Latina/o Adolescents’ Perceived Supportive Family Relationships and Internalizing Symptoms: Examination of Bidirectional Effects

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• Family members support adolescent psychosocial adjustment (Simpson, Vannucci, & Ohannessian, 2018)
• Latino/a cultural values around the family (e.g. familism) may magnify the protective features of the family for Latino/a adolescents (Stein et al., 2014)
Internalizing Symptoms

- Internalizing symptoms increase in adolescence (Graber & Sontag, 2009)
- Anxiety and depressive symptoms are a particular concern for Latino/a youth in the U.S. (Anderson & Mayes, 2010)
  - Stresses related to minority status & acculturation (Lawton & Gerdes, 2014)
  - Cultural values around emotions and social dynamics (Varela & Hensley-Maloney, 2009)
- Gender differences (Smokowski et al., 2014)
Evidence suggests that adolescent girls may be more sensitive to some family-driven effects than boys (Updegraff, Delgado, & Wheeler, 2009).

However, there may be important parent gender differences at work as well (Suizzo et al., 2017).

- The role of fathers in Latino/a families (García, Manongdo, & Ozechowski, 2014)
Relational Developmental Systems Theories highlight mutual contextual influences between adolescents and their families (Overton, 2015).

For adolescents, the protective features of the family may be eroded over time by adolescent internalizing symptoms (Russell, Simpson, Flannery, & Ohannessian, 2017).

Dearth of research examining reciprocal relationships over time for Latino/a families and adolescent internalizing symptoms (Fanti, Henrich, Brookmeyer, & Kuperminc, 2008).
The Present Study

Study aims

1) to examine bidirectional associations between supportive family relationships and adolescent internalizing symptoms over time in a sample of Latino/a adolescents

2) to examine parent and adolescent gender differences
   a. Girls’ sensitivity
   b. Role of fathers
Method: Participants

- Part of a larger longitudinal study of early adolescent internalizing symptoms (N = 1,345)
- The PANDA Project (Predictors of Anxiety and Depression in Adolescence) www.pandaresearchproject.org
- N = 340 Latina/o adolescents attending public middle schools in Connecticut and Massachusetts
- Mean age at T1 = 13.15, SD = .79 years
- 51% girls
Method: Participant Families

Adolescents lived with:
- 90% with biological mothers
- 42% with biological fathers
- 2% with a step mother
- 25% with step father
- 7% with grandmother
- 4% with grandfather
- 50% with 1+ sisters
- 51% with 1+ brothers

Average Parent Education

- Elementary or Middle School: 5%
- High School or GED: 13%
- Two Year College or Trade School: 20%
- Four Year College: 46%
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Example Item</th>
<th>Internal Consistency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Open Communication subscale of the Parent-Adolescent Communication Scale (PACS; Barnes &amp; Olson, 2003)</td>
<td>“My mother/father is always a good listener.”</td>
<td>α=.93 for mothers, α=.94 for fathers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family subscale of the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS; Cheng &amp; Chan, 2004)</td>
<td>“I get the emotional help and support I need from my family.”</td>
<td>α=.90</td>
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## Method:
**Internalizing Symptom Measures**

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<td>The Screen for Childhood Anxiety Related Disorders (SCARED; Birmaher et al., 1999)</td>
<td>“I am nervous.”</td>
<td>α=.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale for Children (CES-DC; Weissman et al., 1980)</td>
<td>“I felt down and unhappy.”</td>
<td>α=.90</td>
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Method: Procedures

- Passive parental consent and adolescent assent obtained
- Surveys administered by trained research personnel
- Data collection during fall 2016 and spring 2017
- Surveys took ~ 1 hour to complete
- Students received a movie voucher for a local theater
Analytic Plan: Multiple Group Path Analysis By Gender
Evidence for Adolescent Gender Differences?

- Analyses controlled for adolescent age and mean parent education
- Model fit: $X^2(2) = 3.20, p > .05$, RMSEA = .04, CFI = 1.00, SRMR = .02
- Compared model fit for unconstrained model in relation to model with loadings constrained across girls and boys
- Significant Chi Square Difference Test
- Change in CFI >.01
- Evidence that paths are different for girls and boys
Results: Boys

Model fit: $X^2(9) = 11.95, p > .05$, RMSEA = .04, CFI = 1.00, SRMR = .03. Analyses controlled for adolescent age and mean parent education. Only significant non-stability paths are depicted.
Results: Girls

Adolescent Depressive Symptoms T1
Adolescent Anxiety Symptoms T1
Family Support T1
Open Communication with Mother T1
Open Communication with Father T1
Adolescent Depressive Symptoms T2
Adolescent Anxiety Symptoms T2
Family Support T2
Open Communication with Mother T2
Open Communication with Father T2

Model fit: $X^2(9) = 11.95, p > .05$, RMSEA = .04, CFI = 1.00, SRMR = .03. Analyses controlled for adolescent age and mean parent education. Only significant non-stability paths are depicted.
Implications

• Findings:
  • Replicated gender differences in family-driven effects on adolescent psychosocial adjustment for Latino/a youth
  • Underscored the role of father-adolescent daughter relationships for Latino/a girls’ internalizing symptoms
  • Evidence of bidirectional relationships suggest role of feedback loops
Conclusions

- Supportive family relationships are important for Latino/a youth’s psychosocial development.
- But, the quality of that support may be impacted by earlier youth internalizing symptoms.
Thank you

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• Audience members