

The Apple and the Tree:  
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Rhet 101 – Race and Ethnicity  
December 6, 2009

## Abstract/Plan

This paper explains how Hispanics and Whites are influenced by their cultural background based upon their economic status and how they were raised. Using the Bureau of Statistics I analyzed how much the average income of average White males was compared to that of a Hispanic male. Using this information I can explain how the absence of Meritocracy in the United States plays a significant role, limiting the number of Hispanics who enter good schools compared to Whites. I will also use a website titled: National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) to evaluate a statement commented on that website that also relates to Hispanics and Whites, “according to NCES a student’s economic standpoint doesn’t reflect a student’s grades. I beg to differ, however, because the United States no longer lives in a Meritocracy. Meritocracy is a system that is based on how much you work and on how much you have achieved.” Lastly, I will try to use an open-ended question survey to obtain information regarding to culture and expectations affect Hispanic and White students’ “success” at UIUC. I will use the following information to support my thesis:

- Who were your major influences to obtain a higher an education from? For instance, family, power, money, trying to prove yourself, etc...
- Do you feel that people who work hard get what they want no matter how much money their parents or relatives have?
- Do you feel that some races have more privileges and advantages than others?

## Introduction:

The apple doesn't fall far from the tree, an overused acronym for an overused truth. Some people live in a fantasy land where they believe that a person's ethnical and financial background has nothing to do with their "success". What is success? I was brought up being successful means that you have accomplished your main goal in life and have become a respectful figure in society, for example, a successful person can be one that has become president of a corporation to a doctor or a professor. To become successful is to have accomplished ones goals, and the main route needed to obtain that dream is usually to obtain an education, first, by doing well in high school and, second, so one can attend a good university. The goal of education is a precursor to obtaining a *professional* job which represents respect from one's family, children, partner, and society in general. While an educational gaze, in general, varies from culture to culture, the study that I pursued is, specifically, whether or not Whites have a different educational gaze when compared to Hispanics.

## The Apple and the Tree

As an eighteen year old Hispanic male, I know how a Hispanic's background can affect one's success. Since I was in preschool I saw how my whole family would push me to become better both academically and as a person, becoming honest, hardworking, and generous. My parents told me that

they worked hard all their lives to allow me to get to the stage where I am at in my education today. Although according to [nces.ed.gov](http://nces.ed.gov), your economic standpoint doesn't reflect your grades. I beg to differ however, because we no longer live in a Meritocracy. Meritocracy is a system that is based on how much you work and on how much you have achieved. But in today's society money comes into play, for example, when a child who works hard in a public school and has various achievements he doesn't always get into a good university because his public school is not well known. Yet a child who is placed into a private school and whose parents paid thousands for attends that university that the child from the public school couldn't attend only because his/her school was well known and his parents paid a lot of money for. This is why most upper class citizens get their children into outstanding private schools based solely on their social standpoint ([NCES.gov](http://nces.gov)). According to [census.gov](http://census.gov), an average middle age white person makes an average income of about \$40,249 while Hispanics only make an average income of about \$21,035; which gives white people more of a chance to enter a good school (Census Bureau). Since most public schools don't ask for a substantial amount of money as private schools do, than the ones who go to public schools have a disadvantage getting into a good college.

Hispanics can be influenced by how much the average income that their family/ethnicity has and if their family fits into the low income level then they can see it as "normal" to stay at a below average level, which should be the opposite, my understanding is... If you see your family struggling one should strive to do better and represent were you're from, by straying away from the norm. That is why Latinos and Latinas come to Universities like the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign to become successful. The ones who are poor are the ones who have to usually work harder than the rich to obtain success because nothing is handed to them thus they take nothing for granted. Compared to Whites, Latino's have a lower economic standing making it almost impossible to enter a great University because Hispanics tend to not earn as much and can't afford private schools or really good public schools. Leading to the reason why Hispanics work so hard because due to their average low earning as my study

shows, compared to a white person, Hispanic people have to work extra hard so that they can push the apple to fall several feet from the tree.

The reason whites have such a high social standing is because they were the first to immigrate and colonize in this country. An average white male usually doesn't have to work as hard as a minority to obtain a good education since according to the U.S. Census Bureau the majority of white people have a good economic standing and are in a respectful position, which is in a position where you can survive with some leeway as well. The view on an education from a white person's perspective varies from a Hispanic in that becoming successful is a norm that most whites obtain good social positions. Although a significant difference is that most whites have a standard to live up to and come to Universities like UIUC to accomplish every parent's dream... for their children to become even more successful than they were.

In order to expand upon my subject I took a small survey at UIUC. When comparing the views of Hispanics to whites I came across several questions such as what motivates Hispanics and whites, what is the cause, and where do they want to go? I found answers like; Hispanics are motivated to prove the stats of average income and social class wrong and to surpass the average income level of their ethnicity. I saw how whites wanted to stay at their level, such as obtain the average income or obtain the highest level possible, gaining greater than the average Hispanic income in order to surpass their ancestors. The cause of both ethnicities was the same... to become successful, to be simply the best they could possibly be. Where they want to go is up.

With this survey I found that 5% of the people who took the survey found it offensive or very difficult to answer. 70% of the people who took the survey, when asked why they chose the motivational factors that they put down they simply didn't answer or simply said "I don't know." This made me conclude that either the participants don't really know how to put what they think into words,

don't want to write about it, or they simply don't want to take the time to fill out the WHY portion. Discarding the last option I decided that many people don't know why because there really is no answer. Everyone is motivated by different things which by looking at what the surveyor checked (table 1.1) we can catch a small glimpse of what they think.

Overall, according to my research (see Table 1.1), out of 20 people surveyed (19 students and 1 adult) most Hispanic, White, other, male, and female thought that Hispanics were mostly motivated by enacted social stereotypes to obtain an education. The statistics indicate that most students at UIUC think that Hispanics use negative social stereotypes as a fuel to counter those stereotypes and prove them wrong by succeeding. Another type of influence, believed by a shocking 90% of the participants was that Hispanics are mainly influenced by family pressure to do better—in contrast to White student's motivation to obtain success from family pressure which was noticeably less but still came in second place at 65%.

According to the survey, the factor that was most motivational for White students was *continuing* their economic status quo (Table 1.1) This was a very intriguing and unexpected result because although my original hypothesis was that family pressure would be the highest for all participants, maintaining financial status quo as a primary motivational factor for White participants rose above family pressure by 5%. These figures help demonstrate that what motivates one group of people might not motivate the other or, at least, might not be as much of a priority.

If the individuals are the apples, and the ethnicities represent different colors of apples, and the tree represents the overall success rate of that ethnicity, Whites fall close to their trees and Hispanics fall far from their trees and those who are strong try to push themselves to overcome their stereotypes and statistics. Hispanics, have all they need to succeed, some just lack motivation (and money), which makes the apple spoil and rot—like an untapped mind. A white person has a greater tree that makes it

harder to fall from and makes it even harder to fall far from it. Whites are pressured to do well since so many of them are successful, thus making it harder for them to totally mature, become ripe and fall even near the landing spot of the other apples of their kind especially if the branches they fall from are far away from the trunk.

Those who view education as a gateway to success are often influenced either by backgrounds people learn to lust after money and power. Like an apple some are better than others and it all depends on how they are grown, how they are taken care of, what tree they fall from, and how far they land from it.

The motivation UIUC students use as their fuel for achieving success is what got them to the University. Whether they are White or Hispanic they are both motivated by relatively the same thing (although one might have one motivational factor above the other). These motivational factors also helped build the steam for the engine which White and Hispanic students used earlier in life to even do the things that lead to acceptance at UIUC. Now that those students, whether White or Hispanic, are here, there is only one overall motivational factor, no matter how different definitions of success might be, and that factor is to become *successful*.

Hispanic 8 Female 5 20- 40 0  
 Other 7 Transgender 0 40+ 1

Do you think Hispanics are motivated towards obtaining educational Success at UIUC?

Yes 20  
 No 0

What motivating factors do Hispanics need to obtain success at a University like UIUC?

			Male:	Female:	Hispanic Voter:	White Voter:	Other:
Family Pressure (to do better)	18	90%	12	6	6	8	4
Social Stereotypes (such as behavior, jobs, status, etc.)	19	95%	15	4	9	4	6
Cultural Influences (awareness of low/high wages)	14	70%	12	2	4	7	3
Awareness of Raising Earnings Continuing/economical status quo	15	75%	13	2	5	4	6
Fulfill traditional gender role	7	35%	5	1	2	3	2
	8	40%	8	0	2	3	3

Do you think White Students are motivated towards obtaining educational Success at UIUC?

Yes 20  
 No 0

What motivating factors do White Students need to obtain success at a University like UIUC?

			Male:	Female:	Hispanic Voter:	White Voter:	Other:
Family Pressure (to do better)	13	65%	9	4	4	6	3
Social Stereotypes (such as behavior, jobs, status, etc.)	9	45%	7	2	3	2	4
Cultural Influences (awareness of low/high wages)	10	50%	8	2	2	4	4
Awareness of Raising Earnings Continuing/economical status quo	12	60%	9	3	3	6	3
Fulfill traditional gender role	14	70%	9	5	6	4	4
	11	55%	8	3	3	5	3

*Further Study*

In order to elaborate on this research some of the following can be suggested...The survey lacked a bigger audience and conducting a survey with more participants would be more accurate. The survey can also be reworded in order to avoid any confusion within those participating in the research. More adults should be surveyed as well as more women. With my studies one can build upon them by using them to conduct such studies as...

- How are other minority groups motivated to success at UIUC compared to White Students?
- How are certain minority groups motivated towards success at UIUC compared to other minority groups?
- What motivates students to become successful at UIUC in general?
- The same research can be done in other Universities then compared to UIUC.

#### References

Current Population Survey. 2009 Annual Social and Economic Supplement, U.S. Census Bureau, A joint effort between the Bureau of Labor Statistics and the Census Bureau 2008. Oct. 18 2009

Survey used to relate the difference in income levels between Whites and Hispanics.

how Whites have a greater income and lower poverty rates than Hispanics. This is an example of an obstacle that affects a Hispanic's view on education.

Current Income Survey. 2009 Annual Social and Economic Supplement. U.S. Census Bureau, 2008. , A

joint effort between the Bureau of Labor Statistics and the Census Bureau 2008. Oct. 18 2009

Talks about the income of married a single Hispanics in detail.

National Center for Education Statistics. Fast Facts. <<http://www.nces.ed.gov>>. Retrieved from

NCES.gov Oct 18.

Fast Facts states that a student's economic status does not affect their grades, and in the paper I contrast this idea.