



Autonomy Expectation Discrepancies, Parent-adolescent Cultural Orientation Gaps, and Parent-adolescent Conflict in Latino Families

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Abstract

This study was designed to investigate linkages among autonomy expectations, cultural orientations, and parent-adolescent conflict in Latino families. Specifically, the study examined whether autonomy expectation discrepancies and cultural orientation gaps between parents and their adolescent were related to parent-adolescent conflict intensity. Participants were adolescents (11 to 17 years old) and their maternal caregiver (18 years and older). Results indicated that adolescent familism was significantly correlated to adolescent reports of parent-adolescent conflict intensity. Findings also revealed that adolescent sex was significantly correlated to adolescent autonomy age expectations, such that on average, adolescent females reported later age expectations, closer to 18 years of age or never, and males reported earlier age expectations, especially when it came to engaging in activities that typically have age restriction (i.e., doing drugs). However, both adolescent males and females had generally the same age expectations (14-17 years old) when it came to mundane tasks (i.e., chores). Lastly, the regression analysis showed only a marginal significance between adolescent familism and parent-adolescent conflict intensity.

Keywords: Parent-adolescent, Autonomy Expectations, Cultural Orientation, Familism, Latino Families, Conflict, Gender

Introduction

The relational conflict between parents and their adolescents and contribution to adolescent adjustment has been a subject of consistent interest over the past several decades. Particular attention has been given to conflict frequency across adolescence (Adams & Laursen, 2007). Montemayor (1983) proposed that conflict between parents and their children increases during early adolescence, stabilizes during middle adolescence, and declines in late adolescence. Recent scholarship, however, reports a linear decline in conflict frequency from early to late adolescence, although there is an increase in intensity (Laursen & Collins, 2009). This latter pattern of increased intensity warrants investigations that focus on parent-adolescent conflict intensity and its potential consequences for youth outcomes.

Family scholars express the need for future research to adequately acknowledge the cultural diversity and complexity of contemporary family life (Bornstein & Sawyer, 2006). Ethnic-racial minority families, specifically, are embedded in diverse cultural (e.g., acculturation) and social (i.e., neighborhood communities) contexts that can shape family life (Cox and Paley, 1997). This suggests that family dynamics, including parent-adolescent conflict and the factors that contribute to its presence, may differ for families from diverse cultural backgrounds. For example, parent-adolescent conflict in Latino families in the U.S. derives, in part, as a result of differences in cultural orientations between parent and adolescent (Basáñez, Dennis, Crano, Stacy, & Unger, 2014). Latino adolescents adapt American values more easily and readily than do Latino parents, creating parent-child discrepancies, or gap, in cultural orientation (De La Rosa, Vega, & Radisch, 2000). Another factor that is implicated in parent-adolescent conflict are autonomy disagreements between parents and adolescents, which have been found to be associated with adolescent adjustment including low self-esteem, academic engagement, and academic confidence (Basáñez, Dennis, Crano, Stacy, & Unger, 2014). The current study extends previous work by providing an examination on factors (cultural values and autonomy age expectations) that may relate to parent-adolescent conflict intensity in Latino families.

Family Systems Theory

A family system functions as a unit comprised of subsystems that include individuals in relationships (Bornstein & Sawyer, 2006). Within a family system, parent-adolescent dyad relational domains have consistently been linked to adolescent outcomes (Steinberg, 2001; DuBois, Eitel, & Felner, 1994; Skinner & McHale, 2016; Telzer, Yuen, Gonzales, & Fuligni, 2016). For instance, the quality of the bond between parent and adolescent affects adolescents' emotional development, school performance, and social growth (Driscoll & Pianta, 2011). Specific to the current study, parent-child conflict is an important parent-child relationship domain that changes in adolescence (Laursen & Collins, 2009) and contributes to adolescent wellbeing (Adams & Laursen, 2007). Importantly, while both boys and girls report conflict with parents, adolescents reported a greater percentage of conflicts with their mothers than with their fathers (Montemayor, 1982). Given the importance of conflict within the parent-child relationship, it is important to identify factors that contribute to conflict, especially in Latino families raising adolescents who experience normative developmental changes and cultural adaptation concurrently, both of which can contribute to conflict. In the current study, we focus on predictors of mother-youth conflict.

Parent-Adolescent Conflict

Historically, three theories of adolescent development (psychoanalytic, sociobiological, and cognitive developmental) have been used to explain increases and changes in the nature of conflict between parents and youth (Laursen & Collins, 1994). The psychoanalytic perspective is a Neo-Freudian view that describes the alignment between an adolescent's physiological and behavioral maturation (Laursen and Collins, 1994). For example, once adolescents reach puberty, they begin to spend less time with their family and more time with individuals outside of their immediate family such as peers. This detachment from parents leads to parent-adolescent conflict as the adolescent readjust their relationship by substituting close family ties with peers (Laursen and Collins, 1994).

Sociobiological perspectives describe the way in which biological maturation causes an abrupt change in adolescent behavior, thus introducing heightened parent-adolescent conflict at the onset of puberty (Laursen and Collins, 1994). Cognitive development perspectives describe the way in which an adolescent's intellectual maturation provides a better understanding of the self and their relationships with others (Laursen & Collins 1994). The adolescent's new way of thinking increases parent-adolescent conflict as the adolescent begins to reject parent input in their decisions and attempt to gain autonomy from parents (Smetana, 1988). In line with a cognitive developmental perspective, we focus on adolescents' and parents' expectations of the ages when they each consider appropriate for the adolescents to engage in a number of autonomous behaviors. We specifically examined how autonomy age expectations from adolescents, parents, and the discrepancies within the parent-adolescent dyad in autonomy age expectations related to parent-adolescent conflict intensity.

Parent-adolescent conflict has been studied in terms of frequency (how often disagreements happen) and intensity (severity of disagreements). Frequency is the most prominent focus of parent-child conflict research thus far (Laursen & Collins, 1994), with intensity, studied to a much lesser extent. Several scholars have examined changes in frequency of parent-adolescent conflict throughout adolescence. Ashraf and Najma (2011) and Laursen and Collins (1994) both found the same pattern, wherein parent-adolescent conflict increases and peaks during the early years of adolescence and declines during late adolescence. Yet recent scholarship reports a linear decline in conflict frequency from early to late adolescence, as well as an increase in intensity (Laursen & Collins, 2009). A number of studies have examined the link between parent-adolescent conflict frequency and adolescent outcomes in Latino samples (e.g., Bámaca-Colbert, Umaña-Taylor & Gayles, 2012; Pasch, Tschann, Flores, Penilla, & Pantoja, 2006). For example, a study with Mexican American families found that parent-adolescent conflict frequency was associated with negative adolescent outcomes, such as anxiety, depression, anger, school misconduct, and substance abuse (Pasch et al., 2006). Less is known about conflict intensity among Latino families but a study by Skinner and McHale (2016) examined parent and adolescent reports of conflict intensity in African American families and their findings revealed that parent-adolescent conflict intensity had implications for youth adjustment and family relationships. Young adolescent siblings who report high conflict in the family reported more depressive symptoms and risky behavior than families who experienced low conflict (Skinner & McHale, 2016). Thus, in the current study we focus on factors that may contribute to the intensity of conflict that Latino youth experience with parents.

It is important to note that gender socialization practices based on traditional Latino cultures might generate more conflict in parent-daughter relationships than in parent-son relationships (Roblyer, Bámaca-Colbert, Rojas, & Cervantes, 2015). For example, when adolescents reach pubertal status, they tend to spend more time with peers than family (Larsen and Collins, 1994), but the expectation in Latino families may be for Latina girls to remain family oriented and tend to household tasks (Romo, Mireles-Rios, & Lopez-Tello, 2014). Thus, Latina girls may experience more pressure from family than Latino boys do fulfill household responsibilities, and this may create more conflict between the parent-daughter dyad as girls may try to address the unequal treatment. Past work has also underscored the salience of gender and how adolescent males and females have differing gendered experiences within family contexts due to socialization (Raffaelli & Ontai, 2004). For example, a study by Crean (2008) focused on Latino families and examined the effects of support and conflict within a mother-father-youth context. The study revealed that for boys' internalizing problems, mother and father support served as a protective factor regardless of the level of conflict with the opposite parent. In contrast, for girls, highly conflictive mother-daughter relationships were associated with increased internalizing and externalizing symptomology, and father support added little in predicting symptomology (Crean, 2008). Therefore, we examined whether gender (i.e., male and female) moderated the association between predictive factors and intensity of conflict in the parent-adolescent relationship.

Autonomy

The acquisition of autonomy is a crucial part of adolescents' psychological development, as they explore their identities aside from that of their parents (Smollar & Youniss, 1989). Two aspects of adolescent autonomy that have been studied are emotional and behavioral. Emotional autonomy refers to adolescents' subjective sense of emotional independence from parental figures (Grotevant, 1998). Behavioral autonomy is the extent to which the adolescent can self-govern himself or herself in the absence of parental guidance or monitoring (Grotevant, 1998). Ways in which adolescent behavioral autonomy has been examined include assessing the amount of freedom an adolescent is granted from a parent or the age expectations at which adolescents and parents expect youth to engage in certain behaviors, such as dating (Bámaca-Colbert, Umaña-Taylor, & Gayles 2012).

For most families in the United States, attainment of autonomy and independence is considered a central developmental task during the adolescent years (Zimmer-Gembeck & Collins, 2006). In Western societies, adolescents are expected to have an increased desire for individuation and parents increasingly expect their adolescents to be able to make their own decisions (Zimmer-Gembeck & Collins, 2003). However, these autonomy expectations and desires vary between cultures and are especially complex if families hold collectivistic norms within an individualistic dominant culture that emphasizes autonomy (Collins & Steinberg, 2006). For example, In Latino families, some parents perceive an adolescent's desire to engage in activities such as going to a friend's house or going to parties as a cultural discrepancy, instead of a normative characteristic that stems from autonomy, which may prompt conflict between parent and adolescent (Roblyer, Bámaca-Colbert, Rojas, & Cervantes, 2015).

Although Latino cultures place more value on collective support than individual autonomy (Zimmer-Gembeck & Collins, 2003), adolescents from Latino backgrounds in the U.S may aspire to behave in ways that mirror the mainstream American culture (Roche, Caughy, Schuster, Bogart, Dittus & Franzini 2014).

As a result, Latino youth may defy what is deemed acceptable to Latino cultures and their parents, and desire behavioral autonomy early on, which may not coincide with parents' culturally prescribed expectations on autonomy vis-à-vis interdependence (Roche et al., 2014).

In addition, traditional Latino cultural values place emphasis on gender scripts that allow male adolescents to receive behavioral privileges at younger ages than female adolescents do, which likely contributes to differing parental, as well as adolescent, autonomy expectations for daughters and sons (Bámaca-Colbert, Umaña-Taylor, Espinosa-Hernández, & Brown, 2012). The complex gender dynamics within Latino families is exemplified in a study by McHale, Updegraff, Crouter, and Killoren (2005) who found that older sisters with younger brothers still received relatively fewer privileges (i.e., going to a friend's house, going to parties) than their younger brothers. We will examine the role of autonomy expectations from parents, adolescents, and differences in expectations on autonomy within the dyad as predictors of parent-adolescent conflict intensity. Further, we will examine whether autonomy age expectations of adolescents vary as a function of adolescent gender.

Cultural Orientation

In ethnic-racial minority families, the cultural orientation of their family members can be characterized by the heritage and mainstream cultural practices, values, and identifications to which each member adheres (Schwartz, Unger, Zamboanga & Szapocznik, 2010). According to Berry's Acculturation Model, individuals who have contact with at least two cultural groups can fall under one of four categories. They may identify more with their heritage culture, adopt the new culture, identify with both cultures, or reject both cultures (Schwartz, Unger, Zamboanga & Szapocznik 2010).

One aspect of cultural orientation within families that has received significant attention in research is on the differences in cultural orientation that can emerge between parents and their children (i.e., parent-child cultural orientation gaps). Widely known as acculturation gaps (Szapocznik & Kurtines, 1993; Smokowski, Rose, & Bacallao, 2008; Birman & Trickett, 2001), it is postulated that immigrant children acculturate to their new culture at a quicker pace than their parents resulting in cultural gaps between the dyad which contributes to family conflict and, ultimately, youth maladjustment (Telzer, 2010). Historically, cultural orientation gaps within parent-adolescent Latino dyads have been studied by examining language proficiency, behavioral practices, and cultural values (Telzer, Yuen, Gonzales & Fuligni, 2016). Language proficiency measures how well the adolescent and parent can speak, understand, read, and write Spanish and English. Behavioral practices refer to the extent to which the parent and adolescent enjoy and engage in traditional practices from their heritage culture and from U.S. mainstream culture. Cultural values include domains tapping into family's heritage culture such as family obligations and familism as well as mainstream values such as material success, gaining independence and self-reliance, and competition and personal achievement (Knight, Gonzales, Saenz, Bonds, Germán, Deardorff, Roosa, and Updegraff, 2010).

Theoretical and empirical work on parent-adolescent cultural orientation gaps indicates that cultural gaps are associated with increased levels of family conflict (Coatsworth, Pantin & Szapocznik, 2002; Pasch, Deardorff, Tschann, Flores, et al., 2006), but findings are not always significant (see Telzer, 2010 for a review).

More recently, a longitudinal study with Mexican-origin families (Padilla, McHale, Rovine, Updegraff & Umaña-Taylor, 2016) revealed that parent-adolescent conflict predicted increases in parent-adolescent discrepancies in familism values, but not the inverse; the discrepancies in values did not predict subsequent parent-adolescent conflict. In the current study, we examined whether parent, adolescent, and the gap in familism values within the dyad were associated with parent-adolescent conflict intensity.

Current Study

To gain an understanding of what factors are related to parent-adolescent conflict intensity in Latino families in the U.S, we examined parents' and adolescents' expectations on autonomy and familism values, as well as the differences between the dyad in both of these domains (i.e., autonomy expectations discrepancy and familism gap), and their association with parent-adolescent conflict intensity. First, we examine whether all of our variables (adolescent conflict intensity, adolescent familism, parent familism, adolescent autonomy, parent autonomy, familism gap, autonomy age expectations discrepancy, adolescent sex) were associated with each other. We then investigated whether significant male-female differences in autonomy age expectations were present. Finally, we tested whether 1) autonomy age expectations from parents and adolescents were related to conflict, 2) parent familism and adolescent familism were related to parent-adolescent conflict, 3) the familism gap between parent and adolescent was associated with parent-adolescent conflict, and 4) autonomy age expectation discrepancies between parent and adolescent were associated with parent-adolescent conflict. Overall, this study aimed to increase the understanding of the factors associated with parent-adolescent conflict among Latinos families in the U.S.

Methods

Participants

Data were drawn from a small-scale cohort study ("Understanding Families, Adolescents, and Neighborhoods in Context" (FAN-C)) focused on African American and Latino families (i.e., caregiver and adolescent) residing in a small, urban, predominantly African American northeastern U.S. community that has experienced an influx of Latino immigration in recent decades. Latino residents represented 18.2% of the city population, with 82.6% growth from 2000 to 2010 (PASDC, 2011).

The Latino subsample for the current study consisted of 52 Latino maternal caregiver-adolescent dyads. There were two dyads with paternal figures, but they were not included in the analyses. The majority (58%) of the families lived in two-parent households. About of third of parents (35%) reported having a high school diploma and another third of parents (31%) reported having vocational schooling, college degree or advanced degree. The majority (50%) of family income was less than \$20,000. The majority (32.7%) of the caregivers were born in Puerto Rico and the majority (55.8%) of the adolescents were born in the United States. On average, caregivers were 41 years old ($SD = 8.85$) and adolescents were 13 years old ($SD = 1.90$). A little over half of the adolescent sample were female (52%).

Procedures

Caregivers (18 years and older) and their adolescent (11-17 years) were recruited through community organizations and agencies in the targeted city and surrounding areas. Data collection took place at community organizations.

Upon arrival, bilingual (Spanish-English) personnel provided information to caregivers about the study procedures and obtained parental consent for child and self-participation. After parents agreed, research personnel obtained assent from adolescent.

Data were collected through paper-pencil questionnaires provided in the participants' preferred language (Spanish or English). The questionnaire took 1-1.5 hours to complete. Participants completed the questionnaire with an interviewer's assistance. The interviewer read the questions and participants circled the answers on their questionnaire. When participants preferred to complete the baseline questionnaires on their own, they were placed in a setting with other caregivers or adolescents who also chose to work alone, accompanied by a person from the research team available to answer any questions they may have. Caregivers received a \$25 gift card to Giant (a local grocery store) and adolescents received a \$15 gift card to a local movie theater (for 15 to 17 years old) or a \$15 gift card to Toys R Us (for 11 to 14 years old) for their participation.

Measures

Familism values. The Cultural Value Scale (Unger, Ritt-Olson, Teran, Huang, & Palmer, 2002) was used to assess adolescent and caregiver opinions towards their family obligations. This scale is comprised of two subscales: Filial piety (10 items) measures obedience to parents (e.g., "I must obey my parents, whether I agree with them or not") and relative familism (4 items) assesses obligations to family (e.g., "No matter what the cost, dealing with my relatives' problems comes first"). For the larger project, only 14 items were included (6 items were not included in the survey), scored on a 4-point Likert Scale with responses to statements ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (4); where higher scores indicated greater familism towards parents and relatives. Two scores were calculated: an individual mean score and a difference mean scored to tap into familism gaps. We computed cultural familism gaps by subtracting adolescents' scores from caregivers' scores, given that most research indicates that adolescents find it easier to adapt to the new country's values and practices and are, therefore, more likely to acculturate faster than their parents (Shwartz, Unger, Zamboanga, Szapocznik, 2010). Past work using the full scale reported Cronbach's alpha of .81 (Unger et al., 2002). With the current sample, alpha coefficients were .90 and .87 for adolescent and caregiver, respectively.

Autonomy age expectations. A 20-item Teen Timetable Questionnaire (Feldman and Quatman, 1988) was used to ask adolescents and their caregivers the ages at which they believed target adolescent should engage in a number of behaviors or activities (e.g., "Go to girl-guy parties at night"). Choice options included 1 = before age 12, 2 = 12-14 years, 3 = 15-17 years, 4 = 18 or older to 5 = never. Two scores were calculated, an individual mean score and a mean difference score to tap into the discrepancy in autonomy expectations between each dyad. We subtracted caregiver scores from adolescent scores such that greater differences scores indicated that caregivers had later autonomy age expectations than adolescents. This measure has obtained good reliabilities with Latino samples (Roche et al., 2014). With the current sample, Chronbach alphas of .92 and .81 were obtained for adolescent and caregiver reports, respectively.

Parent-adolescent conflict. A 15-item scale (Updegraff, Delgado, & Wheeler, (2009) modified from Smetana's measure on conflict (1988) was used to assess caregivers' and adolescents' reports of perceived conflict intensity within the dyad across several domains (e.g., physical appearance, friends, and romantic relationships).

If adolescents indicated that certain types of conflict happened with their caregiver, then they rated how intense the conflicts were with a 5-point Likert scale from 1 = very mild to 5 = very angry. Caregivers were asked the same questions, rephrased for the caregivers' perspective. This measure tapping into conflict frequency has obtained good reliabilities in previously studies with Latino samples (Padilla, McHale, Rovine, Updegraff, Umaña-Taylor, 2016). With the current sample, alpha coefficients .86 and .94 were obtained for adolescent and caregiver, respectively.

Data Analytic Strategy

First, preliminary bivariate correlations were conducted to explore associations between variables of interest. Then, we ran independent t-tests to investigate potential differences between adolescent males and adolescent females on autonomy age expectation items. We then conducted two hierarchical linear regressions. The first, explored whether the main effects (adolescent autonomy, parent autonomy, adolescent familism, parent familism) were associated with conflict intensity. The second regression tested whether the autonomy age expectation discrepancies and cultural orientation gap between caregiver and adolescent predicted parent-adolescent conflict intensity. Control variables considered included adolescents' age, family structure (two parent vs other), income level, and maternal educational level.

Results

All analyses were conducted using SPSS version 25. Descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations among variables of interest and demographics are presented in Table 1. Correlation analyses indicated that more adolescent-reported familism was significantly associated with more adolescent-reported conflict intensity ($r = .321, p < .05$). In addition, results revealed that adolescent sex was correlated with adolescent autonomy age expectations ($r = .297, p < .05$). We followed up with independent t-tests to investigate further this association.

Independent samples t-test analysis revealed significant mean differences between adolescent males and females on perceived autonomy age expectations across several domains (Table 2). Overall, females selected older ages ($M_{female} = 2.96, SD = 1.26$ versus $M_{male} = 2.0, SD = 1.25$) to engage in autonomous decision making such as choosing what clothes to wear. This general trend held true for decisions such as going out on dates ($M_{female} = 3.08, SD = 1.02$ versus $M_{male} = 2.21, SD = 1.10$), going on overnight trips with both sexes ($M_{female} = 3.78, SD = .085$ versus $M_{male} = 3.1, SD = 1.07$), going to mix-sexed parties at night ($M_{female} = 3.22, SD = 1.05$ versus $M_{male} = 2.54, SD = 1.18$) and curfew ($M_{female} = 4.11, SD = .640$ versus $M_{male} = 3.58, SD = 1.02$). Two other activities had similar patterns as well. Specifically, on average, females reported older ages to drink ($M_{female} = 4.42, SD = .902$ versus $M_{male} = 3.91, SD = 1.04$), and to do drugs ($M_{female} = 4.70, SD = .542$ versus $M_{male} = 4.17, SD = 1.11$).

Two, two-step hierarchical linear regression models were conducted to examine whether adolescent sex, familism (from caregiver and adolescent), and autonomy age expectations (from caregiver and adolescent) predicted adolescents' reports of conflict intensity (Table 3). In the first model, adolescent sex was the only variable entered as a control in the first step. Other demographic variables (i.e., adolescent age, family income level, and maternal educational level) were not included as controls because they were not significantly related to the variables of interest. The independent variables (parent familism, adolescent familism, parent autonomy, and adolescent autonomy) were entered in the second step.

The overall model revealed no significant effects for adolescent-reported conflict intensity ($R^2 = 0.42$, $F(5, 43) = 0.064$) but there was a marginally significant association between adolescent familism and adolescent-reported conflict intensity ($R^2 = .285$, $p < .10$). In the second model, adolescent sex was entered in the first step. Familism gap and autonomy expectation discrepancy were entered in the second step. None of the regression paths reached statistical significance.

Discussion

The aim of the current study was to identify which factors (autonomy or culture) were associated with adolescent-reported parent-adolescent conflict intensity among a sample of Latino families residing in the U.S. At the bivariate level, we hypothesized that the more family oriented the adolescent would be correlated with less conflict intensity. Although a significant finding was present in the correlation analyses, the direction of association was opposite to what we expected. Specifically, adolescents who reported higher levels of familism also reported more parent-adolescent conflict intensity. It is possible that this finding is due to the adolescent being so present and invested in the relationship that the adolescent perceived disagreements as more serious matter than someone who is less family oriented. It is also possible that adolescents who are more family oriented spend more time with families and this gives many opportunities to engage in disagreements which can be perceived as more intense. Future research is needed to uncover additional factors that contribute to conflict intensity within the parent-adolescent relationship.

As expected, our results also indicated that being male or female was implicated in the age expectations that adolescents reported for different autonomous activities and behaviors. Specifically, results showed that, on average, adolescent females reported later age expectations, closer to 18 years of age or never, and males reported earlier age expectations, especially when it came to engaging in activities that typically have age restrictions (i.e., doing drugs). However, both adolescent males and females had generally the same age expectations (14-17 years old) when it came to mundane tasks (i.e., chores). This is in line with the idea that in Latino cultures, traditional gender scripts are emphasized with females being more likely to be more reserved than males (López & Chesney-Lind, 2014). The socialization gender scripts likely lead Latino adolescent males and females to differ in their expectations about when they should be more autonomous.

We also hypothesized that parent-adolescent familism gap and autonomy discrepancies were going to be associated with parent-adolescent conflict intensity, but our regression analysis indicated that adolescent familism was only marginally significantly associated with parent-adolescent conflict intensity. Autonomy expectation discrepancy was not significantly associated with conflict. It is possible that these factors did not reach statistical significance intensity due to sample size. More research with larger samples is needed. Further, longitudinal studies are necessary given recent work that suggest that changes in familism values may contribute to increasing or decreasing discrepancies between family members' values, with implications for family relationship quality (Padilla, McHale, Rovine, Updegraff & Umaña-Taylor, 2016).

Limitations and Future Directions

It is important to note some of limitations of the current study. First, our sample size was small and participants in this study were recruited from a geographical area considered a recent immigration hub for Latinos with a Black population that accounted for over 52% (United States Census Bureau) of the population in that region during the time study took place. Thus, the generalizability of these findings to Latino families residing in areas with different racial-ethnic population composition make up is unknown. For instance, Latino adolescents residing in a predominately European-American community may compare their experiences to their European American peers, who have different values and cultural norms, and autonomy issues may be more salient predictors of conflict intensity with parents in those regions. As a result, Latino parent-adolescent dyads residing in European American communities may experience more conflict, as the discrepancy between parent and adolescent values and expectations may be greater and have different meaning than when this discrepancy occurs within a minority context. Another limitation of this study is the use of self-report questionnaires in a cross-sectional study that only examined what individuals perceived at one given point in time. Reports may also have validity issues because individual could have overreported or under-reported the severity of disagreements. Thus, constructs may have failed to adequately address the dynamic interactions within parent-child relationships.

Despite these limitations, the study shows that gender is an important construct to consider when investigating autonomy issues among Latino families with adolescents. Future studies should include (a) larger samples of Latino families residing in areas with different racial make-up (b) employ of a longitudinal design where adolescents report the intensity of conflict when it happens, and (c) analyze potential differences between the U.S born Latino adolescents and the foreign-born Latino adolescents, which this study did not consider due to sample size.

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PARENT-ADOLESCENT CONFLICT IN LATINO FAMILIES

Table 1
Correlations among familism and autonomy

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1. Child conflict intensity	-												
2. Adolescent familism	.32*	-											
3. Parent familism	.14	-0.03	-										
4. Adolescent autonomy	.15	.24	-.15	-									
5. Parent autonomy	-.03	.16	.08	.19	-								
6. Familism gap	-.13	-.75**	.69**	-.28	-.05	-							
7. Autonomy Discrepancy	-.16	.11	.19	-.77**	.48*	.22	-						
8. Parent education	.02	-.15	-.12	.13	-.01	.07	-.12	-					
9. Family income	-.19	-.06	-.06	-.00	-.02	.01	-.02	.49**	-				
10. Mom's birth country	.06	.21	.05	.06	.22	-.06	0.09	-.17	-.13	-			
11. Adolescent's birth country	.06	-.02	-.05	.17	.21	-.06	-.01	.08	-.35*	.13	-		
12. Adolescent's sex	-.08	-.05	.12	.30*	.12	.14	-.19	.29	.20	-.13	-.04	-	
13. Adolescent's age	.04	-.02	-.19	-.09	-.07	-.08	.03	.28	-.03	0.01	.45**	.07	-
<i>M</i>	2.87	3.08	3.22	3.15	4.06	.14	.90	3.29	1.37	.86	.431	.53	13.0
<i>SD</i>	.83	.58	.53	.70	.5	.79	.77	1.8	.69	.35	.50	.50	1.91

Note. *M* indicates mean. *SD* indicates standard deviation. *P* indicates significance. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

PARENT-ADOLESCENT CONFLICT IN LATINO FAMILIES

Table 2

Independent Samples T-test between Autonomy and Adolescents' Sex

	Male		Female		t	p
	M	SD	M	SD		
1. Choose own hair style even if parents disapprove	2.17	1.34	2.67	1.47	-1.23	0.22
2. Go to girl-guy parties at night (e.g. parties where there are both boys and girls)	2.54	1.18	3.22	1.05	-2.18	0.03*
3. No longer have to tell your parents where you are going	3.05	1.43	3.54	.948	-1.38	0.17
4. Prepare own dinner when home alone	2.71	1.2	2.67	1.30	0.12	0.91
5. Choose what clothes to wear, even if parents disapprove	2.0	1.25	2.96	1.26	-2.74	.001**
6. Watch as much TV as you want	2.04	1.12	2.44	1.28	-1.19	0.24
7. Go out on dates	2.21	1.10	3.08	1.02	-2.90	0.01**
8. Do things with friends instead of with your family	3.0	1.4	2.89	1.40	0.18	0.86
9. Smoke cigarettes	4.17	1.11	4.704	0.54	-2.08	0.05*
10. Stay home alone at night (without supervision) when parents are out	3.0	1.10	3.3	1.17	-1.05	0.30
11. Go on an overnight trip with friends of your own sex, without supervision	3.38	1.28	3.46	1.10	-0.26	0.80
12. Go on an overnight trip with both male and female friends, without supervision	3.1	1.07	3.78	.085	-2.52	0.02*
13. Come home at night as late as you want	3.58	1.02	4.11	0.64	-2.19	0.04*
14. Drink alcohol	3.91	1.04	4.42	.90	-1.84	0.07*
15. Watch my TV, movie, or video you want	3.04	1.26	3.33	1.04	-0.89	0.38
16. Choose own friends even if your parents disapprove	3.12	1.42	3.0	1.33	0.32	0.75
17. Decide how you spend your money (allowance wages, gift)	2.78	1.24	2.78	1.15	-1.2	0.24
18. Stay home alone if you are sick	2.75	1.48	2.96	1.22	-0.56	0.58
19. Not tell parents where you are going	3.54	1.35	3.96	1.13	-1.21	0.23
20. Stay home alone rather than go out with your family	3.21	1.50	3.63	1.11	-1.13	0.28

Note. *M* indicates mean. *SD* indicates standard deviation. *T* indicates t-test. *P* indicates significance. **p* < .05; ***p* < .01

PARENT-ADOLESCENT CONFLICT IN LATINO FAMILIES

Table 3

Predictor factors of adolescent conflict intensity

Predictors	Adolescent's Conflict Intensity	
	ΔR^2	β
Step 1	0.008	
Adolescent's Sex		-0.087
Step 2	0.037	
Parent Familism		0.200
Adolescent Familism		0.285 [^]
Parent Autonomy		-0.110
Adolescent Autonomy		0.146
Total R^2	0.045	

Note. ΔR^2 = change in R^2 ; β = standardized beta; Child sex: 0 = Male; 1 = Female.

PARENT-ADOLESCENT CONFLICT IN LATINO FAMILIES

Table 4

Predictor factors of adolescent conflict intensity

Predictors	Adolescent's Conflict Intensity	
	ΔR^2	β
Step 1	0.008	
Adolescent's Sex		-0.087
Step 2	0.037	
Familism Gap		-0.075
Autonomy Discrepancy		-0.159
Total R^2	0.045	

Note. ΔR^2 = change in R^2 ; β = standardized beta; Child sex: 0 = Male; 1 = Female.