacobs, 1988). The qualitative interview data collected from the participants provide information about the diverse family, educational, social, and cultural background of Hispanic and non-Hispanic participants. The interviews throw light on the needs of Hispanic and non-Hispanic participants. These data may help in assessing whether the program meets the needs and expectations of the participants. The quantitative data also provide information about the effectiveness of the program in improving participants' parenting knowledge and skills, life skills, self-esteem and more. These results will assist the researcher and the Even Start program staff in determining the effectiveness of the program and design strategies as to how the program can be improved.

Tier 4 determines the changes if any, that have occurred among Even Start participants. Change among participants is measured through various quantitative measures and qualitative interviews. Quantitative data are collected on improvement of participants' knowledge of normal child development, parenting confidence and support, mental health, self-esteem, and life skills. Qualitative interviews focus on the participants' life history and parenting, personal and family changes, and changes in the participant's relationships. Looking at the differences between Hispanic and non-Hispanic participants will help determine if the program is leading to predicted outcomes among all its participants and will shed light on the link between social, cultural, and ethnic differences and program outcomes.

The qualitative approach used in this research is based on grounded theory design (Glasser & Strauss, 1967). Grounded theory method is based on an inductive approach, where a theory is generated from the data. Grounded theory design involves identifying the focus of the study, gathering data using various approaches such as interviews or observations, analyzing the data by looking at common themes or patterns, and finally generating a theory based on the phenomenon identified. The qualitative data used in this study are drawn from face-to-face interviews conducted on a sub-sample of participants that attended the program during the program years 1997/1998 and 1998/1999.

The quantitative approach of this research employed the latent growth curve analysis design to assess if the Even Start participants' ethnicity (Hispanic Vs. non-Hispanic) has any influence on the outcomes or changes they experienced. In a latent

growth curve design participants are measured on the same variable at three or more time points. This research study uses structural equation modeling of latent growth curves to assess the initial level and rate of change experienced by Hispanic and non-Hispanic participants on various outcome variables. Latent growth models allow measurement of both intraindividual and interindividual variability in change (Walker, Acock, Bowman, & Li, 1996).

Procedures

The qualitative analysis of the study is based on the interview data collected during program years 1997/1998 and 1998/1999. A total of 60 Even Start participants were interviewed during these program years. This analysis included interview data collected from 32 Hispanic and 25 non-Hispanic female participants. Selection of the participants was done by asking for volunteers who were willing to be interviewed. The Even Start Evaluation team of the Oregon State University interviewed the respondents. Interviews with Hispanic participants were conducted with the help of a translator. These interviews were later transcribed verbatim and analyzed. Interviews were conducted at the program sites and usually lasted for 30 minutes to an hour.

Quantitative analysis is based on the data collected twice during each program year starting from the year 1997 to 2002. Even Start staff collects data from the participants when they enter the program, which is usually in the fall. Most participants enter the program in the fall. Data are again collected from all the participants in spring. In the following fall, if participants continue to stay in the program, staff is not required to collect data from these participants. However, some

Even Start programs collect data from continuing participants as well in fall. As a result, in the second program year, in fall, some continuing participants have data and some do not. In spring, however, data are again collected from all the Even Start participants. Data are collected through surveys administered by the Even Start program staff on knowledge of child development, confidence in parenting, depression, self-esteem and life skills.

The target population for the quantitative analysis of this study included participants who entered the Even Start program at wave 5 (program year 1997/1998), wave 7 (program year 1998/1999), wave 9 (program year 1999/2000) and wave 11 (program year 2000/2001), adding up to a total of 527 participants. The goal of the study was to follow each of these participants for a period of two program years, so that each participant has four waves of data. For instance, participants who entered at wave 5 will be followed until wave 8 and wave 7 participants till wave 10 and so on.

Close examination of the data, however, revealed that most participants dropped out within the first two waves of data collection. Since, latent growth curve analysis requires at least three waves of data, participants who were in the program for four waves were selected for the purpose of this study. This sample consisted of 96 participants. Out of the 96 participants 78 percent were Hispanic (n=75) and 22 percent non-Hispanic (n=21).

Measures

Five variables are of central interest in this study: knowledge of child development, parenting confidence and support, depression, self-esteem, and life skills. All quantitative measures are attached from Appendix A to Appendix E.

Knowledge of Child Development

A measure named “About Children” is used to assess participant’s knowledge of child development. This instrument was originally a 20-item measure developed in 1995/96 after reviewing other measures that assess parents’ knowledge of child development. After a test of internal consistency four items were deleted due to their poor correlation with other items of the measure. Items are measured on a 3-point scale (1 = agree, 2 = not sure, 3 = disagree) with higher score indicating greater knowledge of child development. For example, one of the statements parents respond to is: “Most two-year-olds know the difference between make-believe and true stories”. Reliability of this measure is moderate, with an alpha of .70

Parenting Confidence and Support

“The Parenting Ladder” is the measure used to assess parents’ confidence and available support in terms of parenting. This measure was originally developed by the Oregon State University’s Family Policy Program for evaluating the Oregon’s Healthy Start Program (Katzev, Pratt, Henderson, & McGuigan, 1999). The original 10-item measure was later modified by adding two items that assess the amount of stress in parents’ life and one item that assesses their overall satisfaction with parenting support. The Parenting Ladder is a self-report measure containing two sections, one

that assesses parents' confidence on parenting, while the second section measures the amount of parenting support available to parents. Parents rate themselves on a 6-point ladder with the scores ranging from low (0) to high (6). For example, parents respond to the items such as, "Where would you place yourself on the parenting ladder in terms of your confidence that you know what is right for your child?" The higher the score greater the parenting confidence and support. Cronbach's alpha for this scale was .89.

Depression

The Center for Epidemiology Studies Depression Scale (CES-D) was used to measure depressive symptomatology among the Even Start participants. The CES-D is renamed as 'Feelings About How Things are going' by the Even Start Evaluation team. Parents were asked to respond to items that ask how often they had experienced specific situations of feelings such as, "I felt everything I did was an effort". Responses were scored on a 4-point scale ranging from rarely or none of the time (0) to most or all of the time (3). Participants that score a total of 16 or greater on the 20-item measure are considered at-risk for clinical depression. Alpha reliability on this scale was high (.88).

Self-esteem

"Feelings About Yourself" is a measure developed by Rosenberg (1965) to assess self-esteem. The self-esteem measure includes statements such as, "I wish I could have more respect for myself". Participants respond to the items using a four point scale where 1 = strongly agree, 2 = somewhat agree, 3 = somewhat disagree, and

4 = strongly disagree. Higher score indicates greater self-esteem. Cronbach's alpha on this measure was .70.

Life Skills

The Life Skills' assessment measure focuses on the participants' acquisition of life skills such as having a food handler's card, a driver's license, or how to create a family budget. Participants respond whether they have the skill, they do not have the skill but would like to have it, or they don't need the skill. The score for "No, but I would like to" and "don't need it" are 0 and a score of 1 is given for the "have the skill" option.

Qualitative Interview Protocol

A semi-structured, face-to-face interview was conducted on a sub-sample ($N = 57$) of the participants to assess their satisfaction with the Even Start program. The interview questions focus on assessing the family background, educational background, and life history of the participants, participants' goals for participating in the program, their satisfaction with the adult education and parent education classes and whether parents perceive program participation has changed their lives and family relationships. Finally, the summary section asks questions about whether the program has helped the participants as individuals and their families and the improvements they would like to see in the Even Start program. A copy of the interview protocol is attached in Appendix F.

Analysis

As mentioned earlier, a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches were used to address the specific research questions designed for this study. A software program called WinMax was used in order to facilitate the analysis of already transcribed and coded qualitative data and quantitative data analysis was conducted using AMOS.

Interview data on Hispanic and non-Hispanic participants' educational background and life history and reasons and goals for participation and changes attributed to Even Start participation were analyzed using a qualitative approach. The interviews were transcribed verbatim and analyzed using the coding process of a grounded theory design. In a grounded theory design interviews or text data are read and re-read again to discover reoccurring themes, concepts, or categories. The initial step involved open coding the interview data where data were closely examined and several categories were developed. From the interview data words, phrases or events that appeared to be similar were grouped into the same category. Later, these categories were put together and the relationships between these categories were identified and thus broad themes were developed. For instance, the categories identified for reasons for Even Start participation of Hispanic participants were 'learn English language', 'obtain a driver's license'. Further in-depth analysis of the data revealed that the underlying goal associated with learning English or obtaining a driver's license was to effectively acculturate into the mainstream American society

and thus achieve self-sufficiency. Hence, the theme identified here was self-sufficiency.

In order to assess the differences in outcomes between Hispanic and non-Hispanic participants, a latent growth curve method of structural equation modeling was used. Latent growth curve method allows measurement of change over time. The first step of latent growth curve analysis involves computing a regression line linking a measure of a concept (y) to a point of time (t) along with error term (e) at each point of time, where the error term represents the measurement error for each individual. This gives an intercept (beginning score) and a slope (rate of change) for each individual. In the second step, each individual's intercept and slope is combined with other individual's intercepts and slopes to calculate mean intercept and mean slope, which indicate the average initial scores and average level of change for the entire group (Bear & Schmitz, 2000).

This latent growth curve modeling was used in order to assess change in knowledge of child development, parenting confidence, depression, self-esteem and life skills and to estimate whether ethnicity is a predictor of change in these variables. Individual scores on each item of the measures were summed to obtain a total score for each measurement time period. For instance, total knowledge of child development scores were obtained by summing the scores on the 16 items of the measure. This procedure is repeated for all four points of measurement thus resulting in wave 1 score on knowledge of child development, wave 2 score on knowledge of child development

and so on. These scores were transferred to AMOS and model parameters were estimated using AMOS structural modeling program.

Missing data

Missing data is an inherent problem in longitudinal studies. Three variations of missing data were encountered in this analysis. As mentioned earlier, participants who were in the program for four waves were selected for the purpose of the study. Many participants (65%), however, in this analysis were missing wave 3 data, as program staff was not required by the evaluation team to assess participants at wave 3. AMOS computed full information maximum likelihood estimates for these participants with missing data.

The second variation of missing data involved a small number of participants skipping one or more measures of the total five evaluation measures at more than one wave. For example, Susana had data on only four of the five measures at wave 1 and wave 2. She was missing data on Parenting Confidence and Support measure at waves 1 and 2, but had data at waves 3 and 4. Since Susana had data for only two points of measurement out of the four, she was dropped from the analysis of parenting confidence and support. However, Susana was included when analyzing the other four measures. Similar patterns were observed for other measures and as a result the final sample retained for the purpose of the analysis of each measure varied. The final sample for each of the measures was, n = 96 on knowledge of child development, n = 95 on parenting confidence, n = 91 on the measure of depression, n = 96 on self-esteem and n = 94 on the life skills measure.

The third variation of missing data involved participants not responding to individual items on the measures. For instance, Freya did not respond to item 12 of the 16-item Parenting Knowledge measure. Table 1 gives a count of participants missing data on individual items on each of the five measures by wave.

Table 1. Count of Participants Missing Data on Individual Items of Each of the Five Measures by Wave.

Measure	Wave 1	Wave 2	Wave 3	Wave 4
About Children	10	7	3	7
Parenting Ladder	3	6	1	5
Depression	10	13	4	8
Self-esteem	10	5	1	7
Life Skills	33	39	6	28

Missing values using expectation maximization were imputed for participants missing values on individual items of the measure and individual item scores were then summed to obtain a total score for each measure.

Ethical Treatment of Participants

Approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Oregon State University was obtained when the Even Start Family Literacy Evaluation Project was initiated. All Even Start participants were informed about the project when they enter the program. Participants were told that their participation in the project was voluntary and confidential and services provided to the family would not be affected if the

parent chose not to participate in the project. Informed consent documents were obtained from all participants. Further, all written materials were provided in Spanish for participants who preferred to use their first language. A Spanish-speaking interviewer was also used to conduct qualitative interviews when appropriate.

CHAPTER 4

Qualitative Results

A qualitative approach was used in order to document the similarities and differences between Spanish speaking Hispanic and English-speaking non-Hispanic participants. In particular, this chapter describes the differences in family background and life history between Hispanic and non-Hispanic participants, identifies their varied reasons and goals for participating in the Even Start program, and documents changes participants' attributed to their Even Start participation.

The analysis is based on the interview data collected during the site visits conducted in 1997/1998 and 1998/1999 program years (n=60). The final analysis included interview data collected from 32 Hispanic and 25 non-Hispanic female participants.

Face-to-face interviews were conducted with Even Start parents who volunteered to be interviewed. A copy of the interview protocol is attached in Appendix F. Parents were interviewed in the language of their choice, English or Spanish, and interviews were taped and transcribed verbatim. Data were coded and analyzed keeping in mind the specific research questions that were reported in the previous chapter. The initial broad coding is simply based on the three main topics addressed in the research questions: 1) educational background and family history 2) reasons and goals for participation in the Even Start program and finally 3) individual and family changes attributed to Even Start participation. A careful and rigorous

reading of the interviews allowed major themes to emerge within each main research question. For instance, lack of parental support, was a common theme inherent in the interview data of Hispanic as well as non-Hispanic respondents, when they were asked about educational background and reasons for school failure. Statements that were indicative of lack of parental support were thus coded based on this theme.

Although the themes that emerged in Hispanic as well as non-Hispanic interview transcripts were mostly comparable, vital differences existed in terms of how these two groups experienced, interpreted, and expressed issues relevant to these themes. For example when asked about their goals for participation in the Even Start program, achieving a sense of worth and independence was a common theme that emerged from the interviews of both Hispanic as well as non-Hispanic parents. However, Hispanic participants linked their sense of worth and independence to their ability to communicate in English, or drive a car. For non-Hispanic parents, on the other hand, their sense of self-worth originated from their ability to get off of welfare or find employment. The following discussion highlights the commonalities and delineates the subtle, yet vital differences that exist between Hispanic and non-Hispanic Even Start participants.

Educational Background and Family History

Childhood experiences can facilitate or prohibit an individual from achieving his/her life's goals such as educational success or economic self-sufficiency. A myriad of factors such as accessibility to education, economic status, parental support and encouragement, school environment, and self-motivation influence an individual's

ability to learn. Interviews with Even Start participants revealed a number of circumstances and conditions during childhood that hindered their ability to achieve academic success. The three most common themes that emerged in the interviews of both Hispanic and non-Hispanic participants were poverty, inadequate parental support, and uncooperative school system.

Without surprise, poverty was an important determinant factor in Hispanic as well as non-Hispanic participants' academic failure. However, how an individual experiences poverty is associated with his/her race, ethnicity, country or even the neighborhood he/she was raised in. For a child living in a developing country poverty may mean living in a large family without access to clean water, food, and education. On the other hand, for a child raised in a developed country poverty may mean living in an inner-city neighborhood, often in an abusive environment, without access to good schools and incessant exposure to violence and drugs. Interview transcripts of Hispanic and non-Hispanic participants illustrate such differences clearly.

Hispanic Participants

For all 35 Hispanic participants poverty was the important determining factor in how long they had attended school. All the Hispanic participants interviewed grew up in Mexico. These participants were from poor families where parents could not afford to send their children to school. Although primary education is free in Mexico, uniforms, books, and other school supplies are not. Dora described some of the barriers she faced:

I really wanted to go back to school, but my mother didn't have enough resources to pay for it. To send me to school, everything gets

expensive. There (Mexico) you have to pay for every single thing you need. Pencils, papers, books, everything and I had a single mother and she couldn't support the whole family.

In developing countries, poverty and family size are greatly interrelated and often one leads to the other. Many low-income families have large families in order to enhance their family income. As many economists say "children are viewed as economic assets, not as economic liabilities" (Weiner, 1991). Parents send their children to work so that they can increase family income and this results in school dropout, child labor, and unemployment and thus the cycle of poverty continues. A strong relationship exists between school enrollment and number of children in the family. In a family with many younger siblings, the enrollment drops since the older kids take care of the younger ones (Weiner, 1991). Girls are more likely to drop out of school than boys. Interviews with Hispanic participants portrayed these social characteristics.

Hispanic participants often came from large families where limited resources had to be distributed among many. Too many children in the family restricted participants' ability to attend school. Rosa explained why she had to drop out of school. She said:

There wasn't very much money in the house and we all had to help and go to work. I am hoping my own son will be able to learn more.

Elsa shared a similar response:

When I was at school, I was a very good student. And I was participating in competition between different schools about knowledge.... And I won. This competition was because the school district was going to give scholarships, but I didn't take it, I won but I didn't take it....I didn't take it because in my house, my parents' house,

we were 12 in the family and my parents couldn't think about it. I wanted to go to another place. They had enough time to think about just one child, because they had more children, too many children.

Ramona, another Hispanic participant, grew up in a family of 16 children. She explained:

I didn't continue school because my mom each year had a new baby. And my parents told me "you can't go to school because your mom needs home help."

Another important theme that emerged through the interviews was lack of adequate parental support. Interviews with Hispanic participants revealed that parental support towards education was closely linked to their economic status and cultural beliefs. Universally, it is a common belief that low-income families place less value on education. Contrasting this widespread notion, 23 of the 32 Hispanic participants interviewed mentioned that education was a high priority in their families. Parents, however, could not support their children's education due to financial troubles. When asked if education was considered important by her parents, Rosa responded:

My mother really thought it was very important, because she knew that for the future, you needed to be able to read and write. It was simply because they didn't have any money.

For Selena's parents, the value they placed on education was dependent on how much money they had. She explained:

Well, my dad and my mom, I think for them it wasn't really, really important. They say that it is important, but if they don't have the money to give to the school, it wasn't important.

An interesting scenario revealed through some interviews was that, although education was considered important by parents, often, it was considered less important

for girls than boys. Gender discrimination is one of the main reasons for low literacy rates among women in many developing countries. Traditional gender roles and cultural beliefs often force girls to drop out of school and do household work or care for younger brothers and sisters. Adriana shared her parents' views:

When I was little my father and mother thought that they need to go to school, but just for elementary school. Just the men need to go to the high school and all that stuff, the woman no, elementary school was enough.

Angela expressed similar views held by her family:

When I wanted to continue my education beyond grade school my dad said no... that only grade school was important. The custom was that a woman would find it difficult to study because her work would then to be a homemaker. It wasn't important for a girl to study. When he saw that I had good grades he allowed me to attend Jr. High.

Supplementing the poor socio-economic conditions, lack of support from the school system in Mexico acted as a disincentive for some parents in sending their kids to school. In many developing countries government aided schools are underfinanced and underequipped. Schools lack adequate infrastructure, have high student to teacher ratio and are often inaccessible. Private schools, although promise quality education, are very expensive and unaffordable by low-income families. Jasmine explained:

We did care about education but we didn't have the resources to pay for it. That's usually the problem. In Mexico you have to pay for education. It's the opposite here, we pay for education here with taxes. That's what I notice here, it's easier to study because there it costs. You have to buy everything. Everything costs and sometimes they barely have enough for food. They need to buy books and if you don't take them, they demand them. It's embarrassing to have them demand this. Sometimes they say if you don't have this by tomorrow we won't let you into the classroom. And it feels bad. It's better not to go because sometimes there is not the money to buy the needs.

Also, school was not easily accessible, as many participants lived in small towns/villages. Many students had to walk miles to get to the nearest school. Rosario, explained how hard getting to school was for her:

The school was far away from my house. I needed to walk around one hour to get to school. When I was little, my brothers and I and everybody walked to school.

Hispanic participants also talked about their unpleasant and often abusive experiences at school that prevented successful school completion. Consuelo, shared:

In Mexico the teachers are kind of abusive. They grab the board up (the paddle) for very little reason.

Another participant described the anxiety produced by her elementary school experiences and why she dropped out of school:

In school I had much love, but what I didn't like was the feeling that the discipline was too hard. We are not all alike in feelings. I consider myself very fragile. Depending on how things are said to me, I am very sensitive. I understand, but I am sensitive. If something happens to me I have that with me. I cannot concentrate on other things. I can't forget. I scold myself sometimes to get over it. If I have made a mistake I have to say it, it bothers me. At school when I was young we had two lists on the board—the most dedicated and the little burros. My name was on the board for the most dedicated a couple of times and on the other list too. I think that damaged me psychologically a little. It was a daily thing. I was anxious a lot of time. I consider myself as intelligent. We are all intelligent. But we all have a learning method. Many times with children one has to find the way they learn, so that they won't get frustrated and want to leave school. That's one of the reasons that children want to leave school. That's what I did. I have different method of learning and they have to find my learning style otherwise I will leave my studies. I abandoned my studies.

Non-Hispanic Participants

The reasons for school failure for non-Hispanic participants are similar to their Hispanic counterparts. Poverty, lack of adequate parental support, and uncooperative

school system were also the three most common themes that emerged from interviews with non-Hispanic participants. Although the reasons were similar, the experiences and the implications of these were varied for non-Hispanic participants. For instance, poverty restricted parents of Hispanic participants in sending their children to school. Parents could not afford the high cost of the school system and this resulted in high dropout rate. Unlike the public education system in Mexico, education in the United States is both free and compulsory. However, poverty often forced parents of non-Hispanic participants to lead a nomadic life, which created instability in their children's lives. Poverty resulted in increased family stresses and tensions and this further resulted in school failure. Such nuances were apparent in the interviews conducted with non-Hispanic participants.

Nearly half of the non-Hispanic participants reported moving frequently from one place to another as children. Of the 25 non-Hispanic mothers, 10 mothers talked about multiple moves when they were children. Parents' of non-Hispanic participants held seasonal and unstable jobs, which forced them to move constantly. For example, Shirley's father was a migrant worker. She lived in six different states during her childhood. Shirley explained how frequent moving has influenced her learning ability.

I went to, I changed schools probably every three months. I moved around a lot! It was really hard for me to attach myself to have companions or friends, because I knew as soon as I got close to somebody we were going to move. Just going to school I was really good in school actually. I did really well. I was well advanced in reading and so on and so forth like that. I used to be really good at math, but not using those skills, now I get sometimes, trying to bring myself back up, it's hard.

Jane shared similar experiences:

Terrible. For one I wasn't placed in a school long enough to really get to know anybody. I was always moving around here and there. Different schools, I don't know how many different schools I went to. Then I just lost interest in school and ended up not going.

Studies conducted in the United States indicate that living in poverty creates stresses and strains in the family and often leads to divorce, abuse, drug and alcohol problems or mental health problems (Seccombe, 2000). According to a recent report in a leading newspaper "children living in persistent poverty are twice as likely to live in dysfunctional families" ("Measuring Poverty", 2002). This theory is strongly supported by the interviews conducted with non-Hispanic participants.

Twenty of the 25 participants interviewed indicated that they grew up in families that were simply chaotic. Issues reported by participants included living in abusive environments, divorce of their parents, drug and alcohol addiction of parents, and mental health problems. These negative experiences had lasting effect on non-Hispanic mothers' well-being and functioning. The dysfunctional environment in the family resulted in emotional problems among children, school-drop out, teenage pregnancy and drug addiction. Seccombe (2000), states that poverty creates dysfunctional families, which in turn creates children at risk for delinquency. Lisa's experiences growing up in a low-income family supports Seccombe's findings. When asked why she dropped out of school she answered:

Well, I was raised as a Catholic, went to Catholic schools, repeated the 3rd grade about 6 or 7 times, but my father's an alcoholic and he was beating on me a lot. My mother had 9 children, so there was a lot of mental, physical pain. So I was just really withdrawn, then I ran away from there when I was just like 11 years old and lived on the streets

ever since. So I never went to school to maybe the 3rd, 4th grade. So I never went to school. And then I had a baby at 14, then just had baby after baby. Then got on drugs, --- took my kids away, and my husband brought me here to Oregon a couple years ago and I was pregnant, and I divorced him, went to drug and alcohol, and I've been clean ever since.

Another participant echoed similar experiences:

I just, a lot of things happened and I had a really bad family situation that I was going through. I was getting beat a lot and molested and stuff, so I had to, I just dropped out. I kept going back to OSUC and said forget it, and then I got pregnant with my daughter and my whole life totally changed. I just, I went through hell with her, being pregnant. Quite a few times she almost died, cause I'd drink really heavy and her heartbeat stopped quite a few times. And it's just a whole bunch of chaotic, so...

As a result of poverty and family problems associated with it, parents of non-Hispanic participants failed to provide adequate support and encouragement towards their children's education. Research indicates that children from low-income families have on average, less educationally stimulating home environments. Although parents recognize the need to provide education to their children, the significance of it is overshadowed by economic and emotional distresses in the family. Rachel described how her mother's lack of support and encouragement led to her troublesome behavior at school.

Yeah, I went to school, but I got in the wrong crowd and my mom didn't want to be involved with me in school. She didn't encourage me, she wouldn't help me with my homework. I couldn't get into sports because she couldn't afford it or anything. I was just, I always had my head down and I always got in fights. I got into drugs really bad, and everything else. I've been clean for five years now. And I just kept, every time I went to school, I wouldn't go, I'd skip. I'd say I'm going to school and I'd leave and go party or whatever. Get in lots of trouble.

Carmen's life experiences summarize the damaging and lasting effects of poverty on a child's well-being and functioning. Carmen's mother was a drug addict and had mental health issues. When asked about her school experiences she explained:

Junior high was a very bad time. I got into drugs, I was living in a condemned house. My mom was really sick, I ended up getting shot. I had a bullet go through my brain by my brother. That was not a good time, I dropped out, told my principal to fuck off, that their school sucked, and I hated all the teachers, and their students were rude and I wasn't coming back. I was not nice. I was very rebellious I guess is the word.

Carmen ended up dropping out of school and had two kids. At the time of the interview Carmen was struggling to get a GED and find employment and get out of an abusive relationship.

In addition to family problems that hindered the successful completion of school, several participants described the bad experiences they had with teachers that influenced their desire to stay in school. For some participants, a particular event at school had a long-lasting impact, whereas, for others the overall school atmosphere didn't fit well with their needs and expectations and thus resulted in school failure.

Nancy, when asked why she dropped out of junior high, replied:

Um, it was the teachers. It was, I loved homework, I still love homework to this day, I mean, if I take work home I can get it done and it's just fine. But um, the teachers, they didn't help you, they were just like, you know, if I asked them "well, can you help me do this problem?" it's like, well here's the answer. It's like, you can't learn that way. And it was really frustrating to me, so it was like, me, I just didn't deal with the problem, you know, don't even go there.

Tracy explained how her bad experiences with teachers coupled with problems at home led to her failure at school. Tracy dropped out of high school at 10th grade when she got pregnant.

Well one teacher told me that you're stupid and you're not gonna amount to anything. And that's when I just had a low self-esteem, plus my mom wasn't a very big help for me. She did everything for me, she didn't know what to really do. She did my homework for me, she made my bed for me, she didn't know what to really do. She was in a bad relationship with my dad. She was married to my dad for 27 years and finally got a divorce. My dad, I was his little girl up until the first time he found out that I was having sex. Then I didn't turn into a little girl, he kept abusing me, grounding me, all that type of stuff. Saying I can't go nowhere, dah, dah, dah. Telling me that I was big, I was fat, I was all this stuff.

Reasons and Goals for Participation

The quest for self-sufficiency and independence is the vital theme that emerged through interviews with Hispanic as well as non-Hispanic participants, when they were asked about the reasons and goals for participation in the Even Start program. Both Hispanic and non-Hispanic parents expressed a strong desire to be independent and make a better life for themselves and their family. While the common goal among Hispanic as well as non-Hispanic participants is to achieve self-sufficiency, the processes and steps involved in achieving these goals were often determined by their previous life history, and ethnic origin. As one early childhood educator succinctly stated, when we strip the details of cultural practices, beliefs, and experiences away, there are very basic commonalities among all individuals. In order to ensure effective multicultural practice, it is vital to identify the commonalities as a basis for understanding while preserving and honoring differences (Becker, 1995).

For a Hispanic participant, achieving self-sufficiency is strongly linked to her ability to acculturate to the mainstream American culture. Acculturation is defined as the “process by which people of one culture learn to adjust their behavior to accommodate to the rules and expectations of another culture” (Mayden, Castro, & Annito, 1999). In order to function well in a foreign country and gain independence, Hispanic mothers had to master critical skills such as an ability to speak in English or obtain a driver’s license.

For non-Hispanic participants, on the other hand, the path to achieving self-sufficiency involved forgetting their past, refocusing their priorities and gaining academic and job skills. The following discussion highlights the commonalities between Hispanic and non-Hispanic participants while focusing on the cultural diversity and ethnic characteristics of these two groups.

Hispanic Participants

All the Hispanic participants interviewed for the purpose of this study were immigrants from Mexico. As a result, these women experienced changes in their identities, customs, and ways of life. In the process of acculturation, Hispanic participants adjusted their behavior to accommodate to the mainstream American culture. They identified the need to be independent and build social relationships in order to function well in the American society. The critical step involved in acculturation and achieving independence for Hispanic mothers was learning English. The interview transcripts indicated that nearly all the Hispanic participants had little or no ability to speak in English when they entered Even Start. This hindered their ability

to perform both simple and complex life tasks such as communicating with the doctor, or their children's teacher.

The opportunity to learn English is the prime reason that many Hispanic participants enrolled in the Even Start program. Jasmine explained why she joined the program:

The principal thing was that I wanted to learn English... I didn't know anything. When Sylvia gave me the test the only thing I answered was my name. That's all I knew.

Selena expressed similar sentiments:

I want to talk more English. And I want to learn about the rules...Grammar...and they are teaching me, they teach me about computers...because my husband has computer and I didn't know how. Now I know and I do some things there, letters, and a lot of things.

For Hispanic parents, being self-sufficient also meant being actively involved in their children's education by communicating with school teachers, helping children with homework or making important decisions about their children's education. However, lack of English language restricted their ability to involve actively in their children's education. As a result, Hispanic mothers often felt frustrated and incompetent. Rosario expressed her frustrations:

When I first started to come to Even Start I couldn't speak English and I couldn't have a good relation with my children's teachers. So I was very frustrated.

Ramona also shared:

When I started Even Start, the main goal was to learn English because my children ask for help when they are doing their homework. And I couldn't answer and I needed to learn English to help my children, basically.

Learning English also meant that families were able to actively participate in the life of the community and interact with different people, be it a grocery store clerk or their children's doctor. Rafaela related:

My goal was to learn English so I could communicate with the pediatrician and with my doctor.

Another mother enthusiastically explained her desire to be a part of the community. When asked why she joined Even Start she said:

Like the brochure said, to meet new parents, share with others, learn English...This is a great opportunity because I was going to embrace everything-I was going to go out, to be entertained, to have friends. My children were going to have friends, play with others and go out and come to school.

For an immigrant, a simple skill such as an ability to drive, can act as an important aid in successful acculturation into the American society. Inability to drive, although may seem to be a minor issue, often aggravates the stresses and strains that many Hispanic parents endure during their transition to a new society and culture. Their inability to communicate in English, and inability to travel from one place to another may lead to social isolation and thus serve as a huge barrier in the parents' pursuit of building a social network or achieving independence and self-sufficiency in an unfamiliar world. Thus, another critical step mentioned by Hispanic participants in achieving their independence involved learning to drive and getting a driver's license.

Francisca related:

I have been in the United States for about two years. In a year that my daughter was born we lived in Harrisburg. Then I didn't know English. I didn't go anywhere because I didn't know how to drive. It was too far but afterward, in April we moved here because I felt it was better for my daughter if we lived in the city. She was now growing and I wanted

to learn English. Then I found this program. When they called me I came because I was very interested.

With time, the goals of Hispanic parents transformed. Participation in the Even Start program and interaction with other parents and community members encouraged parents to build new goals and set higher standards for themselves and their family. Damita joined Even Start with the goal of learning English. Gradually, she realized the need to have a GED and find a better job. Damita said:

My goal was to learn English basically, because just in that way I can grow in this country. Now my goal is to still learn English, but I want to get GED to get another job or something, something better.

The above discussion provides insight into the processes Hispanic participants undergo in adapting with the mainstream American culture. The goals set by Hispanic mothers indicate a desire to converge from traditional Hispanic norms and culture to the mainstream American culture, although this convergence may still be less prominent.

Non-Hispanic Participants

Similar to their Hispanic counterparts, the emerging theme from non-Hispanic interviews was also the desire to achieve a sense of independence and self-sufficiency. While Hispanic parents had the challenges of adjusting and adapting to the American culture, non-Hispanic participants often faced the challenge of severing the influence of their past, often troubled lives in their quest for self-sufficiency. The goals for Hispanic as well as non-Hispanic participants were the same. But the motivations and processes involved in achieving the goals varied.

The primary reason given by non-Hispanic mothers for participating in the Even Start program was an opportunity to attain GED. Pat said that when she first came to Even Start she hoped for, "a better life! I wanted to get my GED, really, really bad. And I did that."

Laurel also described her desire to lead a better life:

Well I wanted...my GED anyways. My husband prevented me from doing a lot of things. I wanted to get my GED done, I wanted to get some computer training, and I'm going to do that this summer. And then I just wanted to get my life straightened so I can raise my daughter. I don't want to be on welfare.

Another mother, who has endured domestic violence in her marriage, explained how hopeless her life was before Even Start and what motivated her to get into the program.

I've never really had like a long term picture because nobody ever told me, well you've got to start thinking about five years, ten years from now. Nobody told me that. I didn't even know. I'm only 20 you know, I didn't know nothing. I lived with my kids' dad you know, and it was like, I didn't think about anything cause he works two jobs. So I didn't think about anything, until I left him one day and I didn't have a dime in my pocket, nothing, and I had to go because he was hurting me really bad so I left. And it was while he was at work, so of course I didn't have no money, he didn't give me any. And so then I decided that I wanted to get my GED, learn some computer skills, cause there's a lot of things I want to learn other than just computer skills, and then do my paid work experience.

Stricken by poverty and problems such as abuse or poor health, many participants experience depression and other emotional problems. Many parents were forced to rely on welfare due to their inability to find employment or find accessible and affordable childcare for their children so that they can go to work. Welfare

dependency led to poor self-esteem and despair in life. Jane, when asked what it was that made her decide that Even Start was for her answered:

I hoped for my self worth. I wanted more self worth and to be independent. Depend on myself and to get off welfare, which I'm working my way off of it.

Rachel expressed similar sentiments stating that:

My goals, basically to get my GED and just to feel confidence, like I said before. And self-esteem and control of my life. Just, they're all for my daughter basically and for me. Cause like I said, I want my daughter to have, like I never had. I mean I don't have nice clothes, everything, I want her to have everything. I didn't get that, I was always, I had to wear hand downs and everything and I don't want that for my daughter. I want to have friends too. I hate welfare.

Although Hispanic families enjoyed the childcare services provided by the Even Start program, for non-Hispanic parents, provision of childcare was a major incentive in attending the Even Start program. In order to get off welfare and gain independence they needed a safe and secure place to care for their children. Parents were pleased with the childcare services provided by Even Start and the accompanying parenting lessons. The family focus of the Even Start program facilitated parents to work towards not only their educational but also parenting goals. Regina explained her reasons for participating in the Even Start program:

There was childcare. And the program wasn't just based on books. It was more of a physical thing. Like your parenting...Yeah. Parenting classes, you know, you sit there and you read all these books, but where's the experience, you don't get anything from reading the books you know. I have two kids, but reading the books and watching my two kids at the same time, it's not the same.

Another mother said:

Childcare and plus it's like it's a family orientation, I'm involved with Sandra at her school too, and then plus getting my education at the same time.

Kristina was pleased about the opportunity that all her family members can go to school together.

My first initial thought was, the girls can go to school, cool. And so we can go to school together and they'll be in like an almost Head Start. And so I was kind of thinking about them, cause they're not in school yet and I thought it would be a really good thing for them. And the computer really interested me.

Changes Attributed to Even Start Participation

The participants interviewed in this study reported a variety of changes due to their participation in the Even Start program. The emerging themes through the interviews of Hispanic as well as non-Hispanic participants were changes in literacy and life skills, personal changes such as increased self-esteem and self confidence, changes in parenting behaviors, changes in their kids, and relationship changes with family and friends. The changes reported by parents directly link to the four main components of the Even Start program, Adult Education, Parent Education, Parent and Child Time Together (PACT), and Early Childhood Education. The adult education component had a major influence on the literacy skills and life skills of the participants. The parent education component and PACT changed the parenting behavior and improved parent-child interactions. The Early Childhood component helped the children of Even Start participants prepare for school and develop social skills. Interviews with Even Start parents not only revealed the independent effects of

each of the four Even Start components, but also illustrate the overall effects of the Even Start program on participants' lives. The following sections are organized around the five themes mentioned earlier, which demonstrate the changes reported by Hispanic and non-Hispanic participants due to their participation in the Even Start program. Similarities and differences between Hispanic and non-Hispanic participants are highlighted.

Literacy and Life Skill Changes

The literacy and life skill changes participants' experienced were closely linked to their ethnic origin. Both Hispanic as well as non-Hispanic participants reported they had better educational skills and job skills. However, interviews with Hispanic participants shed light on the cultural adaptation processes these immigrants experienced and illustrate how the acquired new skills facilitated effective acculturation of these women to the American society.

Hispanic Participants

For Hispanic parents the most often mentioned skill development centered on learning English. Historically, English language proficiency has been an important measure of acculturation (Schauffler, 1994), and Hispanic mothers indicated immense improvement in their ability to communicate in English. Knowledge of English was positively associated with increased independence among Hispanic mothers. One participant explained briefly when asked in what ways Even Start has helped her most. She said, "Well, here it's really been English".

Felicia enthusiastically explained how she is able to understand conversations better.

I for example, would go to the store and I wouldn't understand what people were saying and my husband would say, "Felicia, I'm going to send you to school one day." And I would kind of hunch up and skooch down because I felt so... Now, I go to the store and I say, "Is this what they said?" and I understand them a little bit and now he says to me, "Hmm, you're learning." So lots has changed.

Graciela was pleased that Even Start helped her interact well with her children's teachers.

Before I was too embarrassed to talk with my kids' teacher. Now I am able to talk with some of their friends. I'm able to talk with the teachers. Before I couldn't fill out papers, now I am able to fill out papers. And before I couldn't send notes to school, now I am able to send a note to my kids' school.

Apart from learning English, another practical skill mentioned by many Hispanic parents is their ability to drive and get a driver's license. Nearly all the Hispanic mothers had never learned to drive before and were dependent on their husbands or other family members for transportation. Learning to drive and obtaining a driver's license was often cited as an important achievement and participants derived a sense of independence and self-sufficiency due to their ability to travel from one place to another.

Jackie expressed the struggles that she went through in order to get a driver's license and the sense of gratification she derived after getting it.

And then just last year I got my driver's license. I worked really hard on that. And I got it. I had a hard time with it because I couldn't understand, but I finally got it and it's a good feeling. I can take my daughter to school and don't have to wait for somebody to pick me up, and I can come here too.

Carina explained how getting a driver's license helped her be more independent. She said:

For two weeks now I've also obtained my driver's permit. I'm practicing now because it's one of my most important goals to learn to drive a car because this will make me more independent from my husband. I can take myself and my children and go wherever we please, places to have fun and including driving to school. This is most important, that my husband no longer has to bring them.

Traditionally, Hispanic families place strong emphasis on the role of women as caretakers and mothers (Mayden, Castro, & Annitto, 1999). Women usually stay home and take care of the family, while men adopt the role of breadwinners and heads of the household. Although Hispanic women still hold on to the traditional gender roles and are family oriented, due to the influence of social and economic forces, they change and adapt to the dominant American culture. The low-income levels of Hispanic families often force women to find employment and supplement the family income. Also, Hispanic women adopt the mainstream American values, where both men and women work and support family.

Participation in the Even Start program prepared Hispanic mothers to acquire job skills and find employment. Ability to speak in English and drive encouraged Hispanic parents gain confidence in finding employment and build a better future for themselves and their family. Damita explained how her improved knowledge of English helped her seek employment. When asked how Even Start has helped her, she replied:

Even Start helped me to make secure to myself. Because now I can listen or I can talk a little bit and I feel secure about that. I don't need

an interpreter. I called the employer, filled out the application. I feel secure about it. This is more better.

Not only did the Even Start program helped Hispanic parents seek employment, it also helped some in establishing career goals. Participants realized the need to find stable and secure jobs instead of working in dead end jobs with no opportunities for growth. Sabina currently works as a cook in a local restaurant. She expressed her confidence in finding a better job in the future with the help of Even Start.

And now that I come here to Even Start, I know that I can get a better job if I learn, and now I know what I want to do. I would like to work as a receptionist some day, and my daughter says, "oh momma, it's going to take you like 10 years." It's not going to be that long.

Non-Hispanic Participants

Similar to Hispanic participants, non-Hispanic participants were also enthusiastic about the academic and job skills they acquired through Even Start participation. While learning English was the primary skill reported by Hispanic participants as the most important accomplishment, non-Hispanic participants most often mentioned about their ability to obtain a GED. For Hispanic participants learning English was a stepping-stone in adapting to the American way of life and achieving personal and financial independence. Non-Hispanic parents perceived acquiring GED or a High School diploma as an essential skill in order to obtain a job and achieve financial independence.

Pat became a mom when she was a teenager and dropped out of high school. She explained the importance of finishing up her GED and getting a job. Pat said that

when she first came to Even Start she hoped to get her GED. She said, "I wanted to get my GED and I wanted to go through jobs and get a job. And I'm going to do that this summer.". She enthusiastically listed all the skills she gained through GED training:

Well, I've worked on my GED ever since I got here and I took all my GED tests and I need to take my math test and then I'll have my GED. And teacher Linda, she's great. She's a teacher. She's taught me how. When I came here I couldn't spell anything. I can spell now and I can do math. I didn't understand math at all. They thought I had a learning disability, but Linda just found a way to show it to me and I get it now. I can do geometry and stuff.

Regina expressed her determination to get a high school diploma. She said, "I won't settle for anything less than a high school diploma. And it's been working out pretty good." She continued, "I'm doing pretty good you know, just right before the last of day of class I completed a subject."

Cindy, who has endured domestic violence in her marriage, said when she first started Even Start she wanted to get her GED. She said:

I'm going to take my last test tonight and I've passed all the other tests like on the first time with high scores and things like that. Things I didn't think I was ever gonna able to get when I was in, you know.

She also wants to learn computer skills and do paid work experience. She said 'That's what I'm doing starting June 25th, is doing computer classes at Greentree and then doing the paid work experience in the afternoon.'

Similar to Hispanic participants, Even Start participation not only helped non-Hispanic participants improve their academic skills and learn job skills, it also helped them set career goals and sometimes redefine their career goals.

Laura, talking about the support Even Start has provided her, said:

I got my food handler's permit, so it's easier to look for work. But I still didn't find a job. Applied at a lot of places though. But I think they (Even Start staff) were pretty helpful about it though.

Heidi, who had been participating in Even Start for around a year said:

Before (Even Start) I just wanted to go out and find a job. I didn't really know what I wanted to do. Just whatever pays, just get a paycheck. But Tonya, she (said), 'all right, just don't go out there for a paycheck. Find a job that you want to get up and be happy to go to work'. So probably yeah, now, instead of just going out to try and find a job, getting a directive into what I want to do and just go towards that. Then I can just stay there and not have to go from job to job.

Personal Changes

Both Hispanic and non-Hispanic parents reported positive changes that they attributed to their participation in the Even Start program. The academic and job skill accomplishments and other life skills contributed to the participants' feelings of self-sufficiency and self-esteem. Another change reported by Hispanic as well as non-Hispanic parents is the ability to set goals for themselves and their family.

Hispanic Participants

Increased ability to communicate in English, ability to drive, and newly acquired job skills facilitated the acculturation process for Hispanic parents. Educational attainment and ability to drive a car encouraged Hispanic parents to do things on their own and gain independence. This resulted in increased self-esteem and self-confidence. Following are the responses from Hispanic parents when asked in what ways Even Start has helped them the most.

I'm really shy too, but now ----- I don't feel, I feel more secure. I can talk to different people, ----- I don't feel so, like I'm in my own little closet. I can talk better to other people.

I'm learning a lot and they've given me self-confidence, which I didn't have that before. And I feel more confident and more secure. And I used to be really shy and quiet, but they've helped me be around other people.

Since I started ES improved my self-esteem. Because now I feel value in me. A good value. Before when I go to the doctor, I always was thinking about who is coming to help me. Now I don't need it.

Increased self-esteem and independence encouraged Hispanic participants set goals for themselves and their family. The resources and support provided by the Even Start program and its' staff helped parents not only achieve their short-term goals, but establish long-term goals for the well-being of the entire family. Consuelo reported:

I have goals now and that if I hadn't come to school I might not have set for myself. I have goals to get my GED, to come to class until I learn English, later on get a home. These are goals that can be reached eventually. I don't want to set impossible goals that I can't reach. I want to set reachable goals and then go on to the next one.

And Lupita said:

It's more clear now. It's more clear. Because I know I have, I feel more, I can make, I feel close. My goals gonna be, I don't know, I gonna be in different ways, I can get more better job, I can call my caseworker. Maybe not [in the] short time, but I, now I have dream get some help for my family.

Rosario talked about how Even Start helped her redefine her goals and have a better life for herself and her family.

I changed my mind about the future because before I thought that it was very good to have just one job, and have my children have a house and that's it. But now I think that is not enough. All the time there are a lot of things that we can get, or we can like a better job, a better relation with the other, education for my children, and I think beyond than one point.

Non-Hispanic Participants

Similar to their Hispanic counterparts, non-Hispanic parents also reported increased self-esteem and self-confidence due to Even Start participation. Poverty, unemployment, welfare dependency, and abusive relationships led to depression and low self-esteem among non-Hispanic mothers. Increased academic skills and job skills contributed to participants' feelings of self-sufficiency. As a result, similar to Hispanic parents, non-Hispanic parents also reported key changes in their psychosocial development, which were illustrated in the following comments:

When I first came here I would cry every second. Everything I said, I would cry. My self-esteem was just so low and I think now that I don't care what people think, they can laugh, I'm helping myself.

Motivation, confidence, esteem, I just feel a lot better about myself and the way I go about doing things personally, myself.

Well my confidence and my esteem have got really, really high. It's a lot better than it used to be. I used to have my head down all the time. Now it's up. I've, I learned to put my daughter in front of everybody else. I've put my foot down, I stand up for myself now, a lot more than I used to. I tell people what's on my mind, they don't like it, and then there's the door.

Non-Hispanic parents also reported that Even Start helped them set goals and offered them help in attaining their goals and aspirations. Regina explained the changes she experienced after participation in the Even Start program and how much Even Start has influenced her perspective towards life.

Just total development, everything. I'm just, in general I am just a better person. I have more goals. They basically taught me of goals, you know, before I was like, a piece of paper, tear it in half, yaaah I did it, you know. And now I have goals. How am I going to tear this piece of paper in half. Which way is half. Do I want it sideways or, and it's

made me a more patient, it's just, it's done a lot! You know, it's not just one specific thing that's done the most, it's done a lot.

Kristina described how stressful life was before Even Start and how Even Start gives her a sense of direction and purpose.

I've thought about going to LCC and taking classes. It just kind of opened the door to life, instead of thinking you're at home all the time and realizing, you come here and you realize, well, I can do something later. They're really positive people, they're really positive. The teacher especially, she's like never negative, she's always positive. And I like that. It like helps me think, like brings me up, you know what I mean. From being down, thinking, oh I'm so young, I have three kids, I don't have any friends, and I never get out of the house. I never go anywhere, I'm always cleaning up and yelling at my kids, and you know, I come here and it makes you feel a lot better. Well maybe I can go to school, maybe I can get a job, maybe, know what I mean?

Parenting Changes

Parent education is an important component of the Even Start program. Knowledge about children's growth and development and better parenting skills are offered to parents through Parenting and Child Time (PACT), parent support groups, guest lectures, and classroom discussions. Although, Even Start parents enter the program with the goal of achieving their GED and finding employment, often report that the parenting programs are most helpful. Interviews with Hispanic and non-Hispanic participants revealed that parents reaped considerable benefits from parenting classes, mainly, increased literacy interactions with their children, increased confidence in parenting, and appropriate disciplinary strategies. Both Hispanic and non-Hispanic parents reported that when they first entered the program they had limited knowledge and skills in involving their children in learning activities or using appropriate disciplinary strategies. This supports the argument by Lesar, Espinosa, and

Diaz (1997) that maternal education and socio-economic status have more influence on how mothers interact with their children than cultural differences. Although the cultural background and life history of Hispanic and non-Hispanic participants were different, economic status and education levels seemed to mainly determine the quality of parent-child interactions among both these groups. A study conducted by Laosa (1980) revealed that differences in teaching behaviors of Mexican-American and Anglo-American mothers disappeared when the education levels of mothers in both groups were the same. The following discussion illustrates the role of mother's education on parenting behavior.

Hispanic Participants

Living in an unfamiliar culture and inability to speak in English makes parenting a challenging experience for Hispanic participants. For instance, Hispanic parents inability to communicate in English restricts them from actively involving in their children's education. As a result, parents often feel incompetent and insecure about themselves. Also, Hispanic parents are more likely to feel uncertain about their parenting abilities, as their beliefs about effective parenting often conflict with the norms and expectations that exist in the American society. For example, Mexican mothers have been found to use more controlling teaching behaviors such as, commands, corrections and physical disapproval, which may conflict with the teaching behaviors of the American system (Lesar, Espinoza, & Diaz, 1997).

Interviews with Hispanic parents exemplify the uncertainties and fears experienced by parents. In addition, the interviews also illustrate the role of Even Start

in helping parents overcome their inadequacies and practice healthy and appropriate parenting practices.

The level of acculturation of a parent has a considerable influence on the parent-child interactions. Parents' lack of English fluency may lead to uncertainty and feelings of inadequacy in interacting with their children and involving in their education. For instance, Katrina was fearful of being an ineffective parent because of her inability to speak in English. Before she entered the Even Start program, she said, as a parent she was "More afraid." She added, "I think because of different language." She was unsure if she would be able to communicate with other people effectively. For instance, she said, "if they get sick, probably I can't communicate with the doctor."

Adriana expressed similar concerns. She said, "before I came to Even Start I felt that I was not a good mother. Because I didn't know how to handle things with my children."

Lack of English speaking ability and transition to the new society and culture may pose challenges to Hispanic parents in effectively fulfilling their parenting roles. Rafeala explained:

Before (Even Start) whenever he was crying, my baby was crying, I didn't know what to do. And now the teacher teaches me how, what to do, like she gave us, showed us a video on colicky babies and I didn't know what to do here in this country. Because I know in Mexico, but here it's very different.

Carmela's interview illustrated the conflicts and challenges immigrant families face in adjusting to the mainstream American culture and how it affects their parenting

abilities. She shared how the educational system in the United States differs from Mexico's and how she slowly is altering the expectations she has for her children.

Perhaps I give them (my kids) too much homework. I can't help it, because of the way it was in Mexico. If they don't do a lot of work then I feel that they haven't done enough. Sometimes, they say, "Mom, Please." Sometimes I ask that they do the whole book and I ask why not? And I tell myself that may be I am pushing them too hard. I shouldn't be so hard. My system is hard for them and the school system. I have to take that in to consideration.

Participating in the parenting classes instilled a sense of confidence and reassurance in Hispanic parents. Even Start program helped parents remove the language barrier by providing them English as a Second Language (ESL) educational program. During parenting classes parents were provided an opportunity to raise questions, express concerns and share each other's experiences. These enriching experiences removed intimidations faced by newly immigrant parents, promoted a sense of confidence, and enhanced effective parent-child interactions. The following excerpts, illustrate the increased confidence parents gained through Even Start participation.

(I have) more confidence. When my children would ask me something before, I would answer I don't know or something similar and now I take the time to explain.

I am more confident more clear in my ideas. My children are very happy with me and they ask for help and I am able to help.

Participation in ESL classes and home visits encouraged parents to be their children's teachers, which is the main objective of the Even Start Family Literacy Program. More than half of the Hispanic parents reported that literacy activities at home increased due to the parenting classes. Parents realized the need to read to their

children, learn about children's school, and involve children in literacy activities at home, and thus foster their children's educational success. In many families reading to children has become an important daily family activity. Jasmine explained the changes that she experienced after participating in the parenting classes.

I spend more time with him. I didn't make time for him before. I spent most of my time with cleaning etc. I learned at school that we need to spend time with our children even if it's ten minutes, but that we spend time with them.

She commented on how Even Start gave her the support and skills to get involved in enriching literacy activities with her child:

I never read to him before. I never showed him books. I thought he doesn't understand me, how am I going to show him? Now since we've also learned about the development of the child now I know about these things and I read to him. He's gotten some books as gifts. So that he doesn't listen to the same story, I tell him another story with the same pictures.

The following quotes further illustrate increased literacy use and involvement of Hispanic parents in their children's learning.

Before I participated in Even Start, I never read anything with my children. But now every night I go with them to bed and write something, and read something, and I spend more time with them than before the program.

Everything changed because there were a lot of things that we didn't know about parenting that now we know and we know things about how to educate our child and how to educate them, how to teach them. And really I think that's the most important part.

I never realized it was so important to talk to them read to them and show them games. I didn't think about that. I've seen families that wake up, eat, and say sit down because I'm going to do housework. When they cried, eat again. I didn't realize how important it was.

Increased opportunities to learn and use literacy encouraged Hispanic parents to offer creative learning experiences for their children at home and outside. Use of books and reading materials at home drew parents' attention to the use of other modes of literacy training with their kids. Parents learned how to use songs, language games, and outdoor activities as enriching learning experiences. For example, Selena uses songs as a mode of literacy training at home. She said, "Sing songs with her...breakfast is fun and I pay more attention ..." Similarly Damita explained:

Before I came to Even Start I didn't realize what I have to do with my children to keep their attention. For example, the kids, my kids are very active. I didn't know what I can do with that energy. But, now I can do different activities with them, like cut magazines and paste different things.

The strength and success of the Even Start program in promoting family literacy lies in the bilingual teaching environment it provides to immigrant families. Hispanic families are provided literacy materials in both English and Spanish, which not only helped retain their native language ability but also built their English language proficiency. Availability of literacy materials in English as well as Spanish provides a supportive and culturally sensitive environment and helps parents feel competent in involving in their children's education. Rosa explained how the bilingual environment promoted literacy in her family.

I am teaching everything in both English and Spanish, and he's (her son) understanding everything in both languages. Like numbers and colors. I ask him questions in both languages, and if we don't know the answer, we talk about it when we come to this class.

Another often mentioned change reported by Hispanic parents was changes in disciplinary practices. Seventeen of the 32 Hispanic parents interviewed reported that

prior to Even Start participation they had less patience and used punishment to discipline their children. For example, Norma said, "I didn't have patience and now I do." In the same way Juanita said:

Before I came, I punished them a lot because I get mad for some things, like if the older daughter tell something that she wants, doesn't like, I get mad."

With the help of parenting classes, Hispanic parents not only learned appropriate disciplinary strategies, but also improved their relationships with their children. One Hispanic mother exemplified this:

Before I came to the program I was very strict with my children. For example, if my daughter spilled her milk on the table, usually I'd hit the child, and I'd punish her. But now if something happens like that I talk with her about the problem, not just say please clean it up. Now it's different.

Another Hispanic parent explained how Even Start offered her support and knowledge that is needed to be a better parent.

Oh it was (my parenting) fatal! No really, because I'm a real screamer...Now that I am here I'm more patient, I've put more attention with the children, and even with the other child I help him with his homework. How I thank Even Start for changing me!

Non-Hispanic Participants

Interviews with non-Hispanic parents revealed that non-Hispanic participants, similar to their Hispanic counterparts, expressed inadequacies about being an effective parent prior to their Even Start participation. However, while language barriers and cultural differences led to the feelings of inadequacy for Hispanic parents, for Non-Hispanic parents on the other hand, teenage pregnancy, lack of parenting knowledge and experience caused feelings of ineffectiveness. Cheryl succinctly expressed how

she felt as a parent prior to Even Start, “uninformed. Kind of frustrated.” Janis, in particular, described how as a teenage mom she lacked knowledge and skills to be a good parent.

I was a bad parent. I got pregnant when I was 16, and I didn’t want to be a mom. I would make my mother-in-law take care of Jack every day for the first year and half of his life. And I would pay people one dollar to change his diaper. I hated to change diapers. Then one day Jack fell, and he ran to his grandma for comfort rather than his own mommy. That hurt my feelings really bad. His grandma said, “Janis, what do you expect? I’m the one who takes care of him.” Then I wanted to be a better mom. I decided to start up Even Start.

Similar to Hispanic participants, interviews with non-Hispanic participants also revealed that parents lacked knowledge and skills in involving children in literacy activities and using appropriate disciplinary strategies. Lack of awareness and resources limited non-Hispanic as well as Hispanic parents’ active involvement in their children’s education or practice healthy parenting behaviors. Extensive commonalities existed in parenting practices of Hispanic and non-Hispanic participants. For instance, both Hispanic as well as non-Hispanic participants reported that they engaged in limited literacy promoting activities at home prior to Even Start participation. Hence, it is of no surprise that non-Hispanic participants, similar to their Hispanic counterparts, reported engaging in literacy activities with their children as a vital parenting skill that they gained through Even Start participation.

Cindy explained how Even Start facilitated her to involve in enriching activities with her children. She said:

It’s been easier for me to get access to like books and things like that, where I can copy things and ‘cause I never really knew what kind of activities should I get for my kids. ‘Cause I never, I was around my

niece for a little while but she was still, she was two, when they moved to Idaho. So, it was like, my daughter's in the years right now that I've never been...I'm learning all this stuff that's new to me. So I've been taking it as it goes and her teacher taught me to, they give me ideas and I go buy activities and things like that..crayons, markers, movies.

Similar experiences were reported by other non-Hispanic mothers.

We read more together. I spend more time with, you know, socializing together.

She (my daughter) likes now that we have like sit down time. We read to them. Sometimes she likes when I read to her, stuff like. Before I only did it sometimes, now we do it pretty much every day.

We do a lot of different reading, and we make up like different board games, or like there's one where Tina has done before where you take a cereal box and cut it out and put it together as a puzzle. You know you'd never think of doing anything like that. Just different things that we try to make up ourselves. Instead of you know buying a game or, which you can't afford a lot of them, but you know, imagination wise.

Similar to Hispanic parents, non-Hispanic parents also noted considerable changes in the disciplinary strategies that they practiced. Regina reported how Even Start classes helped her change her abusive and aggressive behavior towards her child.

(Before Even Start) I would yell. I was very, I wasn't abusive, I wasn't like, I was aggressive basically. I wouldn't spank her or hit her and beat her, you know, I just, if she made me mad and she got into things that she knew she wasn't supposed to and I have already told her several times, I'd spank her and I'd send her to her room. And I was very forceful, you know, this is your mess, you made it, now clean it up. No questions asked, just do it. Because I was basically raising her like my parents raised me. And now I'm just...Now I'm more patient with them. I understand now what they are going through, their mind frames. You know, when they, when they, my oldest she's very sentimental. We had some baby birds for two days I took them to the vet and she got upset and she cried and she cried and she cried. And I, now before I would have been angry with her, shut up! You don't have any reason to cry, you just stop. And now, I curled up in the back seat with her and cried with her. You know, I didn't really cry with her, cause big deal. But I let her cry and I held her and I explained to her

and before, it was just, I was more aggressive. Just shut up and stop crying cause I don't want to hear it. Cause that's the way it was. And so now I think I'm a much better parent because of their classes.

Pam experienced similar changes:

Work our problems out without yelling at them. It's better to take time out and talk. So now I talk. Shut the radio off and TV and just talk and tell the person what you feel about it, what's wrong. If he had a bad day from school or somewhere or something wrong about herself or him. And I sit there and listen to them.

A few non-Hispanic parents also reported that parenting classes helped them have more structure at home. Laura explained:

There's more routine now that I've gone here, because of, she never did take naps and now she enjoys it because she gets to have lunch early. She has a set bed time now and stuff like that. Before she just went to bed whenever she wanted to.

Another mother discussed how Even Start lead to changes in their day-to-day activities.

We are more on a routine for one. Schedules, structured. Get up in the morning and you eat breakfast and then get ready and go to school, and then come here and after we get home you can have a little snack, watch TV and go to the park, and then dinner time, and then clean up time, and then go to bed. Story time comes in with bed time.

Changes in Children

Apart from changes among themselves, Even Start parents also talked about changes in their children they attributed to Even Start participation. Increase in their children's social skills, literacy skills, and behavioral changes were the most often reported changes by both Hispanic and non-Hispanic parents. Although, some of these changes may be due to the result of normal growth and development, parents believed that Even Start promoted their children's mental and emotional development and

provided better opportunities for them. Time and again many parents reported that Even Start promoted their children's social skills and taught them self-control and obedience. The only difference noted between Hispanic and non-Hispanic parents was that Hispanic participants most appreciated their children's ability to learn and communicate in English.

Hispanic Participants

For many Hispanic children a discontinuity exists between home and school due to language and cultural differences. School expectations are different from home environments and children's performance at school is often hindered due to the lack of connection between home and school culture. Although immigrant families place high value on education, they often fail to get support from the school system which inadequately addresses the cultural differences and bilingual issues. The Even Start program, through it's English as a Second Language component and Parent and Child Time Together, sends a message to the Hispanic families that the program values and respects individual family differences and cultural differences. Immigrant families feel comfortable in bringing their children to the program, thus both parents and children acquire language and literacy skills. As a result, children are better prepared when they attend formal school system.

Interviews with Hispanic parents revealed that they highly appreciated and were pleased with their children's ability to speak in English after Even Start participation. Consuelo, talked about her children:

They have learned English. I have friends that have children about the same age as mine and they don't know what my daughters know

because my daughters have been coming to this program since they were little. I once told my husband that if I didn't learn English it would be okay so long as my daughters learn.

Similar changes were reported by Pilar, who has a year and a half old daughter.

My child has learned some things in English. Things she didn't say before. Before she spoke only Spanish and now she's speaking only in English.

Apart from English speaking skills, Hispanic parents were pleased with their children's improved academic skills such as ability to draw, read books, paint etc.

Juanita shared:

This program makes them more organized. Now she can draw and painting, and before she could not do that...and now she can sing in Spanish and English. All day she sings.

Ramona, who has two children under the age of eight, answered similarly:

Even Start helped my children a lot. People who have children at home, because they don't qualify to get this kind of program, like my nephews and nieces, they don't have the same ability that my son has. For example, my son, my youngest son, can manipulate and handle the scissors...and he has a lot of ability. My son knows everything about the sounds, animal sounds, and pictures. What is what.

The Early Childhood Education component of the Even Start program also provided an opportunity to children to interact with other kids and improve their social skills. Even Start set the stage for these children to establish positive social relationships with other children. Jasmine, talked about her son.

He's learned many things. He's become more social. Before he wouldn't let anyone hold him or if someone spoke to him he would cry. But, not now.

Adriana noted increased self-esteem and social skills in her child.

He's got more self-esteem. It looks like it. He's happier and he's not so shut out and..and before he used to..and wouldn't bother with his little friends or anything. And now it's like he's got all these friends and he's blabbing off and on. The teachers have really pushed him to be more open. I think they helped him out a lot.

Increased self-control, respect, and obedience were few other important changes reported by some Hispanic parents. Following are some quotes from Hispanic interviews:

Well! The main thing I like about Even Start is they teach my kid how to behave good in society.

In the school they teach them to respect and follow rules.

Well! You know, before Even Start my daughter was one of those, that, how do you say it? Was always running around and always crying and she was very very active and unquiet and restless and now she's attentive to tasks. When I sit down to read her a book, she's not, she's attentive. She's quieter.

Non-Hispanic Participants

Interviews with non-Hispanic parents revealed similar changes among their children like the children of Hispanic parents experienced. Even Start program helped non-Hispanic children also prepare well to school by improving their academic and social skills.

Kristina was asked whether participation in the Even Start program led to any changes in her children. She commented on the academic skills her child has gained:

Coloring, letters...that's a big thing. My four year old, she's learning her letters. Songs like alphabet song and you know, kid songs, Ole Macdonald had a farm, and stuff like that...

Janis noted that her son, who is in kindergarten, loves school. "Robert can count to 10, and he knows his colors."

The positive changes in children's social abilities and confidence were however, most often noted in non-Hispanic children. Regina has two daughters, a five-year old and a two-year old. She commented:

It's (Even Start) really actually helped my youngest with development. She's very shy, very quiet, and being around all the other kids now, she can, you know, when we go to a park she doesn't have to argue with the other kids. You know, I want to go on the slide first, she just stands back and lets everybody go down first and then she'll take her turn. And my oldest, she's still shy. But she has an easier time making friends. Now she'll walk up and just start talking to them, you know. When we're at McDonald's and you know, there's other kids there she'll just start talking to them rather than just come back over and sit down. So, I think it has a lot to do with being around the other kids in the class.

And Kristina said:

I see them improving a lot. They're learning how to talk to other kids, to share, to get into group activities with other kids.

Non-Hispanic parents also noted the behavioral changes in their children. Similar to Hispanic parents, they noted increased obedience and self-control in their children.

To be able to be with kids and teach her to use her words. Like if something happens, like if she gets hit, instead of her hitting somebody, to have her use her words and explain what she wants instead of crying or yelling. That's one big thing that they've helped her with.

Charlie, has kind of an anger. He's kind of mad and he kind of does some not so nice things, like throwing things and yelling at people. And whenever they say it happens, they calmly tell them this is something, we don't do this here. And again, however many times, and however many ways, till he understands we don't do this here. Nicely, not

don't say those, don't do this, don't do that. It's really helped him calm down and say okay.

Relationship Changes

Relationship changes are seldom looked into in the evaluations of family literacy programs. However, interviews with Hispanic and non-Hispanic participants presented evidence suggesting that increased literacy skills and improved independence and self-esteem among the participants had powerful and enduring effect on the relationships participants' have with other family members and friends. The following discussion highlights the relationship changes Hispanic and non-Hispanic participants experienced and the similarities and differences between these two groups.

Hispanic Participants

Hispanic immigrants often leave their friends and family behind and migrate to the United States in search of better economic opportunities. Immigrant adjustment, low economic status, and acculturation stresses may have a destabilizing effect on the relationships of immigrant families. Inability to communicate in English and isolation from family and ethnic community often may lead to feelings of depression. This may in turn have an effect on the marital and family relationships. One Hispanic mother succinctly described the challenges immigrant Hispanic families endure during their transition to a new society and culture:

What depressed me more was not having family around, the language, the climate, the culture. It was a ball of fire. I felt like a volcano that was going to blow up. I thought why did I come here? Should I return? What should I do?

Participating in the Even Start classes and interaction with other parents helped Hispanic parents share their experiences, build a social network, and give and share support. Even Start program helped families reduce their levels of stress by providing them life skills and a supportive environment. One participant, whose entire family lived in Mexico, said that Even Start helped her change her social life. She said, "I opted for coming out ahead. And if I don't knock on doors, no one is going to open them and if I don't speak no one is going to listen. And no one is going to know what's wrong or what my needs are."

Through Event Start participants established new friendships and built a powerful support network. Rosario established new friendships after participating in the Even Start program. She said:

The program helped me because I now have friends here. And I have a good relationship here with other people and I, now I realize that it is important to have good relation with others. Because, before I lived alone and I lived just by myself, nobody else, just me. And now, I have good relationship with other people.

Similarly, Elsa said:

Now I have more friends, because before I came I knew few people, but now I have more friends.

The most noteworthy change reported by Hispanic participants is the quality of their relationship with their spouse. Seventeen of the 32 Hispanic participants interviewed indicated that their relationship with their spouse changed for the better. In particular, participants' increased ability to communicate in English and better life skills reduced the stresses and strains in the family. Also, participants improved their communication skills, learned better and productive ways of handling conflict, which

fostered better relationship with their partner. The following excerpts illustrate this scenario.

He feels more comfortable with me because I can speak English and when somebody calls by phone, I can answer the phone. I can say he's not, or who is calling, stuff like that. I can take messages for him. All the time I was very dependent on him. But now I'm more independent.

Before, I think when we got married, I always depended on him. If I wanted to go to the clinic he would have to take me or if I wanted to buy a dress he would have to pay for it because I didn't know English. I think it has changed a lot. Now I go to the market myself. I buy what I want. I drive wherever I want to go. I can pay bills. My husband feels better because I don't have to depend on him.

Even Start participation provides participants an opportunity to interact with other people and learn appropriate and effective communication skills. These skills are transmitted into home environment and thus positive relationships are established between parents and children or between husband and wife. Elsa described how Even Start helped her establish a better relationship with her husband.

When I'm here in Even Start, I changed my behavior. Before I came I was all the time fighting with my husband. Because I was all the time yelling, yelling at the children, yelling at him, and yelling at everybody. But now our relation has changed. Because I'm now under control and he's fine with that. He's very happy.

Jasmine explained how she learned better communication strategies.

We don't get as angry as before. Now when I get angry I don't tell him anything. I wait until I am calm and then I talk to him calmly about what is bothering me. This way the problem won't get bigger. Before I wanted for him to know that I was angry so he would notice me. After a while he would ignore me because I was angry so often.

Non-Hispanic Participants

For non-Hispanic participants the issue was not so much about building social network, but mostly it centered on recreating a better and more effective social network. The troublesome past of many non-Hispanic participants had negative influences on their relationships with friends and family. While some participants were unable to trust anyone and make friends, others made wrong decisions and got involved in negative and harmful relationships. However, Even Start helped them break down some of their insecurities and open up to others. Pat was a teenage mother who had trouble trusting people and making friends. She explained:

When I started here I didn't trust anybody and I didn't like anybody. I mean, I was nice, I wasn't rude to anybody, but I didn't like anybody and I actually developed friendships here and my, I learned how to talk to people more efficiently so that they hear what I'm saying and not just the anger that I'm feeling.

For few other participants, too much trust and reliance on friends overshadowed their ability to judge true friendships. Even Start helped these parents establish better relationships, as Rachel demonstrated:

I realized who my true friends are. I got rid of all my really bad friends. And my two friends, we've gotten a lot closer and my daughter loves my friends. If I don't like them I don't hang out with them.

Cheryl expressed similar sentiments:

I'm a little more open eyed. In which friends I should keep, which friends I should have.

The increased self-esteem and confidence helped non-Hispanic participants in severing the damaging influences of their past life and redefine their priorities. The following two quotes illustrate how two mothers learned to be assertive and set

boundaries with regard to their relationships with other people. When asked how Even Start has helped them, they replied:

Most important way is because I was so passive/aggressive before. If, I just went along with the flow. People would come and stay at my house, I didn't know how to tell them to leave. And will you take me here, do this, do that for me, and I could never tell them no. But I can now! No! Leave!

Yeah, because I learned how to tell people, I mean, it was like I was always giving to my friends and doing for my friends. They helped me say, I'd rather be with me and my kids and only my kids. I need to worry about them and I need to worry about me. And I'm sorry, that you guys are my friends and that you guys are hurting...but this is my family and this is, we're all we got and we have to take care of each other. I can't, so as far as that, yeah.

Although not so much as Hispanic participants, a few of the Non-Hispanic parents also reported increased communication and better relationship with their partners. Two women explained the changes they experienced:

I talk to him more, I'm more sensitive, or I'm trying to be more sensitive about his feelings. We just open up more. Because I used to feel like I couldn't talk to him. It wasn't that I was hiding things, but I just felt like I couldn't talk to him. I didn't feel comfortable. And even though I've been with this man for seven years, I just never felt comfortable. He's always intimidated me to where I felt if I talked to him about something that bothered me, or something I wanted to do and he didn't like it, it would just start a big argument and start a big fight. A big fiasco! But now I open up more, I tell him how I'm feeling, I tell him what's going on and it's a lot better.

We used to argue all the time. I had no patience with anybody. And we don't argue any more. We argue may be once in three months...I needed to get my anger out, I had a lot of issues and going to Even Start I was able to talk to...anybody I could talk to, that would allow me to talk...Now I can listen instead of yell. ..we get along a lot, a lot better.

Summary

Qualitative interviews with Hispanic and non-Hispanic Even Start participants indicate that although extensive commonalities exist between these two groups there were some subtle differences that can be linked to the diverse cultural background and experiences of these participants. Membership in a specific ethnic group and cultural differences played an important role in their prior educational level and academic success, their reasons for participation in the Even Start program, and the benefits they reaped out of it.

All the participants interviewed, Hispanic as well as non-Hispanic, indicated poverty as the main determinant factor for educational failure when they were children. The experiences and implications of poverty were, however, varied for both the groups. When asked about reasons and goals for Even Start participation Hispanic and non-Hispanic participants indicated a need to be self-sufficient and independent, For Hispanic participants however, achieving self-sufficiency meant being able to effectively acculturate into the mainstream American culture. For non-Hispanic participants, self-sufficiency meant being able to sever the influences of past, often disturbed lives, and gain academic and job skills.

The most important changes reported by Hispanic and non-Hispanic participants due to their participation in the Even Start program were changes in literacy and life skills, personal changes such as increased self-esteem and self-confidence, changes in parenting behaviors, changes in their kids, and relationship changes with friends and family. Changes reported by Hispanic participants illustrated

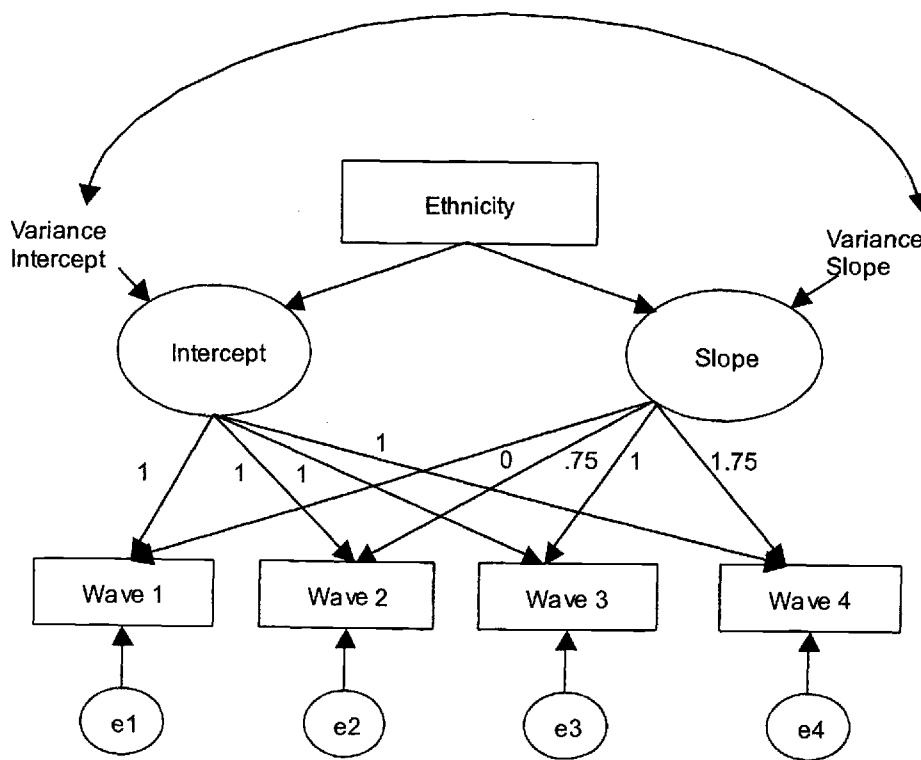
the cultural adaptations immigrant families go through and demonstrated the role of Even Start in facilitating smooth and successful transition of Hispanic families into the American culture.

CHAPTER 5

Quantitative Results

This chapter presents the results of the latent growth curve model used to measure the changes experienced by Hispanic and non-Hispanic participants due to Even Start participation and the differences, if any, between these two groups in the amount of change they experienced. In order to determine the linear growth curves two parameters need to be estimated, the intercept and the slope. The intercept is referred as the value at the start of the process. It reflects participants' scores on the outcome at wave one. Hence, the intercept is often referred as the "initial level" (Duncan, Duncan, Strycker, Li & Alpert, 1999). The slope indicates the amount of change from one measurement time point to the other. The slope is the average or expected rate of growth over time. The intercept and the slope are also referred as latent or unobserved variables. Measurements at wave 1, wave 2, wave 3 and wave 4 are referred as observed variables. Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual linear growth curve model with ethnicity as an explanatory factor. For the purposes of this analysis ethnicity is coded as 0 for Hispanic participants and 1 for non-Hispanic participants. The model estimates amount of change over time and the effect of ethnicity on the rate of change over time.

Figure1. Conceptual Linear Growth Curve Model.



In Figure 1, the observed variables, measured at four time points, are indicated as wave 1, wave 2, wave 3, and wave 4. This model will be estimated for each of the five measures. At the bottom of the figure are the error terms which indicate the measurement error at each point of measurement. The latent variables intercept and slope are illustrated where intercept represents the initial level and slope represents change over time. The factor loadings for the intercepts are all constrained to 1 and the factor loadings for the slope constructs are constrained to 0, .75, 1, and 1.75. These factor loadings indicate the time intervals between each measurement. Factor loading 0 indicates the first measurement point, which is in fall for the sample selected for the

purpose of this study. Participants were again measured in spring, which is 9 months after the first measurement. Hence, the factor loading is set to .75. Three months later participants were measured again and hence the factor loading is set to 1. The final measurement was done nine months later and the factor loading is set to 1.75. It is important to note that participants in this study may or may not have been measured at exactly equal time intervals. Slight variations may exist in terms of when participants were measured, but for most participants measurement intervals were at months 0, 9, 12, and 21. The factor loadings indicated above give the slope trajectory a linear form. This model was drawn for each of the five measurement variables in AMOS graphics version and tested for model fit and to estimate change over time and differences in changes between Hispanic and non-Hispanic participants.

Knowledge of child development

The first model tested whether parents' knowledge of child development increased over time and whether there are any differences between Hispanic and non-Hispanic participants in their rate of change in knowledge of child development. Figure 2 graphically illustrates the model. The results yielded a significant chi-square, $\chi^2 (7, N = 96) = 15.466, p < .05$. However, other measures of goodness of fit indicate that the fit was adequate. The Comparative Fit Index (CFI) = .994 and Normed Fit Index (NFI) = .990 are acceptable. As Table 2 indicates, the initial level of knowledge of child development is 37.87 (C. R. = 69.362; $p < .001$) and it increases at a rate of 1.847 units per year (C.R. = 5.559; $p < .001$). Ethnicity is important for the intercept,

but not for the slope. Non-Hispanic participants indicated higher knowledge of child development when they entered the program ($B = 2.723$; C. R. = 2.332; $p < .05$).

Although Non-Hispanics had a significantly higher initial level of knowledge, ethnicity did not have a significant effect on the rate of change. ($B = .164$; C. R. = .231; ns). Thus, Non-Hispanics did not make significantly higher gains in the knowledge of child development than the Hispanic population over time.

Figure 2. Predictors of Change in Parents' Knowledge of Child Development.

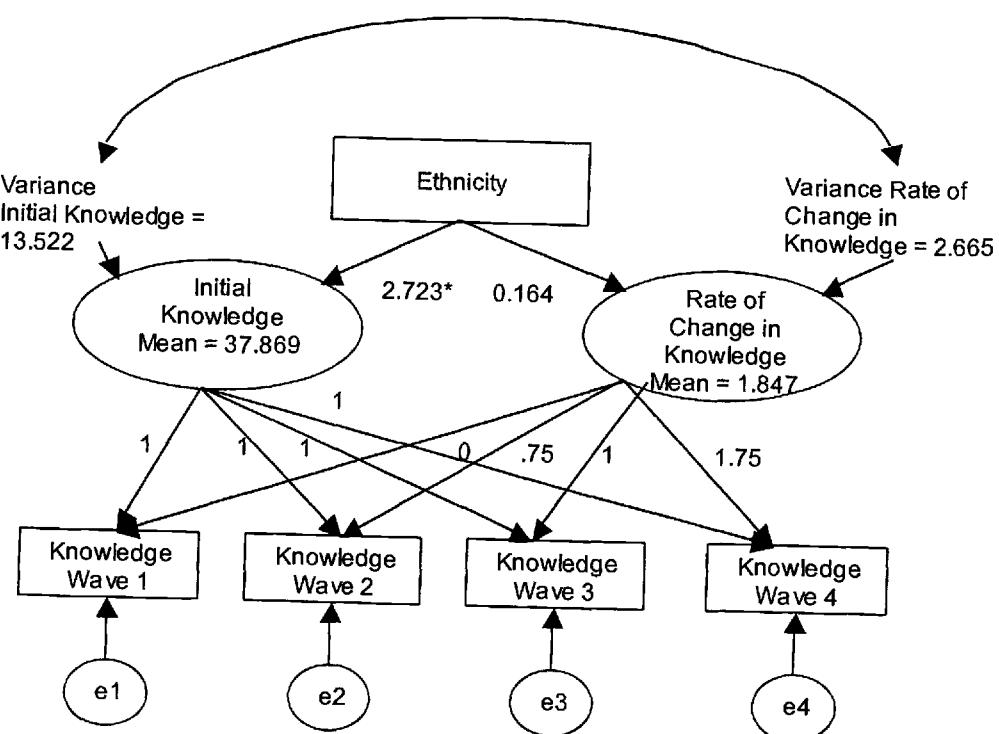


Table 2. Parameter Estimates for the Knowledge of Child Development (Standard Errors in Parenthesis; N = 96).

Parameter Estimate	Unstandardized	C. R
	Coefficient	
Initial knowledge	37.869 (0.55)	69.362
Rate of change in knowledge	1.847 (0.33)	5.559
Ethnicity→Initial knowledge	2.723 (1.17)	2.332
Ethnicity→Rate of change in knowledge	.164 (0.71)	0.231
Variance in initial knowledge	13.522 (3.73)	3.623
Variance in rate of change in knowledge	2.665 (1.98)	1.349
Covariance in initial knowledge and change in knowledge	-4.650 (2.24)	-2.074
Error variance in knowledge wave 1	11.799 (3.55)	3.323
Error variance in knowledge wave 2	9.857 (1.95)	5.054
Error variance in knowledge wave 3	10.979 (3.35)	3.380
Error variance in knowledge wave 4	6.105 (2.70)	2.263

Note. $\chi^2 (7) = 15.466$, $p < .05$; CFI = .994; NFI = .990.

Parenting Confidence and Support

The parenting confidence and support measure was administered to assess the change in levels of confidence and support among Even Start participants. The model was tested to assess the change as well as verify the influence of ethnicity on rate of change. Figure 3 graphically illustrates the model and Table 3 presents the estimates

of the model. Model fitting indices produced a χ^2 (7, N = 95) = 11.868, p > .05, indicating a good fit. Comparative fit indices also indicate that the results provided a good fit. The Comparative Fit Index (CFI) = .995 and Normed Fit Index (NFI) = .989 are acceptable. As Table 3 indicates, the initial level for parenting confidence is 50.745 (C.R. = 33.444; p < .001). This is the predicted initial level of parenting confidence and support on the 0 – 6 point scale described earlier. The rate of change represents the linear change in the parenting confidence and support over time. The rate of change is 4.055 (C.R. = 4.465; p < .01), indicating that the parenting confidence and support increased 4.055 units per year.

Ethnicity however, is not found to have a significant influence on the level of parenting confidence at the initial level or at the slope. Non-Hispanic participants had slightly lower confidence and support compared to the Hispanic population initially (B = -0.374; C.R. = -0.116; ns), but this difference is not significant. No significant differences in rate of change in parenting confidence are observed over time (B = 2.379; C.R. = 1.232; ns).

Figure 3. Predictors of Change in Parenting Confidence and Support.

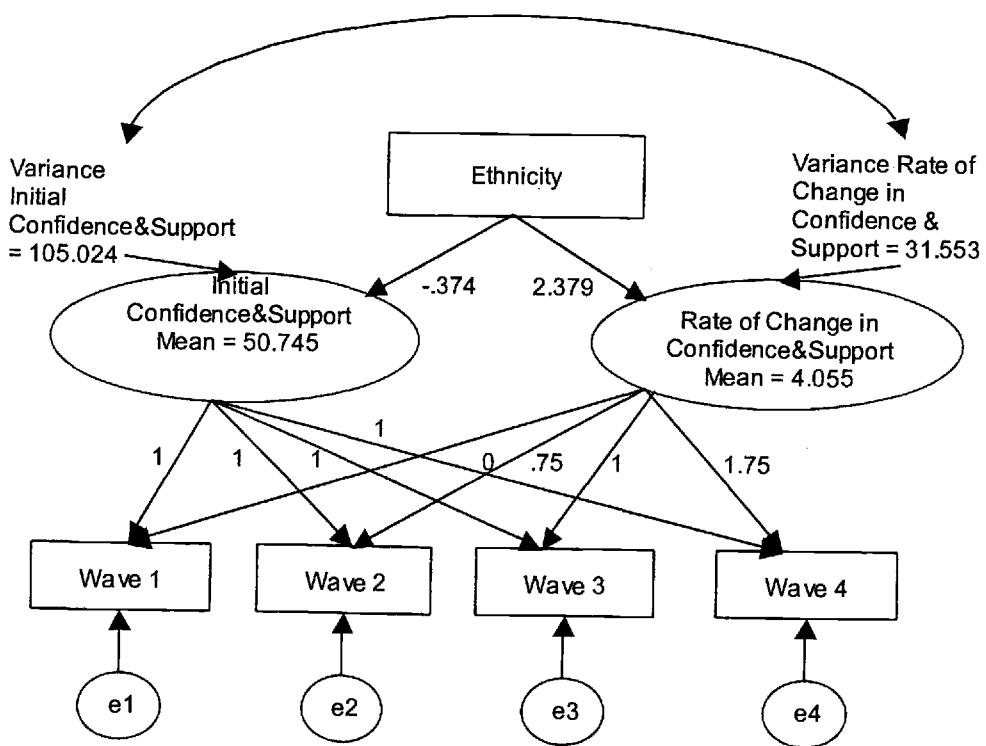


Table 3. Parameter Estimates for Parenting Confidence and Support (Standard Errors in Parenthesis; N = 95).

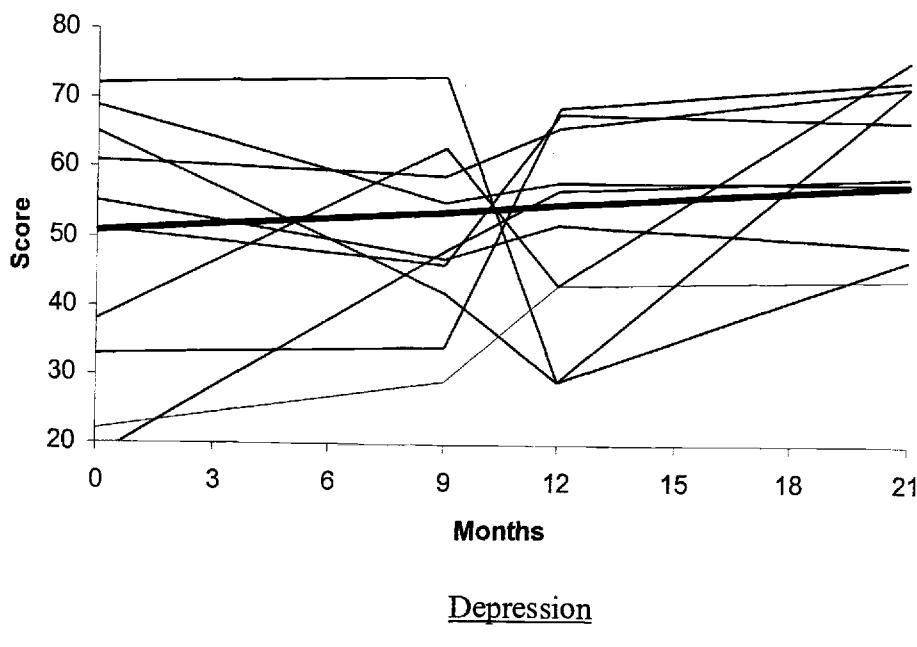
Parameter Estimate	Unstandardized	C. R.
	Coefficient	
Initial confidence & support	50.745 (1.52)	33.444
Rate of change in confidence and support	4.055 (0.91)	4.465
Ethnicity→Initial confidence and support	-0.374 (3.23)	-0.116
Ethnicity→Rate of change in confidence and support	2.379 (1.93)	1.232
Variance in initial confidence and support	105.024 (28.30)	3.711
Variance in rate of change in confidence and support	31.553 (14.73)	2.143
Covariance in initial confidence and support and rate of change in confidence and support	-36.244 (16.11)	-2.249
Error variance in confidence and support wave 1	88.013 (26.76)	3.289
Error variance in confidence and support wave 2	74.403 (14.64)	5.083
Error variance in confidence and support wave 3	146.568 (39.02)	3.756
Error variance in confidence and support wave 4	16.857 (20.61)	0.818

Note. $\chi^2 (7) = 11.868$, p > .05; CFI = .995; NFI = .989.

Figure 4 presents 10 randomly selected individual growth curves of change in parenting confidence and support. The straight bold line is the latent growth curve. The figure illustrates that there is substantial individual variability in parenting confidence and support over time. For some participants parenting confidence and

support steadily increased over time. Others started higher initially, but their level of confidence and support went down from wave 1 to wave 2, but finally went up again from wave 3. The heavy line in the figure represents the overall change for the entire set of participants. The line indicates a linear increase in parenting confidence and support over time for the entire sample.

Figure 4. Randomly selected Individual Growth Curves of Parenting Confidence and Support.



Depression

The third latent growth curve model tested the rate of change in depression over time and the effect of ethnicity on the rate of change. The model is illustrated in Figure 5. The results yielded a non-significant chi-square, $\chi^2 (7, N = 91) = 10.841, p > .05$. Other measures of goodness of fit also indicate that the fit was adequate. The Comparative Fit Index (CFI) = .992 and Normed Fit Index (NFI) = .977 are acceptable. Table 4 indicates that the initial level of depression among participants

was 17.186 (C. R. = 15.223; $p < .001$) and it decreases at a rate of -1.016 units (C.R. = -1.263; ns) per year. However, this decrease is not statistically significant.

Ethnicity is not found to have an impact either on the initial level of depression or the rate of change in depression. Non-Hispanic population indicated slightly lower levels of depression initially ($B = -0.280$; C.R. = -0.116; ns) and also indicated a slightly lower depression over time ($B = -1.301$; C.R. = -0.758; ns). These differences are however, not statistically significant.

Figure 5. Predictors of Change in Depression.

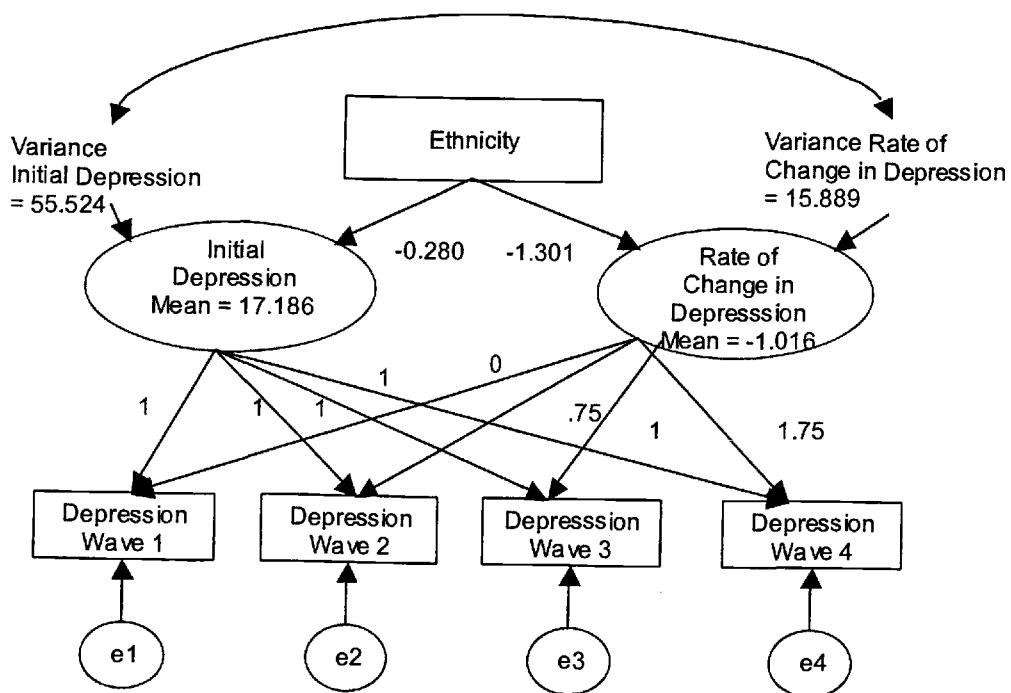


Table 4. Parameter Estimates for Depression (Standard Errors in Parenthesis; N = 91).

Parameter Estimate	Unstandardized	C. R.
	Coefficient	
Initial depression	17.186 (1.13)	15.223
Rate of change in depression	-1.016 (0.80)	-1.263
Ethnicity→Initial depression	-0.280 (2.41)	-0.116
Ethnicity→Rate of change in depression	-1.301 (1.72)	-0.758
Variance in initial depression	55.524 (16.29)	3.409
Variance in rate of change in depression	15.889 (11.06)	1.436
Covariance in initial depression and rate of change in depression	-13.739 (10.79)	-1.273
Error variance in depression wave 1	43.360 (15.17)	2.858
Error variance in depression wave 2	43.991 (9.22)	4.772
Error variance in depression wave 3	60.434 (17.51)	3.452
Error variance in depression wave 4	47.052 (18.12)	2.597

Note. $\chi^2 (7) = 10.841$, $p > .05$; CFI = .992; NFI = .977.

Self-Esteem

Similar to the previous models, model four was also analyzed under the assumption of linear growth to verify the influence of ethnicity on changes in self-esteem and the overall rate of change in self-esteem. The model is illustrated in Figure 6. The results yielded a non-significant chi-square indicating that the model fit the data well ($\chi^2 (7, N = 96) = 5.022$, $p > .05$). Other fit indices are also acceptable (CFI =

1.000 and NFI = 0.996). The root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) also indicates that the model fits exactly (RMSEA = 0.000). RMSEA represents the discrepancy per degree of freedom for the model (Baer & Schmitz, 2000). A RMSEA value of .05 or less suggests a close fit of the model.

The intercept means and slope means are shown in Table 5. The initial level of self-esteem was 32.269 (C.R. = 58.796; $p < .001$). The significance of the slope mean indicates that self-esteem increased .909 units per year among the participants ($B = .909$; C.R. = 2.399; $p < .05$) and this increase is significant. The effect of ethnicity on the initial level of self-esteem is not significant. Table 5 indicates that initially non-Hispanic participants had slightly lower self-esteem compared to their Hispanic counterparts. This difference however is not statistically significant ($B = -1.482$; C.R. = -1.263; ns). The effect of ethnicity on self-esteem at the slope level was close to achieving statistical significance. Results indicate that non-Hispanic participants made slightly higher gains in self-esteem than Hispanic participants over time ($B = 1.531$; C.R. = 1.890; ${}^{\dagger}p < .01$). This gain was close to significant, but not statistically significant.

Figure 6. Predictors of Change in Self-esteem.

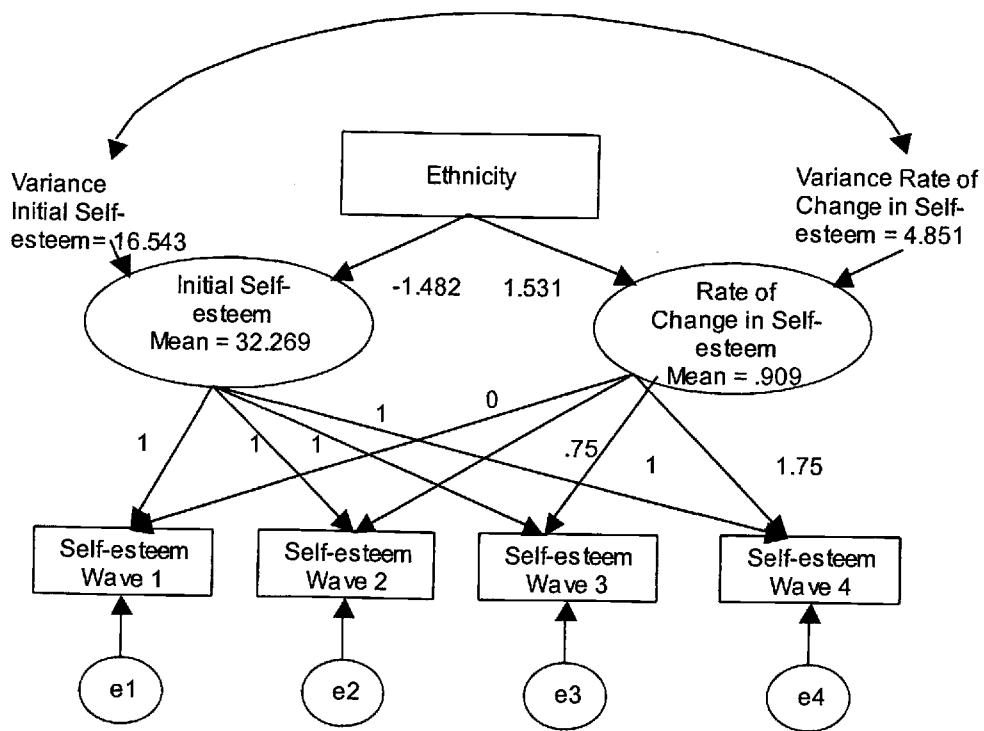


Table 5. Parameter Estimates for Self-esteem (Standard Errors in Parenthesis; N = 96).

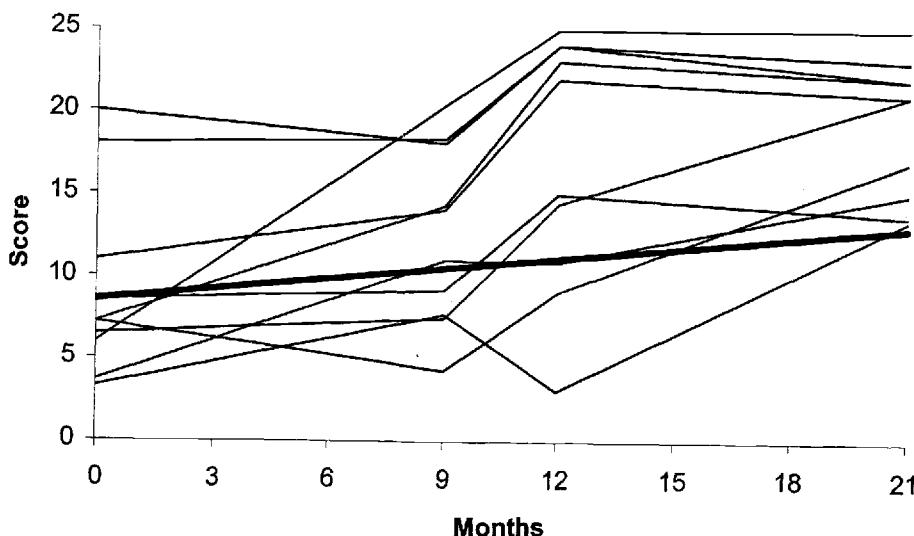
Parameter Estimate	Unstandardized	C. R.
	Coefficient	
Initial self-esteem	32.269 (0.55)	58.796
Rate of change in self-esteem	0.909 (0.38)	2.399
Ethnicity→Initial self-esteem	-1.482 (1.17)	-1.263
Ethnicity→Rate of change in self-esteem	1.531 (0.81)	1.890
Variance in initial self-esteem	16.543 (4.08)	4.058
Variance in rate of change in self-esteem	4.851 (2.46)	1.969
Covariance between initial self-esteem and rate of change in self-esteem	-6.201 (2.64)	-2.349
Error variance in self-esteem wave 1	6.792 (3.40)	2.000
Error variance in self-esteem wave 2	11.508 (2.23)	5.172
Error variance in self-esteem wave 3	18.389 (5.09)	3.616
Error variance in self-esteem wave 4	11.038 (4.00)	2.758

Note. $\chi^2 (7) = 5.022$, $p > .05$; CFI = 1.000; NFI = .996; RMSEA = 0.000.

Life Skills

Figure 7 indicates slight individual variability in the change of life skills over time. In general, an upward trend can be noticed, indicating increased gain in life skills over time. The heavy line in the figure represents the overall change for all the participants. The rate of change can be described as a linear increase.

Figure 7. Randomly Selected Individual Growth Curves of Life Skills.



The results of the latent growth curve analysis yielded a significant chi-square value, $\chi^2 (7, N = 94) = 12.846$, $p > .05$. Other fit indices also indicate that the model fit is acceptable ($CFI = 0.988$ and $NFI = 0.975$). The next step in the analysis was to test the rate of change in life skills. Figure 8 illustrates the model. The initial score on life skills was 8.583 (C.R. = 13.211; $p < .001$). The rate of change in life skills is 2.477 (C.R. = 4.599; $p < .05$). In other words, participants gained life skills at a rate of 2.477 units each year.

Figure 8. Predictors of Change in Life Skills.

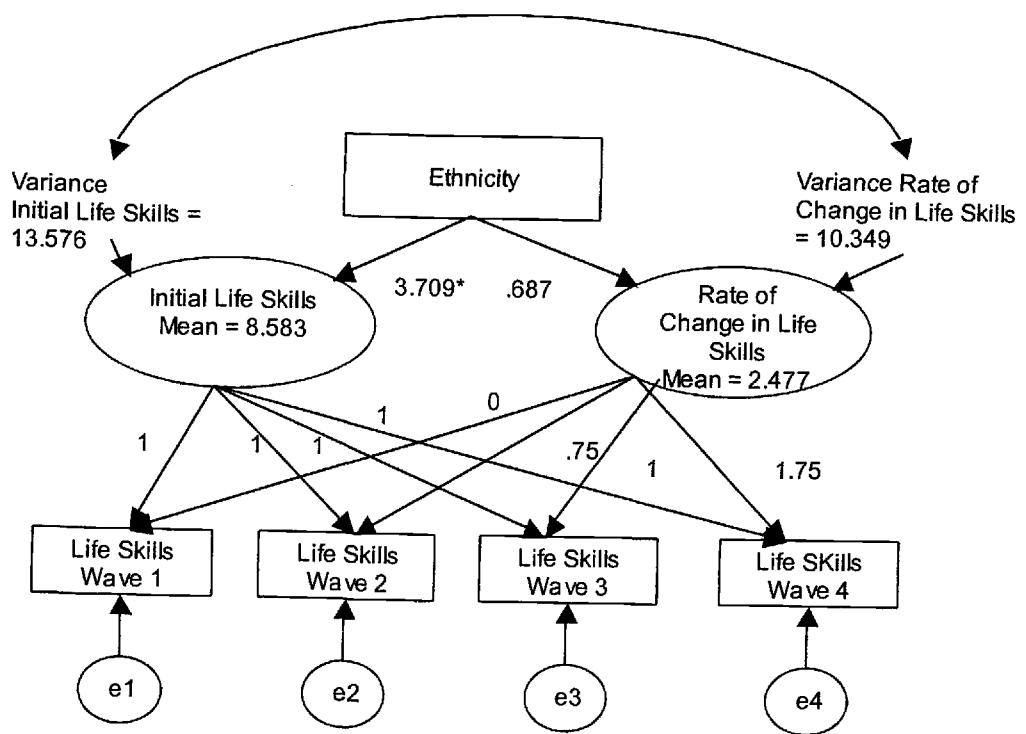


Table 6. Parameter Estimates for Life Skills (Standard Errors in Parenthesis; N = 94).

Parameter Estimate	Unstandardized	C. R.
	Coefficient	
Initial life skills	8.583 (0.65)	13.211
Rate of change in life skills	2.477 (0.54)	4.599
Ethnicity→Initial life skills	3.709 (1.41)	2.633
Ethnicity→Rate of change in life skills	0.687 (1.17)	0.588
Variance in initial life skills	13.576 (6.14)	2.211
Variance in rate of change in life skills	10.349 (4.84)	2.137
Covariance in initial life skills and rate of change in life skills	-4.727 (4.27)	-1.107
Error variance in life skills wave 1	22.135 (6.65)	3.329
Error variance in life skills wave 2	25.305 (4.61)	5.489
Error variance in life skills wave 3	31.062 (8.82)	3.520
Error variance in life skills wave 4	12.335 (7.81)	1.580

Note. $\chi^2 (7) = 15.531$, $p < .05$; CFI = .983; NFI = .970.

As Table 6 indicates, ethnicity had significant effects on life skills at the initial level. Non-Hispanic participants had greater life skills than Hispanic population at the beginning of the program ($B = 3.709$; C.R. = 2.633; $p < .05$). However, ethnicity did not seem to have an effect on the rate of change in life skills over time. Non-Hispanic participants indicate a slightly higher gain in life skills, but this gain is not statistically significant ($B = 0.687$; C. R. = 0.588; ns).

Summary

Results of the latent growth curve analysis indicated that for all the outcomes, except for depression, positive growth trajectories were found. Table 7 summarizes the results of the quantitative analysis. Overall, participants indicated significant increase in knowledge of child development, parenting confidence and support, self-esteem, and life skills. Ethnicity was related to initial levels of knowledge of child development and life skills. Statistically significant differences were found in the overall initial levels of knowledge of child development, with non-Hispanic participants indicating significantly higher knowledge of child development compared to their Hispanic counterparts. Ethnicity, however, was not related to growth trajectory for knowledge of child development. With regard to the parenting confidence and support measure, overall the program led to increased confidence and support in parenting among participants. The program did not lead to different rates of change in knowledge and support over time for Hispanic and non-Hispanic participants.

Interestingly, the program did not have an effect on the depression levels of the participants. Overall, participants indicated a slight decrease in depression levels, but this decrease was not statistically significant. No significant differences between Hispanic and non-Hispanic participants were observed in their initial levels of depression or rate of change in depression.

Self-esteem also did not yield significant effects of ethnicity on initial levels or rate of change. Non-Hispanic population did not make significantly higher gains in self-esteem over time than their Hispanic counterparts. Finally, no significant

differences in rates of change in life skills were observed. Non-Hispanic participants had more life skills at the beginning of the program, but they did not make significantly higher gains in life skills after being in the program.

Table 7. Summary of Statistical Results.

Outcome Variable	Trajectory	Effect of Ethnicity on	
		Initial level	Trajectory
Knowledge of child development	*	*	ns
Parenting confidence and support	*	ns	ns
Depression	ns	ns	ns
Self-esteem	*	ns	ns
Life skills	*	*	ns

Note. * = statistically significant.

CHAPTER 6

Discussion and Conclusion

The results of this study indicate that cultural patterns and ethnic differences between Hispanic and non-Hispanic participants are often subtle and difficult to discern. Nevertheless, consideration of these subtle yet vital cultural commonalities and differences among participants is essential in assuring effective program implementation. In this research study, the voices of the Hispanic and non-Hispanic participants are heard as they revealed their life experiences and reported the skills and knowledge they acquired through Even Start participation. The current chapter summarizes the findings of the research study by integrating the quantitative and qualitative results and explains the similarities and differences between Hispanic and non-Hispanic participants using a life course perspective. This chapter also highlights the limitations of the study and offers implications for future research and practice.

Research Question 1

Are there Differences in Educational Background and Life History between Hispanic and Non-Hispanic Participants?

The interview data indicated that poverty was identified as the main contributor for Hispanic and non-Hispanic participants' school dropout and academic failure. Both Hispanic and non-Hispanic participants interviewed in this study were raised in poverty stricken families. Poverty, however, had different consequences for Hispanic participants, who were raised in Mexico, compared to their American non-

Hispanic counterparts. Poverty restricted Hispanic participants' abilities to access schools or get quality education. On the other hand, poverty among non-Hispanic participants' parents often forced them to lead a nomadic life, thus creating instability in their lives.

Hispanic participants reported that they came from large families where resources had to be distributed among many children. Due to large family size, children were dropped out of school and sent to work. The emphasis Hispanic participants' parents placed on education depended on how much money they had. Although, their parents valued education, the importance of it was overshadowed by their need to earn money. Also, cultural beliefs played an important role in Hispanic participants' educational achievement. Education was considered less important for girls than boys. As a result, girls dropped out of school and shared the responsibilities of domestic work with their parents.

Nearly half of the non-Hispanic participants reported frequent moves from one place to another when they were children, as their parents held seasonal and unstable jobs. This created instability in their lives and eventually led to school dropout. Also, parents of non-Hispanic participants endured mental health problems, abuse, domestic problems and health problems. Living in poverty created stresses and strains in their families and resulted in drug and alcohol abuse and mental health problems. This dysfunctional environment in the family resulted in emotional problems among children, teenage pregnancy, and drug addiction, and these factors finally led to academic failure and school dropout among non-Hispanic participants.

These findings are illustrative of the influence of the social context on the individual's development (Bengtson & Allen, 1993). Interviews with Hispanic and non-Hispanic participants make clear that social context played an important role in their academic achievement. For instance, growing up in a developing country, Hispanic participants did not have access to schools. The existing social structure did not offer avenues for low-income Hispanic families to access and achieve quality education. Also, the social structure forced poor families to have too many children in order to enhance family income. Children were viewed as economic assets and as a result were dropped out of school. Also, the social structure in Mexico encouraged traditional gender roles where education was considered less important for women.

Interviews with non-Hispanic participants reflect the social structure of low-income families in America. Poor families face desperate economic and personal situations that they can seldom resolve. Parents face constant battle with drugs, alcoholism, abuse, and violence and often fail to provide good support to their children. Seccombe (2002) states that poverty undermines family well-being, as poor families are more likely to experience violence, hunger, poor health, stress, and abuse. Seccombe's research on low-income children revealed that poor children experience socioemotional and behavioral problems. The educational background and life history of non-Hispanic participants reflects the social structure that exists in America and how it influences individuals' development.

Research Question 2

Do reasons for participation in the program differ between Hispanic and non-Hispanic participants?

The common goal for Hispanic and non-Hispanic participants was to achieve independence and self-sufficiency through the Even Start program. For Hispanic participants, however, achieving independence involved acquiring the ability to effectively acculturate to American society. Participants expressed a strong desire to learn English, as they viewed learning English language as an opportunity to grow and evolve in the United States. They wanted to learn English so they could communicate with their children's teacher, or interact with the grocery store clerk or express their concerns effectively to the doctor. Similar results were found by Buttaro and King (2001) in their study on ESL learners. The interviews conducted on Hispanic ESL participants by Buttaro and King revealed a strong desire among Hispanic women to learn English. Participants in their study emphasized the need to learn English in order to utilize the opportunities that this country offers and also for personal growth. Another strong desire mentioned by Hispanic participants in the current study is to learn to drive. They believed learning to drive would provide them freedom to do things independently and also help build social networks. With time, the goals of Hispanic participants evolved and improved, thereby encouraging them to take GED classes or computer classes.

Similar to Hispanic participants non-Hispanic participants also placed emphasis in achieving self-sufficiency. However, achieving self-sufficiency for non-

Hispanic participants involved severing the damaging influences of their past and troubled lives. Their primary reason to participate in the Even Start program was to attain GED and thus create a better life for themselves and their families. These findings are consistent with those of Yaffe and Williams (1998) who examined why women chose to participate in an Even Start Family Literacy program operated in the Midwestern U.S. They found that the primary reason for parents in participating in the Even Start program was to get a GED. In the current study, non-Hispanic participants also expressed a strong desire to get off welfare and gain financial independence. They believed that the Even Start program would assist them in attaining their educational goals and achieving financial independence.

The above results are indicative of the heterogeneity that exists between families and individuals. The heterogeneity assumption of the life course perspective assumes that behaviors of individuals and families vary based on race, ethnicity or socioeconomic status. Interviews with Hispanic and non-Hispanic participants reveal their diverse needs and goals for participating in the program. The emphasis placed by Hispanic participants in learning English and acculturating to the American society provides insight into the cultural adjustments and challenges Hispanic families face due to their transition into the new society and culture.

Research Question 3

Does participation in the program lead to different outcomes for Hispanic and non-Hispanic participants?

The quantitative analysis indicated that the Even Start program benefited Hispanic and non-Hispanic participants equally for all the outcome measures assessed. Results revealed that the program increased knowledge of child development of the participants. With regard to the effects of ethnicity, Non-Hispanic participants indicated higher knowledge of child development compared to their Hispanic counterparts when they entered the program. However, there were no differences in the rate of change in knowledge between Hispanic and non-Hispanic population after their participation in the Even Start program. The program did not favor one group over the other in imparting parenting knowledge. Hispanic participants' lower knowledge of child development may be associated with the cultural differences that exist in their parenting knowledge and practices. For instance, cultural differences may exist in how parents interact with their children. In many Latino families parents use authoritarian parenting practices, which may be interpreted as abusive and harmful in the United States. Such cultural differences may have played a role in how Hispanic participants responded to the survey.

The parenting confidence and support measure did not indicate any effects of ethnicity in the initial levels of parenting confidence and support or the rate of change in confidence and support. Participants' parenting confidence and support increased over time, but ethnicity did not determine the amount of gains participants made. These results are consistent with the qualitative analysis results of this study. Interviews with Hispanic and non-Hispanic participants revealed that both Hispanic and non-Hispanic participants felt inadequate as parents when they entered the

program. Hispanic parents' feelings of inadequacy originated from their inability to speak in English and lack of social support. Non-Hispanic participants also reported feelings of inadequacy as parents due to limited support and due to their disturbing and often abusive childhood experiences.

Analysis on the levels of change in depression revealed that Even Start program had no effect on the rate of change in levels of depression for the participants selected for the purpose of this study. Previous studies conducted by the Oregon Even Start evaluation team only looked at the effect of the program on participants entering the program at risk for clinical depression. These studies revealed that participants identified as being at risk of depression at entry to Even Start consistently show reduced levels of depression (Richards, Merrill & Sano, 2003; Richards, Sano, & Guyer, 2002; Richards, Sano, & Corson, 2001; Richards, Pamulapati, Corson, & Merrill, 2000). Restricting the analysis only to clinically depressed individuals may have resulted in significant results, but this would have further reduced the sample size for this study. Hence, this approach was not used.

Results of the analysis on self-esteem measure indicated that increased self-esteem for participants was associated with Even Start participation. There were no initial differences between Hispanic and non-Hispanic participants in their self-esteem. The analysis on rates of change in self-esteem revealed that Non-Hispanic participants made slightly higher gains in self-esteem. However, this difference was not statistically significant.

In general an upward trend was noticed in the life skills outcome measure among participants over time. Overall, participants indicated significant gains in life skills after being in the Even Start program. Similar to the other outcomes examined in this study, life skills outcome measure also did not show any effect of ethnicity on the gains made in life skills. At the beginning of the program Non-Hispanic participants indicated significantly greater life skills than the Hispanic participants. However, non-Hispanic participants did not make greater gains than Hispanic counterparts after being in the program. The possible explanation for lower life skills among Hispanic participants is their immigrant status. As recent immigrants to the United States many Hispanic participants may have lacked awareness of the existing community resources and also may have had limited skills in using these resources. The qualitative interviews indicate that limited English language skills restricted Hispanic participants ability to talk to their children's teacher or write a resume. Hence, it is of no surprise that Hispanic participants scored lower on the life skills measure in comparison to their non-Hispanic counterparts.

The quantitative results of this study demonstrate that the Even Start program seemed to benefit both Hispanic and non-Hispanic participants equally. Several factors may play a role in these positive outcomes. One factor may be the nature and characteristics of the intervention materials. Even Start curriculum is designed to meet the diverse needs of the participants. Parents are offered books and resources in both Spanish and English making them easy to read and understand by Hispanic participants. Another contributing factor may be an opportunity to interact with other

participants with similar background and experiences. Hispanic participants have the opportunity to interact with other Hispanic families, for example, in ESL classes, and share their concerns and issues as recent immigrants. This may facilitate reciprocal learning and teaching among participants. Similar opportunities are provided to non-Hispanic participants as well, thus facilitating positive changes in both groups. Also, the Even Start program staff may have a role to play in bringing out positive changes between Hispanic and non-Hispanic participants as well. Even Start Program staff are usually bilingual and are trained to be sensitive to the diverse needs of the participants. Also, Even Start staff conduct regular home visits, which gives them an opportunity to closely examine the family structure and cultural variations and provide learning opportunities that are sensitive to these differences.

The qualitative interviews revealed that the most important changes attributed to Even Start participation by Hispanic and non-Hispanic participants were changes in literacy and life skills, personal changes such as increased self-esteem and self-confidence, changes in parenting behaviors, changes in their kids, and relationship changes with friends and family. Subtle yet vital differences existed between Hispanic and non-Hispanic parents reports of the benefits of the Even Start program.

Interviews with Hispanic participants illustrated the cultural adaptations immigrant families go through and the role of Even Start in facilitating smooth and successful transitions of these families into the American culture. Hispanic parents indicated an increase in their English language ability after being in the Even Start program. They saw learning the English language as an opportunity to adjust and

evolve in the American society. The ESL component of the Even Start program enabled the Hispanic participants succeed in learning English. ESL classes are less intimidating to bilingual participants as they interact with other Hispanic participants with similar skills, knowledge and background. Similar observations were documented by Buttaro and King (2001) who found that participants in ESL programs showed improvements in English language ability as they faced fewer deterring factors such as fear of speaking, fear of ridicule, lack of child care, or classes being too difficult.

Non-Hispanic participants also reported considerable improvement in their academic skills. Some participants reported achieving their GED while others were close to attaining their GED. Participants also reported acquiring relevant job skills after being in the Even Start program.

The most notable personal changes reported by Hispanic and non-Hispanic mothers were a sense of self-sufficiency and self-esteem. Increased literacy, job skills, and support offered by Even Start teachers and colleagues promoted a sense of self-esteem and confidence among both Hispanic and non-Hispanic participants. Ability to communicate in English helped Hispanic participants increase their self-esteem. Participants' confidence improved, thereby allowing them to set higher goals for themselves and their family. A study conducted by Roth, Jennings, and Stowell (1997) found that the Even Start program promoted family literacy not only in the narrow technical sense of reading and writing skills but also in the broader sense of political and social empowerment. Participants in their study also reported a growing sense of

self-respect, regenerated self-esteem, self-confidence, speaking up, involvement and governance.

Like all parents, Even Start parents also faced significant challenges in raising their children and being effective parents. Prior to Even Start both Hispanic and non-Hispanic mothers reported using controlling disciplinary techniques and feeling insecure about their parenting abilities. Hispanic and non-Hispanic mothers noted significant changes in their interactions with their children, which they attributed to their involvement in parenting classes and their improvement in academic and literacy skills. Parents reported reading to their children every day, and also designing and being involved in creative learning activities. Also, parents reported adopting disciplinary strategies that included less physical or verbal disapproval and increased communication. These results are consistent with the findings of DeBruin-Parecki, Paris, and Siedenburg (1997) who found that parents in the Even Start program felt they had benefited from the program as their involvement in literacy activities increased over time. Seaman and Yoo (2001) also found that parents were able to become more involved in their children's education and had more confidence in helping their children in learning activities.

Both Hispanic and non-Hispanic participants attributed literacy and behavioral changes in their children to Even Start program participation. For Hispanic children Even Start program acted as a bridge between the home and school environments. Even Start set the stage for Hispanic and non-Hispanic children to prepare for the formal school environment. Parents reported increased literacy skills, confidence, and

self-esteem, increased obedience, better social control, and improved social relationships among their children.

With regard to relationship changes with friends and family members, Hispanic parents attributed less isolation and increased support to their Even Start participation. Participation in the Even Start helped these immigrant families establish social networks, share their experiences with other immigrants and gain support. Also, Hispanic participants reported positive changes in their relationships with their partners. Hispanic participants' ability to speak in English and do things on their own reduced the stresses and strains in the family, promoted less dependency on their partners and encouraged better relationships.

Non-Hispanic participants emphasized their ability to establish better relationships due to their Even Start participation. Participants severed the relationships that had negative influences on their family and built more trustful and healthy relationships. Also, similar to Hispanic participants, non-Hispanic participants also reported increased communication and better relationships with partners. The communication skills parents gained in the parenting classes transferred to the home environment and thus had a ripple effect on other relationships (Merrill, 2001).

The changes reported by Hispanic and non-Hispanic participants illustrate the effect of transitions on people's lives. According to the life course perspective, the transitions people experience may have immediate and long lasting consequences on an individual's development. This study illustrates that Hispanic participants' transition into the new society and culture had immediate impact on their lives. This

transition forced them to acquire new skills, adjust to the new society and culture, and thus modify their life paths. Although the transitions experienced by non-Hispanic participants are less dramatic, they too had lasting impact on their development. The transitions they experienced, such as getting rid of past harmful relationships and obtaining new skills may redirect their life paths.

From the life course perspective, not only understanding the effects of transitions is important but also it is crucial to understand the timing of these transitions and their effects on an individual's development. Timing refers to historical time, generational time, or simply to the chronological age of an individual. Non-Hispanic mothers interviewed in this study became mothers at a very young age. This had a crucial role to play in their beliefs and perceptions of parenting. Many of the non-Hispanic mothers stated that they felt uninformed or lacked knowledge of good parenting. Results of this study also illustrate that historical time, in other words, geopolitical and economic events also play a role in an individual's life. The recent influx of immigrant populations, especially the rapid growth of Hispanics in the U.S., has increased their involvement in programs like Even Start. In addition, the tough rules and regulations of the current welfare policy restrict non-Hispanics ability to participate in lengthy educational programs. These social and political events may have resulted in greater involvement of Hispanic participants in the Even Start program than the non-Hispanic participants. The current study had larger sample of Hispanic participants than the non-Hispanic group, which illustrates the social and political shift in who receives services. These macro social events may play a vital role

in non-Hispanic families current and future well-being. Current welfare policy rules and regulations do not adequately address the psychological and emotional stresses and strains low-income families endure and this may have detrimental effects on these families' current as well as future well-being.

Limitations

The small sample size, particularly for the non-Hispanic population, is a limitation of this study. The sample size for the non-Hispanic population was only 21, and it is possible that outcome differences between Hispanics and non-Hispanics might have been identified in a larger sample. This, however, is a challenge commonly faced by many longitudinal studies. My qualitative analysis allows for in-depth comparisons between the two populations that is not possible with the more limited quantitative analyses.

The sample in the quantitative study may also over represent Even Start participants who were more committed to the program. In the past two years, the typical Even Start participants stayed in the program for approximately 13-18 months. Only 30-40% of participants stay in the program longer than a program year. The sample selected for the purpose of this study included participants who were in the program for a period of at least 21 months. Thus, participants who drop out of the program within a year may be different from the participants selected for this study. Hence, the results of this analysis may not be generalized to the participants who leave the program earlier.

In addition to the sampling problems, the study has limitations with respect to the measurement approaches used. The quantitative outcome measures used in this study are not tested for their cultural sensitivity. The tests have not been standardized on Hispanic population and this may have yielded biased results.

The qualitative interview protocol used for this study is also not tested for cultural sensitivity or appropriateness. Another limitation with the qualitative interview protocol is the use of multiple interviewers for data collection. The quality of the data obtained may have depended on the interviewing styles of the interviewers. However, most Even Start participants were eager and enthusiastic to share their experiences and give their feedback on the Even Start program. As a result, having multiple interviewers may have had limited impact on the responses of the participants.

Implications and Recommendations

In light of the findings of this study on the similarities and differences between Hispanic and non-Hispanic Even Start participants several recommendations may be made for program staff and other family literacy researchers.

Implications for Program Staff

This research study indicates that both Hispanic and non-Hispanic participants are receiving needed information and gaining considerable benefits from the Even Start Family Literacy program. Although the program is offering equal benefits to Hispanic and non-Hispanic participants, the study reemphasizes the need to design and implement programs that are in line with the cultural changes and life transitions

participants experience. Most Hispanic participants in this study are recent immigrants. The issues and challenges they face as recent immigrants may change as they adjust and accommodate in the American society. Program staff should not only take participants' current social and economic contexts into consideration, but must also provide strategies and skills to participants that help them cope with their lives in the future. Adult learning theory purports that program staff need to treat adults as individuals with complex individual histories, cultures, responsibilities, needs, and goals (Haverson, 1991; Knowles, 1975; McGoldrick, Giordano & Pearce, 1996). Program staff need to make sure the curriculum lives up to the goals and expectations of the participants and persistently takes into account the social and cultural reality of the participants.

Implications for Researchers

In family literacy research limited focus has been placed on the issues of race, ethnicity, and culture. There have not been many efforts by researchers to understand the connection between ethnicity and its' impact on the success of family literacy programs. Studies need to be conducted that examine how ethnic minority families use literacy at home, and how the approaches they use are distinct from the mainstream American culture. Also, research needs to be conducted that explore the parenting practices of family literacy participants closely and examine how ethnic minority families transfer the concepts they learn into the home environment. Elish-Piper (1996)'s study is one study that examined four ethnically diverse low-income families enrolled in a family literacy program. She found that the purposes of literacy and the

frequency of use of literacy activities varied among and within families, depending on their lives and needs at the specific time. She suggests that more research needs to be conducted that provides insight about the impact of social-contextual issues on the outcomes of family literacy programs.

Another issue with family literacy research is the wide use of anecdotal reports to validate the effect of family literacy programs. Most of the family literacy research uses informal, anecdotal information collected by program administrators and staff to show the effectiveness of the program. This information may be misinterpreted, ignored or sometimes exaggerated, thus hindering us from understanding the true effects of the family literacy programs. Rigorous, scientifically based research studies need to be conducted in the future on family literacy programs. Hannon (1999) states that family literacy programs are driven by rhetoric than research. He suggests that practice and policy needs to be informed by research and researchers are responsible, if not solely, to develop sound policy and practice. The mixed-method, longitudinal approach used by my study strengthens the existing family literacy literature. It helps make a strong argument that family literacy programs are effective in bringing positive changes and improve families' well-being.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

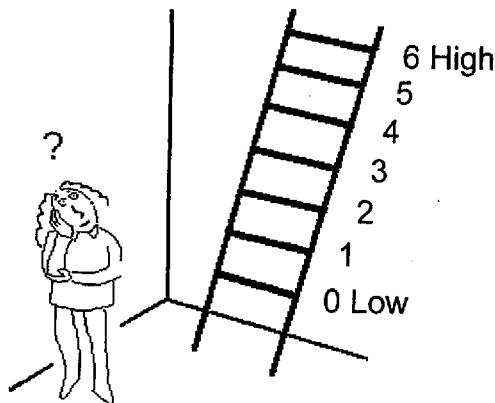
About Children

Here are some ideas about children and their development. After you read each item, decide whether you AGREE, DISAGREE, or are NOT SURE.

	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree
1. Paying attention to babies whenever they cry will spoil them.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. It is normal for a two-year-old to refuse to do what a parent says.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. A mild to moderate hearing loss does not affect the way young children learn language.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. A good way to teach your child not to hit is to hit back.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Most two year olds know the difference between make-believe and true stories.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Most children are ready to be toilet trained by one year of age.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Some normal children do not enjoy being cuddled.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. If you punish your child for doing something wrong, it's okay to give the child a piece of candy to stop crying.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. It really doesn't make much sense to talk to babies before they understand the meaning of words.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. For sake of safety, babies should be discouraged from crawling in the home.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. Playing is simply a way of passing time for children and does not help their learning abilities.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. Children do not need to see a dentist until they get their permanent teeth.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. By the age of 3 children should easily be able to share their toys with others.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. A 5-year-old who wets the bed is just being lazy.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15. Normal children never cheat or tell lies.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16. A baby is not hurt by being left in a crib for most of the day.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Appendix B

Parenting Ladder



Where would you put yourself on the Parenting Ladder in terms of:

Your knowledge of how children grow and develop? _____

Your confidence that you know what is right for your child? _____

Your ability to create a safe home for your child? _____

Your success in teaching your child how to behave? _____

Your skill at finding fun activities that interest your child? _____

The amount of stress in your life right now? _____

Your ability to cope with the stress in your life? _____

Parenting is often smoother when others are there to help. Where would you put yourself on the Parenting Ladder in terms of:

Other parents for you to talk to? _____

Someone to help you in an emergency? _____

Someone to offer helpful advice or moral support? _____

Someone for you to relax with? _____

Professional people to talk to when you have a question about your child? _____

Your overall satisfaction with the amount of support in your life? _____

Appendix C

Feelings About How Things are Going

For each of the following statements, check the box that best describes HOW OFTEN YOU HAVE FELT THIS WAY DURING THE PAST WEEK.

	Rarely or none of the time	A little of the time	A moderate amount of time	Most or all of the time
1. I was bothered by things that don't usually bother me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. I did not feel like eating; my appetite was poor.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. I felt that I could not shake the blues even with help from my family or friends.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. I felt that I was just as good as other people.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. I had trouble keeping my mind on what I was doing.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. I felt depressed.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. I felt that everything I did was an effort.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. I felt hopeful about the future.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. I thought my life had been a failure.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. I felt fearful.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. My sleep was restless.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. I was happy.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. I talked less than usual.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. I felt lonely.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15. People were unfriendly.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16. I enjoyed life.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17. I had crying spells.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18. I felt sad.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
19. I felt that people disliked me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
20. I could not "get going".	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Appendix D

Feelings About Yourself

Here are some other ways people describe themselves. Indicate the extent to which you agree with the following items:

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal basis with others.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. I am able to do things as well as most other people.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. I take a positive attitude toward myself.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. I wish I could have more respect for myself.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. I certainly feel useless at times.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. At times I think I am no good at all.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Appendix E

Life Skills Assessment

Do you have:	Yes	No, but I would like to.	Don't need it
1. An Oregon driver's license			
2. Car insurance			
3. Car registration			
4. An Oregon Health Plan card			
5. A first aid card			
6. A voter registration card			
7. A local library card			
8. A checking account			
9. A bus pass			
10. A food handler's card			
Do you know how to:			
11. Organize your bills			
12. Write a personal check			
13. Make a family budget			
14. Stretch your groceries to the end of the month			
15. Develop a good credit history			
16. Apply for a credit card			
17. Prepare a well-balanced meal for your family			
18. Get a telephone			
19. Work with your landlord to improve housing			
20. Register a consumer complaint			
21. Talk to your child's teacher			
22. Fill out forms to apply for services			
23. Apply for a job			
24. Write a resume			
25. Dress for a job			
26. Join a local club or organization			
27. Create a personal support system			

Appendix F

Participant Interview Protocol

Even Start, 1997

I am part of a team that is evaluating the Even Start Programs in Oregon and I would like to ask you some questions about your experiences in the program. Your information will help us find out what parts of the program seem to work well, and what parts need to be improved or changed. We are also interested in understanding more about the families who choose to participate in Even Start. Doing this interview is voluntary, and if you do not want to answer any or all questions you do not have to. If you choose not to participate, it will not affect the services you and your family receive from Even Start. The information you give to me in the interview will be kept private and confidential. Your name will not be used on any reports, and your responses will be combined with others to provide summaries of the program. Do you have any questions before we start?

1. First, tell me a little bit about your family. How many children do you have, and what are their ages? Which ones are participating in Even Start? Are there other family members that participate in Even Start, on a regular basis, or for special events?
2. When did you first start coming to Even Start? (probe: How old was your child?)
3. Have there been any changes in your family since you started Even Start?
 - Have you moved? (If yes, ask why)
 - Are there any new family members?
 - Are there any changes in who lives in the house?
 - Has anyone changed jobs, or started a new job?
 - Has anyone lost a job, or reduced the number of hours working?
 - Have there been any other important family changes that you can think of?
4. I'd like to know how you came to be in a program like Even Start. How did you first hear about it? What made you decide to start participating?
5. When you first came to Even Start, what were your goals? Do you have the same goals now, or have they changed?

6. Did you have any formal schooling when you were a child? What were your school experiences like? How did school work for you? Can you tell me a story about a school experience you remember really well? (If the interviewee has trouble with this try asking for a story about something really good that happened to them in school, and a story about something not so good that happened to them in school.)
7. How far did you go in school? Did you get a high school diploma or GED? (If no), What prevented you from completing high school?
8. Did other members of your family complete high school? Your parents, brothers, sisters, or other relatives?
9. Some families think school is really important, and other families think other things are more important. In what kind of family did you grow up?
10. Adult education is a big part of Even Start, and most parents work really hard to learn new things. What adult education activities are you participating in? What parts do you enjoy most? Why? What parts do you find the hardest? Why?
11. One of the services that most Even Start programs provide is help with parenting. Before you first started Even Start, what kind of a parent were you? How would you describe your parenting before you came to Even Start?
12. What about now? Has your participation in Even Start led to any changes in the way you do things as a parent?
 - Has it changed the types of activities you do with your children?
 - Has it changed anything in your relationship with your children?
 - Has it changed the way you think about the future for your children?
13. Has your participation in Even Start led to any other changes in the way you do things at home?
 - Has it changed anything in your relationship with your spouse or partner?
 - What about changes with others in your life—friends, or other family members?
 - Has it changed the way you think about the future? How?
14. How has Even Start worked for your child? In what sort of educational program does your child participate? How does he/she like it?
14. What opportunities have you had to do things with your child in his/her classroom? How has that worked for you, and how has that worked for your child?

15. Even Start is a demanding program and asks parents and children to spend a lot of time at school each week. Sometimes that is really hard for families. What parts of Even Start have encouraged you to keep participating?
16. Finally, I have some summary questions about your experiences with Even Start.
 - What, if any, are the most important ways that Even Start has helped you as an individual?
 - What, if any, are the most important ways that Even Start has helped your child(ren)?
 - What, if any, are the most important ways that Even Start has helped the rest of your family?
17. Is there anything that you think needs to be changed to make Even Start a better or stronger program?
18. Is there anything that we missed, or that you would like to say about the program?