

Beyond Acculturation: An Investigation of the Relationship of Familism and Parenting to Behavior Problems in Hispanic Youth

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In the adolescent research literature, acculturation processes have been linked to the development of serious behavior problems in Hispanic adolescents, but not enough is known about how that process takes place. This article reports an investigation that sought to shed light on empirically plausible mechanisms by which family processes (i.e., familism and parenting practices) may operate as mediators of acculturation-related factors on adolescent problem behaviors among 167 Hispanic sixth- or seventh-grade early adolescents. SEM analyses identified an empirically plausible mediated pathway through which parenting practices may operate as a mediator of the effects of acculturation-related variables on adolescent problem behaviors. Second, although the role of familism as a mediator was not supported, the results did provide support for familism having indirect effects on behavior problems also through parenting practices. The findings are discussed in the context of existing research and clinical developments in the treatment of Hispanic adolescents and families.

Keywords: Hispanic; Adolescent; Acculturation; Parenting Practices; Familism; Behavior Problems

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Of the many powerful forces that impact Hispanic adolescents and families, one of the most promising for family process research is acculturation, its links to problem development, and its possible indirect effects through family-level mediators (Berry, 2003;

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Abraído-Lanza, Armbrister, Flórez, & Aguirre, 2006; Gil, Wagner, & Vega, 2000; Santisteban, Muir-Malcolm, Mitrani, & Szapocznik, 2002; Schwartz, Unger, Zamboanga, & Szapocznik, 2010). Of particular concern to clinicians and researchers is the literature that empirically links high levels of acculturation to the development of serious behavior problems and drug use in adolescents (Gonzales, Deardorff, Formoso, Barr, & Barrera, 2006; Tonin, Burrow-Sanchez, Harrison, & Kircher, 2008). This pattern is referred to as the “Immigrant Paradox” (Burnam, Hough, Karno, & Escobar, 1987; Vega et al., 1998). This paradox points to higher rates of behavior, health, and psychiatric problems identified and reported among immigrants who have been in the United States longer when compared with those who have been in the United States less time, and also greater among U.S. born Hispanics as compared with immigrant Hispanics. The paradox is that recent immigrants might be expected to show greater levels of symptomatology due to stressors related to the immigration and acculturation processes (Cervantes, Fisher, Córdova, & Napper, 2011), and to disruptions in support networks.

Some studies suggest that the endorsement of values and behaviors prominent in the host culture are associated with increasing drug use and behavior problems (Vega, Zimmerman, Warheit, & Gil, 2003) whereas others suggest that retaining Hispanic values and behaviors may be linked to lower levels of delinquent activity (Castro, Stein, & Bentler, 2009; Guilamo-Ramos et al., 2009). A careful examination of this literature reveals a number of questions that remain unanswered and worthy of further investigation. One question is whether it is the adolescent’s level of acculturation or the parent’s that may be most predictive of adolescent problems. Although much of the literature appears to assume that the level of adolescent acculturation is most predictive, a closer analysis suggests that the parent level of acculturation may be at least as important as the adolescent’s (Gonzales et al., 2006). Given that many of the plausible mechanisms by which acculturation might have its effects work through family-level processes, it is important to investigate the possible role of parent acculturation.

A second question is whether it is the acquisition of host culture behaviors and values or the loss of culture of origin behaviors and values that are most associated with symptom development. Research conducted with Hispanics supports the value of a two-dimensional model of acculturation that allows the individual’s profile to include a range of participation in both the new host and original culture (Berry, 2003; Schwartz et al., 2010). This more complex way of conceptualizing acculturation replaces the original “unidimensional models” that tended to define acculturation as the *replacement* of culture of origin with new host culture values, beliefs, and behaviors. Now, acculturation can be thought of as a process with many possible combinations of endorsements of the culture of origin and new host culture (Berry, 2003). Use of both the culture of origin and new host culture dimensions adds precision to the investigation of the relationship of these variables to problem development. Although the labels are limited and perhaps even misleading, a Hispanic individual’s endorsement of behaviors of the culture of origin is often described along a “Hispanicism” dimension, whereas endorsement of more mainstream values commonly attributed to life in the United States is labeled along an “Americanism” dimension (Szapocznik, Kurtines, & Fernandez, 1980).

A third unresolved question revolves around the identification of mechanisms by which acculturation processes may have their impact on the development of behavior problems. A number of studies have moved beyond the documentation of the association between acculturation processes and the emergence of behavior problems (i.e., direct effects) to identify specific mechanisms by which acculturation processes might plausibly have indirect “mediated” effects on the development of adolescent problem behaviors. The search for plausible mediators has focused on such factors as acculturation stress and the acquisition of “involuntary minority status” (Gil et al., 2000), family conflict (Gonzales

et al., 2006), and changes in the size of the family network (Allen et al., 2008). Among the candidates, familism (Sabogal, Marín, Otero-Sabogal, & Marín, 1987) and specific parenting practices (Allen et al., 2008; Gorman-Smith, Tolan, Zelli, & Huesmann, 1996; Gil et al., 2000) appear to be particularly promising as plausible mediators.

Familism

The literature on Hispanic families suggests a preference toward “familism” and an emphasis on the importance of the family unit over values of autonomy and individualism (Comas-Diaz, 2006). Among Hispanics, preference toward *familism* has been cited as a protective factor against the development of behavior problems and has been associated with higher levels of parental monitoring in the context of adolescents’ deviant peer relationships (Germán, Gonzales, & Dumka, 2009; Romero & Ruiz, 2007). Research has suggested that certain aspects of familism may decrease as an individual’s acculturation increases (Sabogal et al., 1987), supporting its possible role as a mediator.

Parenting Practices

The literature on adolescent behavior problems has linked parenting practices such as weak limit setting and monitoring to the emergence and/or maintenance of externalizing and other delinquent behavior (Dishion, Bullock, & Granic, 2002; Gayles, Coatsworth, Pantin, & Szapocznik, 2009; Kiesner, Dishion, Poulin, & Pastore, 2009; Wagner et al., 2010). An empirical literature also exists documenting how cultural beliefs and values about parenting as well as actual parenting practices vary between different countries and cultural traditions (Domenech Rodríguez, Donovanick, & Crowley, 2009). Given the central role of parenting practices in the development of behavior problems, the possible relationship between familism and parenting practices, and the ethnic differences that have been found in parenting practices, a promising avenue of investigation focuses on whether familism and parenting practices may mediate the effects of adolescent and/or parent Hispanicism and Americanism on adolescent behavior problems.

The scientific and clinical significance of advancing our understanding of the processes and negative impacts of acculturation is increased by the fact that Hispanics are among the largest and fastest growing minority group in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau Estimates, 2010). The health of this large cohort of children is significant given that Hispanics are estimated to make up 16% of the general population in the United States, with 39% of the Hispanic population younger than 18 compared with 27% for the total population (U.S. Census Bureau Estimates, 2010). Research findings that shed light on the interface between acculturation, parenting, and child outcomes are needed to inform the development of efficacious interventions for Hispanics (Santisteban, Mena, & McCabe, 2011) and the training of the next generation of counselors who must be increasingly attentive to family processes that might be impacted by culture-related processes in minority families (Shriver & Allen, 2008).

Research Aims

Drawing on the literature above, Figure 1 presents a conceptual model of the hypothesized pattern of acculturation and family process effects. Consistent with the goal of empirically investigating plausible mechanisms by which parent and adolescent acculturation may have an effect on family values and parenting practices as possible mediators of youth problem behaviors, this study sought to investigate the following direct effects, specific effects, and mediated effects:

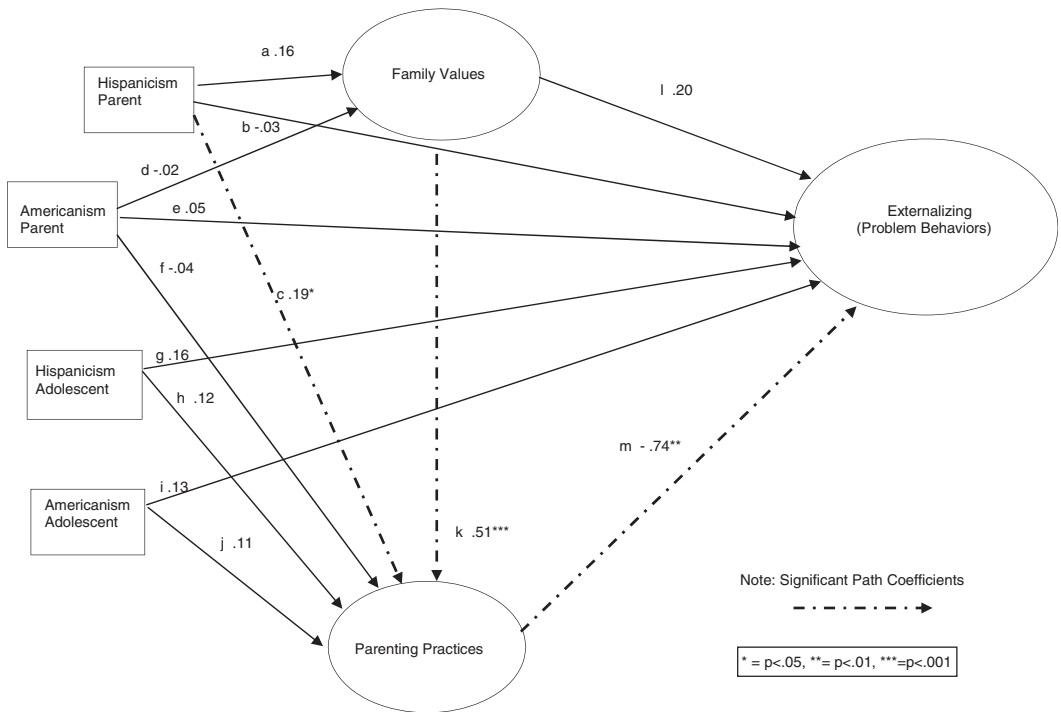


FIGURE 1. Empirical Pattern of Acculturation and Family Process Effects

Direct effects

Based on extensive previous research linking adolescent Americanism and/or Hispanicism to behavior problems, the model hypothesized that adolescent Hispanicism would be related to adolescent problem behaviors (Path –g) and that higher levels of adolescent Americanism would be related to higher scores on adolescent behavior problems (Path +i).

Based on a small but compelling literature on the relation between parent acculturation and problem behaviors (Gonzales et al., 2006), the conceptual model hypothesized that lower levels of parent Hispanicism would be related to higher scores on adolescent problem behaviors (Path –b) and that higher levels of parent Americanism would be related to higher scores on adolescent behavior problems (Path +e).

Specificity of effects

With respect to the specificity of effects of the acculturation variables on the hypothesized mediator variables (i.e., familism and parenting practices), the model hypothesized that higher levels of parent Hispanicism would have direct effects on both higher levels of familism (Path +a) and parenting practices (Path +c). Furthermore, it was hypothesized that higher levels of parent Americanism would have direct effects on both lower levels of familism (Path –d) and parenting practices (Path –f). In addition, in the absence of any previous empirical research or strong theoretical rationale, the conceptual model hypothesized a similar pattern of effects for the adolescent acculturation variables on parenting practices. Specifically, higher levels of adolescent Hispanicism would be related to higher levels of parenting practices (Path +h) and higher levels of adolescent Americanism would be related to lower levels of parenting practices (Path –j).

Mediation

Drawing on the extensive literature on the effect of family processes on adolescent problem behaviors and the emerging literature on the effects of acculturation on familism and parenting cited above, the conceptual model hypothesized that higher levels of family values would operate as a mediator of the effects that parent Hispanicism has on adolescent problem behaviors (Path +a \rightarrow -l) and that parent Americanism has on problem behaviors (Path -d \rightarrow -l). The model also hypothesized that parenting practices would operate as mediators of the effects that higher levels of parent Hispanicism have on lower levels of adolescent problem behaviors (Path +c \rightarrow -m) and lower levels of parent Americanism have on lower levels of problem behaviors (Path -f \rightarrow -m).

In addition, the model hypothesized that parenting practices would operate as mediators of the effects that adolescent Hispanicism has on adolescent problem behaviors (Path +h \rightarrow -m) and that adolescent Americanism has on problem behaviors (Path -j \rightarrow -m).

METHOD

Participants

Participants for the current study were 167 Hispanic primary caregivers (primary caregivers were defined as the person who had primary responsibility for the daily management of the adolescent) and their sixth- or seventh-grade early adolescents who were participating in a multiethnic preventive intervention; Structural Ecosystems Preventive Intervention study (Pantin et al., 2003). Families were recruited from three middle schools serving low income urban neighborhoods in south Florida. The data for the current study are from the baseline assessments, prior to delivery of any intervention activities. The demographic characteristics of this Hispanic sample are presented in Table 1.

Data Collection

All study procedures were approved by the University of Miami IRB. All participating youth and their parents signed assent and consent forms, respectively, after having the details of the study explained to them and prior to initiating participation. The study assessors were bachelor level professionals who were trained to administer the instruments as a standardized protocol and all assessors were bilingual, speaking both English and Spanish. Assessments were conducted in an interview style using paper-and-pencil questionnaires or entered directly on laptop computers. Parents and children were interviewed separately to ensure confidentiality. Assessments were conducted in English or Spanish depending on the preference of the participant.

Measures

Spanish versions of all measures were created using a method of translation and back translation. Both adolescent and parent completed a questionnaire which included basic demographics information. The parent questionnaire also included information about their educational and occupational levels.

Bicultural involvement

Both the parent's and the adolescent's levels of bicultural involvement were assessed using a modified version of the Bicultural Involvement Questionnaire (Szapocznik et al., 1980). This measure is based on the two-dimensional model of acculturation and allows the assessment of Hispanic and American culture independent of each other. Participants assess their comfort with Hispanic and Anglo American language, food, media, and tradi-

TABLE 1
Demographic Characteristics of Participants (N = 167)

Characteristic	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Youth age	12.4	.8
Adolescent Americanism	86.1	12.2
Adolescent Hispanicism	66.7	17.4
Parent Americanism	63.2	19.4
Parent Hispanicism	81.6	15.0
Characteristic	<i>Median</i>	
Family income	\$15,000–\$20,000	
Characteristic	%	
Youth Born in U.S.	49	
Parents Born in U.S.	6	
Family composition		
One parent (usually mother)	30	
Two biological parents	57	
Two other parental figures	13	
Caregiver ethnicity		
Argentina	6	
Bolivia	6	
Chile	.6	
Columbia	7.8	
Cuban	37.1	
Dominican Republic	3	
Ecuador	2.4	
El Salvador	2.4	
Guatemala	4.8	
Honduras	5.4	
Mexico	.6	
Nicaragua	19.8	
Peru	2.4	
Puerto Rico	3.6	
U.S.A.	6.6	
Uruguay	6	
Venezuela	.8	
Parent primary language		
Spanish	57	
English	7	
Bilingual	36	
Gender		
Male	61	
Female	39	

tions to yield separate Americanism and Hispanicism subscales. There are 21 items in each subscale; $\alpha = .94$ and $.96$ with higher scores representing stronger identification with either culture.

Familism

Familism was assessed using the Familism scale (Sabogal et al., 1987) which assesses the value that emphasizes the role of family loyalty and responsibility. The scale contains 15 items organized into three subscales: (1) Family Obligations (six items; $\alpha = .72$) indexes perceived obligation to assist the family; (2) Family Support (three items; $\alpha = .83$) assesses

beliefs that the family should be a source of social support; and (3) Family as Referent (five items; $\alpha = .61$) assesses the belief that relatives should be used as behavioral and attitudinal referents.

Parenting

Parenting was measured using the parent report on the Parenting Practices scale (Gorman-Smith et al., 1996). The parent version assesses four dimensions of parenting: (1) Positive Parenting (six items, $\alpha = .80$); (2) Extent of Parental Involvement in the child's life (12 items, $\alpha = .83$); (3) Avoidance of Discipline (seven items, $\alpha = .89$); and (4) Discipline Effectiveness (five items, $\alpha = .71$). Gorman-Smith et al. (1996) created two higher order factors, "Involvement/Positive Parenting" and "Discipline", by combining Positive Parenting with Extent of Involvement and combining Avoidance of Discipline with Discipline Effectiveness, respectively. In the sample reported here, there were also high correlations between Positive Parenting and Extent of Involvement ($r = .48$) and between Avoidance of Discipline and Discipline Effectiveness ($r = -.58$), supporting the decision to form the same two composites: "Involvement/Positive Parenting" (18 items, $\alpha = .87$) and "Discipline" (12 items, $\alpha = .91$) for use in the Structural Equations Modeling analyses.

Problem behavior

Problem behavior was assessed from the parent perspective using a parent report of the 89-item Revised Behavior Problem Checklist (RBPC) (Quay & Peterson, 1987). Three subscales from this measure were used to index externalizing problems: (1) Conduct Disorder, which assesses oppositional and defiant behavior (22 items, $\alpha = .96$); (2) Socialized Aggression, an index of peer-based deviant behaviors (17 items, $\alpha = .93$); and (3) Attention Problems, which assesses the adolescent's distractibility and impulsivity (17 items, $\alpha = .95$). This measure has been used in both clinical and nonclinical populations and a Spanish translation version shows similar factor structure to the original English version (Rio, Quay, Santisteban, & Szapocznik, 1989).

Adolescent reports of their problem behaviors were indexed by five subscales from five measures. The five subscales were as follows: (1) the Behavior Scale Part I (Resnicow, 1997) which assesses the frequency of deviant, antisocial behaviors (13 items; $\alpha = .82$); (2) the aggression subscale from the Interpersonal Competence Scale (Cairns, Leung, Gest, & Cairns, 1994), which indexes argumentativeness and physical hostility (three items; $\alpha = .64$); (3) the behavior subscale of the Piers-Harris Self-Concept scale (Piers, 1984), which measures the adolescents, perception of their conventional behavior in school and at home (16 items; $\alpha = .77$); (4) the classroom behavior scale from the Child Competence Scale (Coatsworth, 1992), which indexes the extent of problem behavior in school (four items; $\alpha = .86$); and (5) the Self-Control subscale, a modified version of the Conners-Wells Self Report Scale, which assesses anger control (eight items; $\alpha = .92$). These five scales correlated strongly and significantly with each other (ranging from $r = .47$ to $r = .71$; $p < .001$) and were thus combined into the adolescent reported behavior problem composite ($\alpha = .88$). Among our measures, two subscales failed to reach conventional levels of acceptable internal reliability (alpha greater than .70). We elected to retain the subscales because of their conceptual importance and contributions to the latent constructs.

Analyses

Structural equations modeling using AMOS 4 (Arbuckle, 1999) with standard model-fitting procedures and maximum-likelihood estimation was used to investigate the main research aims of the study. Structural equations modeling allowed an examination of the

direct and indirect effects of the latent constructs simultaneously and to evaluate how well the hypothesized model's structure fit the data. The fit of the models was evaluated using the overall Chi-Square test and three goodness of fit indices: (1) The Comparative Fit Index (CFI; Bentler, 1990), which has been found to be less biased when small sample sizes are used (Marsh, Balla, & McDonald, 1988); (2) The Bentler-Bonett Non-Normative Fit Index (NNFI; Bentler & Bonett, 1980), which in addition to being less affected by sample size also includes a correction for model complexity given that models with more parameters tend to fit the data better than do simpler ones; and (3) The Root Mean Squared Error of Approximation (RMSEA; Browne & Cudeck, 1993), which is a value that represents the standardized summary of the average covariance residuals (the difference between the observed and model-implied covariances), but that also includes a built-in adjustment for model complexity.

RESULTS

Preliminary Analyses

We examined descriptive statistics for the acculturation, familism, parenting practices, and behavior problem scales for overall mean levels and basic distributional properties. As is common in the literature, same reporter variables were more strongly correlated than cross-reporter. Consistent with previous research, higher levels of adolescent Americanism were significantly related to higher levels of adolescent-reported Behavior Problems and higher levels of adolescent Hispanicism were related to lower levels of adolescent-reported behavior problems, but this did not hold up for the parent reports of behavior problems. Similarly, higher levels of parent Americanism were significantly related to higher levels of adolescent and parent reported behavior problems and higher levels of Parent Hispanicism were related to lower levels of adolescent and parent reported behavior problems. Consistent with prior research on differential levels of acculturation between parents and children (Martinez, 2006), adolescents reported higher levels of Americanism ($M = 86.1$, $SD = 12.2$) than their parents ($M = 63.2$, $SD = 19.4$), $t(332) = 12.93$, $p < .001$, whereas parents reported higher levels of Hispanicism ($M = 81.6$, $SD = 15.0$) than their children ($M = 66.7$, $SD = 17.4$), $t(332) = 8.41$, $p < .001$.

Latent Constructs in the Structural Equation Model

Three constructs were created in this study to investigate the relationships of interest and the factor loadings of each indicator for familism, parenting practices, and externalizing behavior problem constructs. The latent construct of familism was indexed by three subscales from the familism scale (Sabogal et al., 1987), each scale showing acceptable loadings in the SEM ranging from .41 for the family as referent indicator to .84 for the family obligations indicator. The Parenting Practices construct was indexed by two scales, involvement and discipline, derived from higher order factors with four subscales from the Parenting Practices scale (Gorman-Smith et al., 1996). The factor loadings for the involvement and discipline indicators were .40 and .88, respectively. The last latent factor, externalizing, was indexed by three parent report scales from the RBPC (Quay & Peterson, 1987), attention problem, conduct disorder, and socialized aggression and one adolescent report indicator, behavior problem, a composite derived from five adolescent report scales as described in the measure section. The factor loadings for the externalizing behavior construct ranged from .50 for the adolescent report indicator of behavior problem to .95 for the conduct disorder indicator.

Preliminary Acculturation Analyses

As part of the preliminary analyses, we investigated the relation between the parent and adolescent acculturation variables and the latent variable of externalizing behavior in separate models. These models included only a single path from parent or adolescent individual acculturation variables (Americanism and Hispanicism) to the latent variable externalizing problem. Consistent with the previously cited research on the parent acculturation and problem behaviors (Gonzales et al., 2006), the results for this preliminary model indicated moderate and statistically significant paths from parent Americanism and Hispanicism to Externalizing Behavior. Specifically, higher levels of parent Americanism were related to higher levels of Externalizing ($B = .17, p < .05$). Also, as hypothesized, higher levels of Parent Hispanicism were related to lower levels of Externalizing ($B = -.21, p < .01$). In contrast, the relations between adolescent acculturation variables and the externalizing construct were weak and not statistically significant ($B = .07, p = .41$; $B = .01, p = .95$, for child Americanism and Hispanicism, respectively).

Structural Equation Model: Investigating Direct and Mediated Effects

In general, distributions of the responses showed acceptable levels of normality, reflected in skewness parameters less than 1. Distributions with absolute values of univariate skew greater than 1, however, were transformed to obtain more even distributions and correct for outliers (Armitage & Berry, 1987). The results of the analysis of the full model (see Figure 1) examined the direct and indirect effect of both parent and adolescent report of Hispanicism and Americanism on the latent construct of externalizing behaviors as well as the unique contribution of familism and parenting practices on externalizing behavior.

We allowed three pairs of error terms from the adolescent reported indicators (adolescent Americanism, Hispanicism, and behavior problem) to be correlated with one another to control for same reporter bias given that the majority of indicators in the model (10 of 13) were parent-reported. After correlating two more pairs of error terms from parent-reported indicators (Americanism with family as referent and Americanism with parental involvement), the model provided a good fit, $\chi^2(48, N = 167) = 60.20, p > .05$, consistent with the CFI = .98, NNFI = .97, and the RMSEA = .04.

Direct effects

As can be seen from Figure 1, with respect to the direct effects of acculturation variables the results show that once plausible mediators are included, there are no direct effects of acculturation variables on externalizing behaviors. Neither adolescent nor parent Hispanicism or Americanism was significantly related to the externalizing latent construct (Paths b, e, g, i). The direct effects results, however, did indicate that parent Hispanicism was significantly related to parenting (Path c, $B = .19, p < .05$). Familism was not directly related to externalizing behaviors (Path l), but it did have a direct effect on parenting practices (Path k, $B = .51, p < .001$). Parenting practices were the only variable in the model that had a direct effect on the latent externalizing variable, and that was highly significant (Path m, $B = -.74, p < .01$).

Indirect effects

As can be seen from Figure 1, with respect to family variables as mediators of the effects of acculturation on externalizing problem behaviors in Hispanic families, the results yielded some empirically promising results. First, the results identified an empirically plausible mediated pathway (Path +k → Path -m) through which parenting practices may operate as a mediator of the effects of familism on externalizing problem

behaviors. Second, the results also provided support for the hypothesis that parenting practices may operate as a mediator of the effects of parent Hispanicism on adolescent problem behaviors, Path +c \rightarrow Path -m. The hypothesis that familism would mediate the effect of parent Hispanicism on problem behaviors (Path +a \rightarrow -l) was not supported.

DISCUSSION

Efforts to further our understanding of acculturation effects and the development of efficacious family-based interventions for Hispanic adolescents showing behavior problems requires the refinement and extension of our conceptualization of how family and acculturation processes work together to impact externalizing behavior. Specifically, an analysis of the available literature suggests that a logical next step is to investigate empirically plausible mechanisms by which family processes may operate as mediators of the impact of acculturation effects on adolescent problem behaviors. Our study yielded several interesting findings. First, our investigation of the possible mediating roles of familism and parenting practices pointed firmly to the role of parenting practices as a mediator of the relationship between parent Hispanicism and early adolescent behavior problems. Although the role that familism may play in these processes is discussed in more detail below, it did not appear to serve a mediating function as did parenting practices. Analyses suggested that the lower levels of externalizing behaviors often found among the children of parents who endorse highly Hispanic behaviors/values on acculturation measures may be attributable to parenting practices that are characterized by higher levels of involvement, positive parenting, effective discipline, and lower levels of discipline avoidance. The pattern of relationships revealed in the SEM analyses points to a set of empirically plausible mediated pathways through which parenting practices may operate as a mediator of the effects of both familism and parent Hispanicism on externalizing problem behaviors. This finding supports the important role of parenting practices in the family process literature (Gayles et al., 2009) and the emphasis evidence-based family-oriented interventions place on improving parenting practices (e.g., Schmidt, Liddle, & Dakof, 1996; Santisteban et al., 2011).

The finding that a strong family orientation as measured by familism is highly associated with successful parenting is also important. It was particularly interesting that familism was separate and distinct from the Hispanicism variable. That is, familism was not a mediator of the acculturation-related effects on behavior problems as originally hypothesized. The effect of Hispanicism on adolescent behavior was not due to a high level of familism that is often attributed to the Hispanic culture. In our sample, familism emerged as a distinct and important variable after controlling for the effects of acculturation-related variables. The strong relationship between familism and parenting practices in this Hispanic sample suggests that the “value” of familism may be associated with the implementation of specific and successful parenting practices. Again, it is not surprising that many family interventions seek to punctuate and strengthen the commitment and support that adult family members communicate toward each other and toward their children.

A third important finding was that the strategy of conceptualizing Hispanicism and Americanism separately and of collecting both parent and adolescent reports of these acculturation variables was valuable. Our results revealed that parent-reported level of Hispanicism had a stronger relationship with the family-level variables of interest than did adolescent variables such as Americanism. These findings suggest that it would be useful for adolescent research focused on acculturating families to collect data on parent acculturation and to separate Hispanicism and Americanism.

The findings of this study have important clinical implications for practitioners working with Hispanic parents of adolescents demonstrating behavior problems. A more complete

understanding of how family-level processes can either protect or conversely place youngsters at risk within a larger context of acculturation and immigration-related stressors can be helpful in the development and utilization of culturally informed and efficacious prevention and treatment interventions. Practitioners need to be well versed on the strengths that may be associated with the Hispanic family's culture of origin and with familism and how these may create the context for effective parenting that consists of higher levels of involvement and monitoring. In terms of parenting practices, the data support the warning expressed by Baer, Prince, and Velez (2004) that care must be taken to avoid prematurely labeling highly involved parents as overly intrusive, enmeshed, or as thwarting of the youth's autonomy and individuation. Although there may be maladaptive ways in which high involvement can be expressed, our findings are consistent with others showing that highly involved parenting may be associated with lower behavior problems in adolescents. The "Immigrant Paradox" pattern in which "less acculturated families" have youth with fewer behavior problems despite the stress of having more recently immigrated may be due in part to this type of more involved parenting practices among individuals who maintain a strong expression of their culture of origin.

Similarly, the strong relationship of familism to effective parenting practices validates the emphasis family therapists working with behavior problem youth often place on rebuilding family support and an obligation to family. It may well be that many families may require work at the level of the values and attitudes that parents have about their role in relation to their children. In working with families, it is often the case that the most important and difficult work is to repair relationships and reengage parents who have abdicated their roles as leaders due to their own hopelessness about the family's future together. Further research is needed to continue to tease apart not only the critically important role of parenting but also the contextual factors and family characteristics that may support the most effective types of parenting. Future research in this area should also investigate the culture-bound meaning that youth may attribute to specific types of parenting practices. There is some evidence that youth from different ethnic/race backgrounds may give substantially different affective meaning (i.e., caring/loving vs. controlling/manipulating) to their parents' parenting practices. Given the important impact, high levels of involvement can have, it would be helpful to investigate whether there are adolescent perceptions of parenting that can create barriers to these positive effects. This line of research may shed light on such family therapy techniques as reframing which are often used to modify the attributions made by youth regarding the intention and meaning behind certain parenting practices.

Limitations

There were several limitations in the current study that should be highlighted. One limitation is that this study was cross-sectional and as such, a causal relationship cannot be established, for example between parenting and behavior problems. Second, our sample size was too small to allow for an analysis of different patterns depending on the particular nation of origin within the "Hispanic" umbrella. Finally, our model focused on "individual level" acculturation variables and did not account for the possible impact of culture at the larger systemic level.

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