

Social Class, Mexican Culture, and Fatalism: Their Effects on Psychological Distress¹

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We examine the causes and consequences of fatalism in a cross-cultural setting, focusing on the ways in which a fatalistic world view may mediate the effects of social class and Mexican ethnic identity on psychological distress. We find that persons in the lower social classes and Mexicans tend to be more fatalistic than persons in the upper classes and Anglos, and that fatalism, in turn, increases psychological distress. We attempt to integrate research on the social and cultural determinants of cognitive orientations with studies of the effects of social class and Mexican culture on distress.

The purpose of this paper is to investigate whether social class and Mexican cultural heritage are significantly related to a fatalistic orientation that predisposes individuals to psychological distress. We postulate that a fatalistic world view, perhaps most common among persons living at a poverty level (Lewis, 1961; Kohn, 1972; 1974; Wheaton, 1980), may be one of the mechanisms through which social class affects psychological well-being. We also extend our inquiry to Mexican culture. Since fatalism has been identified as a characteristic of Mexican culture (Heller, 1966; Madsen, 1973), fatalistic perspectives may promote psychological distress for persons of Mexican heritage. Therefore, the focus of our study is on

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ascertaining whether or not an association exists between social class, Mexican culture, and fatalism in relation to psychological distress.

FATALISM AND DISTRESS

According to Rotter (1966), fatalism is a generalized expectation that outcomes of situations are determined by forces external to one's self, such as powerful others, luck, fate, or chance. Fatalism is therefore a belief in an external locus of control over the events in one's life. Instrumentalism, or a belief in an internal locus of control, is the opposite of fatalism in that it is a generalized expectation that outcomes are contingent on one's own behavior. In the former the individual believes that he or she is more or less at the mercy of the environment, while in the latter the individual believes that he or she can master, control, or effectively alter the environment.³

Rotter, Chance, and Phares (1972) and others (Jessor, Graves, Hanson, & Jessor, 1968; Kohn, 1972, 1974; Wheaton, 1980) view fatalism and instrumentalism as cognitive orientations learned through social interaction. Through socialization and experience, a person learns that his or her personal efforts are generally likely or unlikely to affect the outcome of a situation. Continual experience of failure in the face of effort has been found to lead to an external locus of control, characterized by passivity and giving up (Dohrenwend & Dohrenwend, 1970). Experiences of success lead to an internal locus of control, characterized by instrumentalism and an active approach to life.

A number of researchers have examined coping mechanisms associated with fatalism and instrumentalism. In a series of studies, Seeman found that tuberculosis patients with an internal locus of control knew more about their condition and took a more active role in dealing with their problems, reformatory inmates with an internal locus of control learned more about parole than those with an external locus of control, and (controlling for social class) Swedish workers with an internal locus of control were more likely to be union members and know more about politics (Seeman & Evans, 1962; Seeman, 1963, 1966). In sum, people with an internal locus of control are more likely to take steps to improve their

³The cognitive habit of interpreting events as beyond one's control appears in the literature under many names: external locus of control (Rotter, 1966), the sense of powerlessness (Seeman, 1972), or its opposite, the sense of personal efficacy (Kohn, 1972) and mastery (Pearlin & Schooler, 1978). Theories that consider cognitive orientations as the link between social class and psychological well-being have used the term fatalism (Kohn, 1974; Wheaton, 1980), and social scientists have described Mexicans as fatalistic (Madsen, 1973; Jessor, Graves, Hanson, & Jessor, 1968). Since we are extending the theoretical approaches of Kohn and Wheaton to persons of Mexican heritage, we, too, use the term fatalism.

condition, whereas those with an external locus of control are more likely to give up and exhibit impaired coping in the face of environmental demands. Feelings of being helpless to control one's own life, feelings that working toward a goal is futile, feelings of failure, and the passive orientation and impaired coping effort that accompany these feelings are associated with psychological distress (Dohrenwend & Dohrenwend, 1970; Seligman, 1975; Pearlin & Schooler, 1978; Wheaton, 1980).

Fatalistic beliefs may lead to psychological distress because they destroy both the will and the ability to cope with life's problems (Wheaton, 1980; Pearlin & Schooler, 1978). A person who feels that working toward a goal is futile and that life's stresses and strains can be borne but not overcome does not make an effort to overcome them, is relatively unaware of things in the natural and social environment that can be exploited, does not invest in the development of skills or in the accumulation of resources that could be useful in difficult circumstances, does not use his or her energy and ingenuity to prepare for or avoid similar problems in the future, and is not motivated to learn new approaches to problem-solving. In contrast, instrumentalism leads a person to cope actively and flexibly, to avoid problems that might develop in the future, and to prepare for those that cannot be avoided.

SOCIAL CLASS

Several studies have found that people in the lower classes are more fatalistic than high-status individuals (Lewis, 1961; Battle & Rotter, 1963; Zytoskee, Strickland, & Watson, 1971; Kohn, 1972, 1974; Farris & Glenn, 1976; Wheaton, 1980). People in the lower social classes learn through recurrent experiences that they have limited opportunities, that no matter how hard they try they cannot get ahead, and that powerful others and unpredictable forces control their lives. These beliefs can be realistic perceptions of their position and most likely reinforced in day-to-day living. By continually experiencing failure, people in low-status positions learn that their actions are not generally associated with successful outcomes.

Studies also consistently find that people in the lower social classes have higher rates of psychological distress than those in the upper classes (Dohrenwend & Dohrenwend, 1970; Dohrenwend, 1975; Cockerham, 1981). Recently, work in this area has found that the cognitive orientations associated with low-status positions partially explain the inverse relationship between class and distress (Kohn, 1972, 1974; Wheaton, 1980). Specifically, fatalism and the reduced sense of personal efficacy associated with lower social class positions may shape an individual's perspective to the

point that goals seem unattainable regardless of effort. As previously noted, the result is greater susceptibility to psychological distress as one's ability and motivation to cope are diminished.

MEXICAN CULTURE

Many behavioral scientists have described Mexicans as fatalistic (Edmonson, 1957; Saunders, 1958; Clark, 1959; Heller, 1966; Jessor et al., 1968; Madsen, 1973). Madsen (1973), for instance, in his study of Mexican Americans in south Texas, observed that suffering was made more acceptable by a strong belief in fatalism. "It is generally believed," states Madsen (1973), "that the good or bad fortune of the individual is predestined and every occurrence in human existence comes to pass because it was fated to do so" (p. 18). This fatalistic philosophy produces an attitude of resignation. Madsen (1973) says: "What the Anglo tries to control, the Mexican-American tries to accept. Misfortune is something the Anglo tries to overcome and the Latin views as fate" (p. 18). If Mexicans are more fatalistic than Anglos, and fatalism leads to distress, then we would expect to find that Mexicans are more distressed than Anglos.

However, others have maintained that fatalism is not a characteristic of Mexican culture, but a function of social class (Casavantes, 1970) or a lack of knowledge about how to be upwardly mobile in an Anglo-dominated society (Stoddard, 1973). It is because Mexicans and Mexican Americans tend to be poor and not well educated that they are fatalistic. Support for this position comes from studies that have found that, when social class is controlled, Mexicans are not more fatalistic than Anglos (Farris & Glenn, 1976; Garza & Ames, 1977; Holmes, Fairbank, & Hough, 1980).

Furthermore, comparative mental-health studies of Mexican Americans and Anglos do not support the contention that Mexican culture leads to greater distress. Studies that compare the two ethnic groups find either that there is no difference between them (Roberts, 1980; Frerichs, Aneshensel, & Clark, 1981), or that persons of Mexican heritage actually have lower levels of symptoms (Antunes, Gordon, Gaitz, & Scott, 1974; Gaitz & Scott, 1972; Mirowsky & Ross, 1980). However, none of these community mental health studies explicitly models an intervening mechanism to explain how Mexican culture affects distress.

In sum, synthesizing the research on Mexican culture and fatalism and the research on fatalism and distress to arrive at a model that explicitly specifies an intervening mechanism to explain the effect of Mexican culture on distress leads to the hypothesis that persons of Mexican heritage have higher levels of distress than Anglos. However, comparative mental health

studies show that there is no difference in distress between the two cultural groups or that Mexicans have lower distress levels. There are two possible explanations for these inconsistent expectations.

First, if Mexican culture is associated with fatalism largely or entirely because of social class, then there would be little or no tendency for Mexicans in Mexico or Mexican Americans to have higher levels of distress than Anglos when social class is controlled. Second, although Mexican culture may increase psychological distress because of its association with fatalism, the effect may be countered by other aspects of Mexican culture (such as high levels of social support) that reduce expected levels of distress. The strong social support role of the Mexican extended family system has been well-documented (Grebler, Moore, & Guzman, 1970; Moore, 1976) to include support rendered for mental health (Padilla & Ruiz, 1973). Thus, Mexican culture may have a direct negative effect on psychological distress as well as an indirect positive one through fatalism. Each effect will tend to cancel the other out, so that Mexican heritage might appear to have no impact on psychological distress.

STRATEGY FOR RESEARCH

We examine whether there are effects of social class and Mexican culture on psychological distress that are mediated by fatalism. In order to address this question we first predict fatalism from Mexican ethnic identity, minority group status, sex, age, marital status, and social class. The analysis is hierarchical. Initially Mexican identity, minority group status, and socio-demographic variables are used to predict fatalism. Next, social class is added. This allows us to address the question of whether the effects of Mexican culture on fatalism are explained by social class.

In the second part we use path analysis to examine whether fatalism mediates any effect of Mexican culture and social class on psychological distress. We develop a path model in which Mexican identity, minority status, age, sex, and marital status are exogenous variables which may in turn affect social class, fatalism, and psychological distress, in that order. We began by estimating an unrestricted model in which all possible recursive paths were included. Any path that was not significant ($p > .05$) was then eliminated and the model reestimated with that coefficient set to zero.

The Sample

Data were collected by means of a survey questionnaire administered in face-to-face interviews in 1975 in El Paso, Texas, and Juarez, Mexico,

companion cities on opposite sides of the border separating Mexico and the United States. The survey was a comparative cross-sectional study of social stressors and psychological and physical symptoms among Mexican, Mexican American, and Anglo adults. Blacks, Orientals, American Indians, Jews, and persons not raised in the United States or Mexico were excluded from the survey. In El Paso, dwellings were randomly selected from the city directory and one adult between the ages of 18 and 65 was then randomly selected from each household. Of 693 dwellings selected from the city directory, 173 were vacant or contained ineligible respondents. Among the remainder, there were 142 refusals, 48 noncontacts, and 330 completions. The unadjusted response rate in El Paso is 63%. If it is assumed that the proportion of ineligibles was the same among noncontacts and refusals as among persons who were contacted and did not refuse, then the adjusted response rate is 73%. In Juarez, a multistage area sample based on aerial photographs was used because of the absence of accurate information on which to base a sampling frame. There were 8 ineligibles, 32 refusals, 14 noncontacts, and 133 completions. The unadjusted response rate is 74% and the adjusted response rate is 75%. The total number of cases is 463.

The questionnaire was written in English and then translated into Spanish by a sociologist with a medical background. It was reviewed by two native speakers of Spanish, revised, and reviewed again by a native speaker who holds a master's degree in social work. The questionnaire was administered in Spanish or English, depending on the respondent's preference.

Measurement of the Variables

Mexican ethnic identity is composed of five indicators: self-reported ethnic group (Anglo, Mexican American, Mexican), and four questions about language use that include the language in which the interview was administered (the respondent's choice); and the frequency with which English or Spanish is used in the family, visiting with friends, and at social gatherings. This produces an index of Mexican ethnic identity in which, for example, Mexican Americans who speak English with their friends and family and identify with American culture may score on the non-Mexican end of the continuum, while Mexican Americans who identify strongly with Mexican culture and speak Spanish with their friends and family may score on the Mexican end of the continuum. The index is strongly bimodal. Almost everyone identifies with either American culture or Mexican culture; few fall in between. Therefore we dichotomized the index into Mexican (1) versus American (0) identity. The validity of subjective cultural

identity is indicated by its relationship to a number of objective factors: All of the non-Spanish-surnamed Anglos in El Paso identify with American culture, while Mexicans in Juarez identify with Mexican culture. More interestingly, 28% of the people of Mexican heritage who were raised and live in the United States identify with Mexican culture, whereas 74% of the people of Mexican heritage who were raised in Mexico but now live in the United States identify with Mexican culture.

We also created a minority group status variable. Anglos who live in the United States and Mexicans who live in Mexico belong to the majority group in their country. Mexican Americans and Mexicans living in El Paso, Texas, are minority group members. The variable is coded 0 = majority group; 1 = minority group. By including two variables—Mexican cultural identity and minority group status—we can look at the effects of Mexican ethnic culture separate from the effects of minority group status in the United States.

The social class variable is a sum of three standardized variables: years of formal education, family income, and occupational prestige as measured by the Duncan SEI (Duncan, 1961). If the respondent was a nonworking woman, her spouse's SEI score was assigned. All incomes are reported in dollars. Pesos are converted to dollars using the exchange rate at the time of the survey (1975). The three components of the social class measure are correlated with the dependent variables and the other independent variables in substantively similar ways (in no case are effects in opposite directions). Although we wanted to examine the effects of each component separately, multicollinearity problems prohibited this.

We also include three sociodemographic variables: sex (0 = male; 1 = female), marital status (0 = not married; 1 = married), and age.

Fatalism is measured using a modified form of Rotter's (1966) internal-external locus of control scale (Holmes et al., 1978). The scale was modified as follows: (a) The forced-choice format was changed to a Likert-scale format; (b) one of each pair of forced-choice items was selected at random. Nine of the selected statements are worded so that endorsement indicates instrumentalism as opposed to fatalism (e.g., "What happens to me is my own doing"). Eleven of the statements are worded so that endorsement indicates fatalism (e.g., "I have often found that what is going to happen will happen"); (c) filler items and school-oriented items were deleted; (d) some of the items were modified to reduce the extremity of the statement, since the extremity appropriate to the forced-choice format is not necessary in the Likert-scale format. In calculating the fatalism score the internally worded (instrumentalism) items are coded 1 = strongly agree, 2 = agree, 3 = undecided, 4 = disagree, and 5 = strongly disagree. The externally worded (fatalism) items are coded in the opposite way from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. An individual's fatalism score is the

sum of responses divided by the number of instrumentalism-fatalism items answered. Alpha reliability equals .65. The items in this index are shown in Appendix A.

The ultimate dependent variable—psychological distress—is measured by eight items from the Langner index (1962) that indicate psychological distress and are not confounded with physical symptoms (Crandell & Dohrenwend, 1967). These items are shown in Appendix B. Whereas the psychophysiological symptoms may indicate different things in the Mexican groups than they do among the Anglos, the purely psychological symptoms appear to be valid indicators of psychological distress in both cultural groups (Wheaton, 1981). Psychological distress refers to unpleasant moods such as worry, anxiety, demoralization, hopelessness, and depression. It does not refer to disordered cognitive or perceptual processes, to withdrawn or inappropriate behavior, to antisocial attitudes or behavior, or to psychophysiological malaise. Although the Langner index lacks diagnostic specificity, Wheaton (1981) finds that the psychological component is correlated with psychiatric diagnoses of major and minor depression and generalized anxiety made using the Research Diagnostic Criteria (Spitzer & Endicott, 1980). The alpha reliability for the total sample is .75; it is .75 for persons who identify with Anglo culture and .74 for persons of Mexican identity.

The correlations among the variables and the means and standard deviations are shown in Table I.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Fatalism

As the first step in the development of a causal model in which fatalism may mediate the effects of Mexican identity and social class on psychological distress, we examine the antecedents of fatalism. Table II shows a two-step model of the determinants of fatalism, in which social class is added in the second step.

Fatalism is strongly associated with Mexican cultural identity, low social class, and female gender. These relationships are all significant at the .01 level. While much of the effect of Mexican cultural identity is mediated by social class, it still has a significant direct effect. The standardized regression coefficient for Mexican identity, not controlling for social class, is .402. When social class is controlled, the coefficient is reduced to .191, as

Table I. Correlation Matrix, Means, and Standard Deviations

Variable	Variable							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Mexican identity	-.003							
2. Minority status	.062	.089 ^a						
3. Sex (1 = female)	-.028	-.029	.024					
4. Age								
5. Marital status (1 = married)	-.009	-.008	-.102 ^a	.102 ^a				
6. Social class	-.623 ^a	-.094 ^a	-.114 ^a	.022	.049			
7. Fatalism	.409 ^a	.051	.187 ^a	.064	.013	-.473 ^a		
8. Psychological distress	.008	.008	.184 ^a	-.091 ^a	-.046	-.079 ^a	.130 ^a	
Mean	.500	.428	.611	37.422	.710	.002 ^b	2.983	1.843
Standard deviation	.500	.495	.488	10.987	.454	.815	.320	.628

^a*p* < .05.

^bMean set equal to zero.

Table II. Fatalism Regressed on Cultural Identity, Minority Status, Sociodemographic Characteristics (Step 1), and Social Class (Step 2) ($N = 459$)

Variable	Step 1 ^a		Step 2 ^a	
	b	Beta	b	Beta
Mexican identity	.257 ^b	.402	.122 ^b	.191
Minority status	.026	.041	.006	.010
Sex (1 = F)	.104 ^b	.159	.090 ^b	.137
Age	.002	.070	.002	.070
Marital status (1 = married)	.018	.026	.027	.038
Social class			-.134 ^b	-.341
Constant	2.692		2.770	
R^2	.201		.270	

^ab = Unstandardized regression coefficient; beta = standardized regression coefficient.

^b $p < .01$.

shown in Table II. Yet despite this considerable reduction in strength, the relationship between Mexican identity and fatalism remains statistically significant at a relatively high level ($p < .01$).

Although some researchers find that the effect of Mexican culture on fatalism is totally explained by social class (Farris & Glenn, 1976), we do not. We find that Mexican culture has an independent effect on fatalism. Our sample includes both Mexicans in Mexico and persons of Mexican heritage in the United States, while most other studies have only compared Mexican Americans with Anglos. This may be why we find that Mexican culture affects fatalism in part directly ($\beta = .191$), and in part indirectly through social class.

Table II also shows that social class has a large effect on fatalism ($\beta = -.341$). This finding is consistent with other studies using random community samples, and it supports the view that a person's position in the social structure affects his or her conception of reality. The recurrent life failures structured into lower social class positions teach individuals to believe that they will fail in the face of effort, and that powerful others and poorly understood forces control their lives (Kohn, 1969; Wheaton, 1980).

Sex is also significantly related to fatalism. Table II shows that women are more fatalistic than men. This result is consistent with other research which finds that females have more of an external orientation than males (Yuchtman-Yaar & Shapira, 1981). Perhaps this is a result of women holding positions with less status and power, thereby promoting a feeling that others control their lives. However, Table II also indicates that age, marital status, and minority group status do not have significant associations with fatalism.

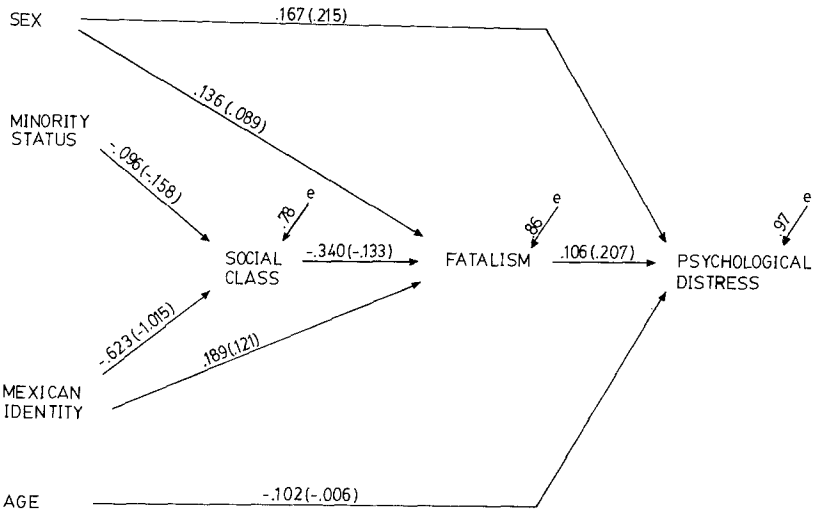


Fig. 1. Restricted path model of Mexican culture, social class, fatalism, and distress. All paths are significant at $p < .05$. Standardized regression coefficients (with unstandardized coefficients in parentheses) are shown. Sex is coded 0 = male, 1 = female; minority status is coded 0 = nonminority, 1 = minority; Mexican identity is coded 0 = Anglo, 1 = Mexican. Interval-level variables are coded from low to high.

Psychological Distress

Figure 1 shows that fatalism mediates the effect of low social class position on psychological distress. Persons in the lower social classes tend to be fatalistic ($\beta = -.340$), and a fatalistic orientation increases psychological distress ($\beta = .106$). Consequently, we replicate a finding and support a theoretical interpretation developed by Wheaton (1980); namely, that fatalism is one of the mechanisms through which social class affects psychological distress. Wheaton interprets this as an indication of impaired coping effort in the face of environmental demands among persons in the lower social strata. The feelings of powerlessness, hopelessness, and futility associated with lower class positions tend to encourage passivity, resignation, and impaired coping. This condition apparently promotes psychological distress. Conversely, upper class positions appear more closely associated with feelings of mastery, competence, and active coping efforts that promote psychological well-being (Dohrenwend & Dohrenwend, 1970; Pearlin & Schooler, 1978; Wheaton, 1980).⁴

⁴It might be argued that the social class measure indicates different opportunities and qualities of life in the two cultures. While comparability of measures is an issue in all cross-cultural research, we think the problem is minimized here for a number of reasons. First, since pesos

Figure 1 also shows that fatalism mediates the effect of Mexican cultural identity on psychological distress. Mexicans are more fatalistic than non-Mexicans: Part of this effect is purely cultural ($\beta = .189$), and part is due to the fact that persons of Mexican identity tend to be in the lower social strata ($-.623 \times -.340 = .212$). Since fatalism, in turn, increases psychological distress, these data indicate that persons of Mexican identity are slightly more distressed than persons of Anglo identity. The total causal effect of Mexican identity on distress is .042. The purely cultural effect (excluding the paths through social class) is .020, a negligible effect.

These results provide some clues as to the ways in which Mexican cultural identity may affect psychological well-being by way of cognitive orientations. We find that, controlling for social class, persons of Mexican identity are more fatalistic than persons of Anglo identity, and that fatalism in turn increases psychological distress. However, the product of these two causal effects is so small as to result in a negligible relationship between Mexican heritage and psychological distress. In addition, Mexican identity has no significant direct effect on psychological distress.

Figure 1 depicts a number of other findings that deserve mention. Sex has a direct effect on psychological distress ($\beta = .167$), with women being more distressed than men. This direct effect replicates a consistent finding in the literature and perhaps captures stressful aspects of women's roles at home or at work (Gove & Tudor, 1973). Our analysis also indicates that women are more fatalistic than men; a cognitive orientation that increases distress through the impairment of coping effort. Age also has a direct effect on psychological distress, with older people being less psychologically distressed than younger people. However, this sample does not include people over 65, a group for which psychological distress may again increase. Although it was important to control for minority group status to arrive at an unconfounded effect of Mexican cultural identity, minority group status

are converted to dollars at the 1975 exchange rate, this standardizes somewhat the buying power of the two currencies. Second, in his cross-national study of occupational prestige, Treiman (1977) found that the correlation of occupational prestige scales between the United States and Mexico was very high, .87. Third, El Paso and Juarez are, in many ways, one metropolitan area that is economically interdependent. However, it is still possible that the social class measure indicates different things in the two cultural groups, and thus has different effects on other variables. To address the possibility that the effect of social class on fatalism is different for Mexicans than for Anglos, we constructed an interaction term between Mexican identity and social class. This interaction term was not significantly associated with fatalism nor did it add significantly to the R^2 , indicating that compared to persons in the upper social classes, persons in the lower social classes have higher levels of fatalism in both cultural groups. It might also be argued that social class and fatalism reciprocally affect one another so that social class shapes fatalistic perspectives, which in turn affect educational attainment, job mobility, and income. Unfortunately we cannot adequately test this possibility with our cross-sectional data. However, we hope future research examines the issue with longitudinal data.

itself does not have significant effects on fatalism or on psychological distress. Likewise, marital status does not appear in the path model because it had no significant effects.

CONCLUSION

Theories of the social and cultural causes of psychological well-being must progress beyond statements of sociodemographic associations and begin to explain why these associations exist. Following Kohn (1969; 1972; 1974) and Wheaton (1980) we have postulated that a fatalistic view of the world is a potential mediating variable that may help explain social class and cultural differences in psychological distress.

Fatalistic beliefs have an effect on psychological distress in part because beliefs shape action. If an individual believes that coping efforts are futile, that he or she cannot effectively manipulate the environment, or that he or she is helpless and powerless, then the person will not take an active role in coping with problems. Feelings of a lack of control may lead to impaired coping effort, and ultimately to psychological distress (Kohn, 1972, 1974; Dohrenwend & Dohrenwend, 1970; Pearlin & Schooler, 1978; Seligman, 1975; Wheaton, 1980).

Theories that consider cognitive orientations as a cause of psychological distress have generally been developed to explain the relationship between social class and psychological well-being (Kohn, 1972, 1974; Wheaton, 1980): Individuals in the lower social classes are more fatalistic, and fatalism, in turn, increases psychological distress. We have continued and expanded that line of inquiry, first by providing evidence for the theory that fatalism mediates the effect of social class on psychological distress, and second by extending the analysis to the effects of Mexican cultural identity. Although we found that Mexican cultural identity was significantly related to fatalism and that fatalism was significantly related to psychological distress, Mexican cultural identity and psychological distress were not strongly associated. Mexican culture may contain a protective feature, such as strong levels of social support, that mediates against psychological distress despite tendencies toward fatalism. Future studies that examine the impact of culture on psychological distress should make a particular effort to determine the specific aspects of Mexican cultural identity that may operate to reduce psychological distress in the face of fatalism.⁵

⁵Social support may be one way that the detrimental effect of fatalism on psychological distress can be counteracted. The question remains whether fatalism can be prevented, or modified once it has developed. Education of all kinds might be effective, especially if it teaches people that they can solve problems. (Small tasks that require some effort but that

APPENDIX A

Fatalism^a

1. People's misfortunes result from mistakes they make.
2. The average citizen can influence government decisions.
3. People get the respect they deserve.
4. When I make plans I can make them work.
5. Getting people to do the right thing depends on ability, not luck.
6. There is really no such thing as "luck."
7. Most misfortunes are the result of lack of ability, ignorance, laziness, or all three.
8. What happens to me is my own doing.
9. In the long run people are responsible for bad government.
10. It is hard to know whether a person really likes you.
11. I have little influence over the things that happen to me.
12. There will always be wars.
13. Without the right breaks one can't be an effective leader.
14. Even if you try hard, some people just don't like you.
15. What is going to happen will happen.
16. Getting a good job depends on being at the right place at the right time.
17. We might just as well decide what to do by flipping a coin.
18. As far as world affairs, most of us are victims of forces we can't understand or control.
19. It is difficult for people to have much control over politicians.
20. There's not much use in trying too hard to please people; if they like you, they like you.

^aModified, Likert-scale version of Rotter's Internal-External Locus of Control index (1966). Agreeing with items 1-9 indicates an internal locus of control. Agreeing with items 10-20 indicates an external locus of control. (In the interview schedule the items were not grouped as we have done here. Internal and external items were intermixed.)

can be solved successfully might be a starting point.) Teaching people that they can control outcomes and encouraging them to attribute success to their own efforts may help modify or prevent fatalism. Community activities, including political activism or community service, may have the same effect if they teach people that they can work successfully toward a goal. Since any task that can be successfully completed through one's own efforts should help modify fatalism, this also implies that employment of any sort is better than unemployment. Working for one's living produces a cognitive connection between efforts and outcomes.

APPENDIX B

Psychological Distress^a

1. Wonder if anything is worthwhile
2. Irritable, fidgety, tense
3. Low spirits
4. Restless
5. Trouble remembering things
6. Sleep problems (oversleeping, trouble falling asleep, waking too early)
7. Can't get going
8. Things never turn out right

^aPsychological items from the Langner index (Crandell & Dohrenwend 1967). Answers to "how often have the following happened to you in the last 12 months?", coded never (0), almost never (1), sometimes (2), fairly often (3) very often (4).

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