

The Protective Role of Familism in the Lives of Latino Adolescents

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Abstract:

Familism, a Latino value that promotes loyalty, cohesiveness, and obedience within the family, predicts improved outcomes for Latino adolescents. However, few studies have tested whether familism serves a protective role when adolescents are facing stress. We examined whether familism predicted psychosocial outcomes in the context of stress, and whether familism moderated the relationship between peer discrimination, acculturative stress, and economic stress predicting these outcomes in a sample of 173 Latino adolescents. Familism was associated with fewer depressive symptoms and greater school attachment, but it did not moderate the relationship between any of the stressors and outcomes. Discrimination was associated with greater depressive symptoms, worse school attachment, and greater perceived barriers to college, but socioeconomic stress and acculturation stress did not uniquely predict these outcomes once taking into account discrimination. Thus, although familial culture values lead to improved outcomes in youth, they are unable to counter the detrimental effects of discrimination.

Keywords: Latinos | Adolescents | Familism | Depressive symptoms | Educational barriers

Article:

Introduction

Latino youth are at risk for multiple negative outcomes in adolescence—particularly greater depressive symptoms, lower school attachment, and greater perceived barriers to college when compared with non-Latino Whites (LeCroy & Krysik, 2008; McWhirter, Torres, Salgado, & Valdez, 2007; Ojeda & Flores, 2008; Twenge & Nolen-Hoeksema, 2002). Although studies are limited, there is some evidence to suggest that greater incidence of adverse outcomes among Latino youth may result from greater exposure to stressors associated with poverty, acculturative stress, and experiences with discrimination (e.g., Stein, Gonzalez, & Huq, 2012). Familism, a Latino cultural value that emphasizes family loyalty, unity, obligation, and obedience (Lugo Steidel & Contreras, 2003) is related to positive outcomes in Latino youth (e.g., Gonzales,

Deardoff, Formoso, Barr, & Barrera, 2006; McHale, Updegraff, Kim, & Cansler, 2009; Smokowski & Bacallao, 2007). However, above and beyond main effects, few studies examine whether familism serves as a protective factor when youth are facing stress (see Umaña-Taylor, Updegraff, & Gonzales-Backen, 2011, for an exception). Cultural values may be critical in helping Latino youth in immigrant families overcome stressors as adolescents may draw on their family connectedness and sense of support to deal with these stressors. Finally, few studies have examined this protective effect across depressive symptoms and educational outcomes.

Familism and Stressors

Familism is a multifaceted traditional Latino cultural value that dictates norms, expectations, and beliefs about the family. A central feature of familism is the subjugation of one's individual needs to those of the family (Lugo Steidel & Contreras, 2003). Accordingly, familism is associated with higher levels of family loyalty and obligation, and Latino adolescents and their parents report greater expectations surrounding family responsibility compared with non-Latino Whites (Fuligni, Tseng, & Lam, 1999; Sabogal, Marin, Otero-Sabogal, Marin, & Perez-Stable, 1987). Another aspect of familism involves obedience and respect for those in positions of authority within the family (e.g., parents, elders), and Latino adolescents and their families in fact demonstrate such values (Calzada, Fernandez, & Cortes, 2010; Guilamo-Ramos et al., 2007). Familism also promotes feelings of unity and cohesiveness in the family (Lugo Steidel & Contreras, 2003). Not surprisingly, given the importance of positive family functioning in the lives of youth, Latino adolescents who endorse greater levels of familism report fewer negative outcomes including depressive symptoms, behavior problems, and academic difficulties (e.g., Gonzales et al., 2006; McHale et al., 2009; Smokowski & Bacallao, 2007).

According to the integrative model of ethnic minority child development (García Coll et al., 1996), adaptive cultural values such as familism directly influence the developmental competencies of ethnic minority youth. This theoretical model also posits that factors such as discrimination, economic stress, and the stress associated with the process of acculturation (acculturative stress) serve as risk factors that negatively affect the developmental trajectories of youth. Although the centrality of familism in the lives of Latino youth and their families has been established, limited research has actually examined whether familism serves to protect youth who encounter these types of risk factors that are linked to their ethnic minority status, such as discrimination, acculturative stress, or economic stress. Across multiple studies, Latino adolescents report facing high levels of racial/ethnic discrimination and these experiences are associated with greater depressive symptoms and worse school functioning (e.g., lower school attachment, worse GPA; Delgado, Updegraff, Roosa, & Umaña-Taylor, 2011; Greene, Pahl, & Way, 2006; Roche & Kuperminc, 2012; Stein et al., 2012). Racial/ethnic discrimination, especially in the school context, may lead Latino adolescents to disengage from school, to feel less capable of succeeding academically, and to develop negative self-evaluations (Alfaro, Umaña-Taylor, Gonzales-Backen, Bámaca, & Zeiders, 2009; Benner & Graham, 2011; Kao & Tienda, 1998; Roche & Kuperminc, 2012; Stone & Han, 2005), but familism may help counter

these detrimental effects of discrimination. First, obligations to family may include school achievement and success as parents have sacrificed for their children's education (Perreira, Chapman, & Stein, 2006; Stepick & Stepick, 2010), and these felt obligations may help students maintain an educational drive when confronting negative experiences (Fuligni et al., 1999). Second, as suggested by social identification theory, adolescents with high levels of familism may be more connected to their culture and may be better equipped to view the positive aspects of their culture when faced with negative messages from others that may be associated with discrimination (Tajfel & Forgas, 2000). Third, familism may also help students feel supported and connected to their family, and adolescents may be able to draw on this social support to maintain a positive self-evaluation and a sense of efficacy to deal with barriers to academic success (DeGarmo & Martinez, 2006; Gonzalez, Stein, Shannonhouse, & Prinstein, 2012).

In the same vein, acculturative stress, which is the stress that results from adjusting to a new cultural context, also is associated with greater depressive symptoms and worse academic outcomes in Latino adolescents (Mena, Padilla, & Maldonado, 1987; Roche & Kuperminc, 2012; Romero, Martínez, & Carvajal, 2007). Acculturative stress includes experiences of family discord due to differential acculturation to Euro-American values, language difficulties, and problems with immigration (Romero & Roberts, 2003), and as Latino adolescents begin to become more acculturated to U.S. values, they are more likely to experience acculturative stress (Cuellar, Bastida, & Braccio, 2004). Latino adolescents who experience acculturative stress may be less likely to aspire to college as past research shows that Anglo orientation but not Latino orientation predicts higher educational goals, aspirations, and expectations (Flores, Navarro, & Dewitz, 2008; Flores, Ojeda, Huang, Gee, & Lee, 2006). Similarly, these youth are likely to feel less connected to school as this may be the very context that leads to acculturative stress (pressure to change cultural values, lack of knowledge about the educational system; Roche & Kuperminc, 2012). Greater school attachment is associated with better GPA, greater academic motivation, and lower absenteeism in Latino students (LeCroy & Krysik, 2008; Sánchez, Colón, & Esparza, 2005), and serves an important role in keeping Latinos engaged in academic pursuits. Finally, acculturative stress may overwhelm the coping resources of youth leading to depressive symptoms (Romero et al., 2007). Familism may be particularly helpful for adolescents reporting high levels of acculturative stress as it would provide youth with feelings of support from family, connection to their culture, and a sense of purpose as their success in navigating these stressors will help their family (Schwartz, Unger, Zamboanga, & Szapocznik, 2010).

Finally, economic stress may be particularly salient for immigrant Latino families who are starting their lives in a new country. The Pew Hispanic Center indicates that 34% of children of Latino immigrant parents live in poverty (Fry & Passel, 2009). Latino immigrant families are more likely to have parents with lower levels of education and thus may have jobs that are less stable and low paying. The majority of research examining the effects of poverty on Latino adolescents' psychological well-being and academic outcomes has examined positional variables (e.g., parent education) or income levels but has not paid as much attention to indicators of

financial stress (e.g., an inability to pay bills) or to subjective economic stress (Anderman, 2002; Bámaca, Umaña-Taylor, Shin, & Alfaro, 2005). While studies have yet to consider how perceptions of economic stress may increase feelings of hopelessness and depressive symptom with adolescents, studies of Latino adults have found that perceived economic stress predicts greater depressive symptoms (Aranda & Lincoln, 2011; Parke et al., 2004). In terms of academic outcomes, perceptions of economic stress may be a more salient predictor as adolescents are determining their paths to postsecondary education (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2001; Suarez-Orozco et al., 2010). High levels of economic stress may lead to decrements in attachment to school as students are attempting to focus in school against a backdrop of family stress (Calaff, 2009). Familism may serve to help youth cope with perceived economic stress, as it would provide an opportunity for social support within the family, provide motivation for continued academic success to improve the family's economic plight, and provide a context for coping with a family-based stressor.

Present Study

The present study proposes that stressors related to economics, acculturation, and discrimination are key factors that are associated with adverse outcomes for Latino youth. Previous studies have suggested, for example, that experiences of discrimination and acculturative stress are linked to elevated depressive symptoms in this cultural group. The extent to which these stressors ultimately are adversely associated with outcomes, however, is expected to vary as a function of adolescents' familism. That is, the key element to this study is the proposal that adolescents who experience high levels of familism will not experience as strong adverse associations between stressors and outcomes.

Only one past study has examined the moderational role of familism when adolescents encounter stress (Umaña-Taylor et al., 2011). In this study of adolescent mothers, the authors tested whether familism moderated the relationship of these same cultural stressors (i.e., discrimination, acculturative stress, and economic stress) and depressive symptoms. Surprisingly, familism did not serve as a moderator for any of the stressors nor did it predict fewer depressive symptoms. Although these findings are counter to the majority of the literature, this is likely due to the fact that this was a unique sample of teen mothers whose coping resources were perhaps not equipped to handle the multiple stressors associated with teen parenting. Thus, further research needs to test these questions in a sample of Latino adolescents who are not facing these additional stressors.

This study extends the current literature in two important ways. First, it examines these questions in a sample of first- and second-generation Latino adolescents in a school setting, unlike prior research that had focused on teen mothers. Second, it examines educational outcomes in addition to psychological symptomatology where the majority of the previous literature lies. We hypothesized that familism would be related to more positive outcomes as a main effect (depressive symptoms, school belonging, perception of barriers to college), and that the cultural

and familial stressors (i.e., discrimination, acculturative stress, economic stress) would be related to more negative outcomes. We also hypothesized that familism would moderate the relationship between stressors and psychosocial outcomes such that the effects of these stressors would be attenuated for adolescents who endorsed greater familism values.

The risk and protective factors associated with depressive symptoms in Latino adolescents are especially important to understand as Latino adolescents report high levels of depressive symptoms compared with youth from other ethnic groups (Twenge & Nolen-Hoeksema, 2002). The majority of studies focus on risk factors associated with increased depressive symptoms, but fewer studies examine the cultural protective factors. Similarly, Latino youth also face multiple academic risks, including poor school attachment and barriers to college. There is increased interest in understanding what helps predict college attendance in Latino youth since they are the ethnic group that is the least likely to pursue postsecondary education (Gonzalez et al., 2012). Identifying how cultural variables such as familism protect youth with regard to these key developmental outcomes is important.

Method

Procedure

We recruited Latino youth in all 7th-, 8th-, 9th-, and 10th-grade classrooms from three schools in North Carolina (two middle schools and one high school) with high Latino enrollment. In the year of the study, 34% of the students in the schools were Latino and this distribution was roughly equal across the three schools. Recruitment occurred in three ways. First, parents and families were approached at an open-house event at the high school. Second, the schools each provided the research team with the phone numbers of all the Latino students at their respective schools. The research team called each family to obtain consent, with most conversations in Spanish. Third, along with the phone call recruitment, all the Latino parents received a bilingual recruitment letter and consent form that was sent home with their child from school and returned to the main office. The research team collected the forms from the schools.

There were 442 Latino students total among the three schools. Of the 442 students' families, 425 were called on the phone whereas 17 families were approached at the open house. Of the 17 students who were consented at the open house, 14 students eventually participated in the study. Of the parents who were contacted over phone, 221 parents consented to have their child participant (79% of those reached; 50% of total) and 40 parents declined to have their child participate (14% of those reached; 9% of total). Seven parents provided consent for their child through the letter that was sent home through the school. The researchers were unable to contact 164 families (37% of total) because of disconnected numbers and inability to reach the parent. One student withdrew from the study. In total, 191 students (68% of those reached; 43% of total) assented and participated in the present study.

All survey administration was completed in the participating school's cafeteria in the fall of 2010. The students were given a child assent form. The participants had the option to have an English or Spanish version of the survey; only one student chose Spanish. Measures not available in Spanish were translated and back translated, and then the research team resolved discrepancies jointly. The team also encouraged participants to ask for assistance at any point during the survey and checked each questionnaire to ensure the quality of the data.

Participants

The original sample included 191 adolescents with one survey determined to be invalid because of inconsistent responses. There was also missing data for 17 adolescents on multiple variables, which was due to the fact that the economic stress variable was at the end of the survey and some students did not finish the entire survey in the time allotted by the school. *T* tests suggested that they did not differ from the remainder of the sample on the key outcome variables. Thus, the final sample included 173 adolescents, with a mean age of 14.08 years. The sample consisted of 53.8% females. The adolescents were primarily of Mexican origin (78%), the remainder of the sample were from Latino-mixed (parents from different countries of origin; 8%), Nicaraguan (2%), Dominican (2%), and Salvadorian (2%) backgrounds. Other individuals identified being from Guatemalan, Colombian, Costa Rican, and Cuban backgrounds.

Measures

Familism

The 18-item Attitudinal Familism Scale (Lugo Steidel & Contreras, 2003) was used to assess the adolescents' beliefs and attitudes toward the family. The responses are on a 10-point Likert-type scale, ranging from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (10) and grouped into four subscales. The first subscale is *familial support*, which includes six items such as "Aging parents should live with their relatives." *Family interconnectedness*, a second subscale, is composed of five items. A sample item is "A person should cherish time spent with his or her relatives." A third scale, *family honor*, is made up of four items such as "A person should feel ashamed if something he or she does dishonors the family name." Fourth, *subjugation of self* for the family consists of three items. For example, "A person should be a good person for the sake of his or her family." The internal consistency reliability for the overall scale was high ($\alpha = .83$). An average score was calculated for the entire measure to reflect total familism as has been done in previous research (Kuhlberg, Peña, & Zayas, 2010).

Racial/Ethnic Discrimination

An 18-item discrimination measure developed by Way (1997) was used to assess peer discrimination. The measure was based on in-depth, semistructured interviews with more than 150 Black, Latino, and Asian American adolescents (Rosenbloom & Way, 2004). Adolescents reported whether they experienced a specific discrimination event on a 5-point Likert-type scale

ranging from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*all the time*). Sample items include “How often do you feel that other students in school make fun of you because of your race or ethnicity?” and “How often do you feel that other students in school expect that you will get bad grades because of your race or ethnicity?” Because few participants used the entire range of response options to indicate very high frequencies of discrimination, items were recoded, as in previous research, and dichotomized to represent whether the adolescent experienced the specific aspect of discrimination presented in each item (Stein et al., 2012). The scale has demonstrated adequate psychometric properties (Greene et al., 2006) and had adequate reliability in the present sample as a continuous measure ($\alpha = .96$). The items were summed to represent total discrimination.

Economic Stress

Three items from the Current Economic Stress Scale assessed adolescents’ perceived economic stress (Shek, 2005). Participants rated the frequency of experiencing stress from (1) *never* or *no financial difficulty* to (4) *always* or *much financial difficulty*. Sample items include “In the past six months, has your family had inadequate money to cope with the family expenses?” The scale has shown adequate psychometric properties (Shek, 2005) and reliability in this sample ($\alpha = .78$). An average score was used in the analyses.

Acculturative Stress

The 20-item Bicultural Stress Scale (Romero & Roberts, 2003) assessed experiences of acculturative stress. The scale includes experiences of conflict stemming from differential acculturation, language difficulties, and family obligation. The response scale ranges from *not having experienced the stressor* (1) to *very stressful* (5). The scale has shown adequate psychometric properties (Romero & Roberts, 2003). Two items were dropped from the measure after a factor analysis revealed that they did not correlate with the remaining measure (the two items pertained to pressures to learn and speak Spanish). Additionally, items assessing specific experiences of discrimination were not included to differentiate between acculturative stress and discrimination (three items). As in past studies, the responses were dichotomized to represent whether an adolescent had experienced a stressor or not (Romero & Roberts, 2003). Reliability in this sample was adequate ($\alpha = .87$). The items were then summed to represent total acculturative stress.

Depressive Symptoms

The Mood and Feelings Questionnaire (Angold, Costello, Pickles, Winder, & Silver, 1987) was used to assess students’ depressive symptoms. The 33-item Likert-type scale measured the extent to which students experienced depressive symptoms in the past 2 weeks. The measure included items such as “I didn’t enjoy anything at all” and “I felt I was no good anymore,” and students reported whether the statement was *not true* (0), *sometimes true* (1) or *mostly true* (2). This measure has demonstrated adequate psychometric properties (Daviss et al., 2006) and reliability

in this sample ($\alpha = .94$). The items were averaged to compute a mean score to represent total depressive symptoms.

School Belonging

The 18-item Psychological Sense of School Membership (PSSM) scale is used to measure both adolescents' perception of school climate and relationship with teachers. Adolescents report on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*not at all true*) to 5 (*completely true*). Sample items include "I can really be myself in this school," and "I feel proud of belonging to this school." Cronbach's alphas were .80 for urban students responding to the English version of the PSSM scale and .77 for the Spanish version in a study of middle school students with diverse ethnic backgrounds including African American, Latinos, and White. The PSSM was significantly correlated with self-reported motivation measures, expectancies for school success, subjective value of school work, and school achievement, indicating good construct validity of the PSSM scale (Goodenow, 1993). In the present study, Cronbach's alpha was .83.

Perception of Barriers

Eight items from Perceptions of Barriers measure examined perceptions of barriers to entering college (McWhirter, Hackett, & Bandalos, 1998). These items asked students to respond how strongly they agreed from 1 (*strongly agree*) to 5 (*strongly disagree*) whether a particular barrier would be a reason they would not go to college (e.g., because I am not smart enough; because of family problems, because of money problems). All the items were reverse coded during data analysis to be consistent with the directionality of other measures. Cronbach's alphas for the original study with Mexican American and White students ranged from .86 to .87, and in the present study was .86.

Results

Preliminary analyses examining potential covariates revealed that age (r range = .02-.21, p range = .01-.80) and gender (t range = 0.08-2.08, p range = .03-.98) were related to some of the independent and dependent variables so they were retained as covariates, but nativity status (foreign or native born) was not significantly related to any of the variables so it was not included in the analyses (t range = 0.42-1.58, $p = ns$). Means and correlations are presented in Table 1.

[Table 1 Omitted]

A series of two-step hierarchical regression analyses were estimated to examine the main effects of familism, discrimination, economic stress, and acculturative stress on the three outcomes of interests (depressive symptoms, school belonging, and perceptions of barriers) and the interaction of each stressor with familism. Per Aiken and West (1991), all predictor variables were centered and then product terms were created for each stressor and familism.

Depressive Symptoms

The main effects model examining the depressive symptoms explained 18% of the variance. Controlling for the other variables in the model, greater levels of discrimination predicted greater depressive symptoms whereas a greater endorsement of familism was related to fewer depressive symptoms (see Table 2 for main effects model). Next, the interaction term for each stressor and familism was created in separate models as has been done in past research (Umaña-Taylor et al., 2011). The introduction of the interaction terms with discrimination ($\beta = -0.07, p = .84$) and acculturative stress ($\beta = -0.13, p = .66$) were not significant. Although the model with the interaction term of economic stress explained an additional 2% of the variance, the interaction term did not reach statistical significance ($\beta = -0.67, p = .08$).

[Table 2 Omitted]

School Belonging

The main effects model examining school belonging explained 20% of the variance. As with the prediction of depressive symptoms, when controlling for the other variables in the model, only discrimination and familism predicted school belonging (see Table 2 for main effects models). Next, the interaction term for each stressor and familism was entered into separate models. These models accounted for no additional variance, and none of the interaction terms reached statistical significance (discrimination $\beta = -0.23, p = .47$; acculturative stress $\beta = -0.01, p = .96$, economic stress $\beta = -0.11, p = .77$).

Perception of Barriers

The main effects model examining perceived barriers explained 10% of the variance. Discrimination and age were the only significant predictors (see Table 2 for main effects model). Next, the interaction term for each stressor and familism was entered into separate models. These models accounted for no additional variance, and none of the interaction terms reached statistical significance (discrimination $\beta = -0.37, p = .30$; acculturative stress $\beta = -0.22, p = .45$; economic stress $\beta = 0.19, p = .64$).

Discussion

The present study examined the role of familism in the lives of Latino adolescents from immigrant families, and whether familism served to buffer youth against different experiences of stress. Although familism appears to confer positive effects for Latino youth, it did not significantly attenuate the experiences of stress, consistent with past studies (Umaña-Taylor et al., 2011). A greater endorsement of familism was correlated with both psychological and educational outcomes, but these values were not sufficient to combat the negative effects of discrimination, which emerged as the most consistent stressor.

Our first hypothesis was partially supported. As has been found in past work, adolescents who endorsed greater levels of familism reported fewer depressive symptoms (e.g., Smokowski & Bacallao, 2007). As discussed above, youth who endorse high familism values are likely to have greater family cohesion and support that helps youth maintain positive psychological functioning—including fewer depressive symptoms. Past research documents the important role of social support and positive family functioning in the prediction of depressive symptoms (Rueger, Malecki, & Demaray, 2010). Importantly, our study also found that adolescents who held greater familial values also reported a greater sense of belonging to one's school. This finding aligns with past research on filial obligation and academic functioning (e.g., Fuligni, Witkow, & Garcia, 2005), but extends this work by suggesting a potential mediator of the relationship of familial cultural values and academic outcomes such as grades. Consistent with the integrative model of child development (García Coll et al., 1996), familial cultural values may aid in the development of psychosocial competencies that are necessary for ethnic minority youth. In particular, these values may help adolescents develop interpersonal competencies that enhance the feelings of connectedness and solidarity in the school setting. Latino adolescents may apply this schema of relatedness and obedience to their school, leading to a greater sense of belonging.

Contrary to our hypothesis, familism did not predict barriers to college-going. This finding may be because of the fact that the barriers that Latino adolescents face to college attendance may be external to their family relational processes (e.g., inability to succeed, get in, or pay). Instead of directly influencing perceived barriers to college, familism may instead influence the motivation for college attendance which we did not examine in this present study. This notion is consistent with past work that finds that family support is indeed an important predictor of educational motivation (Auerbach, 2004; Ceja, 2004). In a similar fashion, the emotional support provided by family relationships may serve to motivate youth, but different types of instrumental support would be necessary to overcome barriers to college entry (Gonzalez et al., 2012). This may be particularly true for adolescents in immigrant families, where oftentimes they are the first to attempt to enter the U.S. system of higher education. In addition, familism not only includes aspects that may be supportive (e.g., sense of solidarity), but it also includes aspects that may interfere with college attendance (e.g., obligations to provide aid to family members). Thus, it may be that certain facets of familism are negatively related to the perception of barriers whereas other may be positively related, thus washing out any significant correlation. Future work could examine these questions by looking at whether some aspects of familism serve to support motivation and decrease the perception of barriers whereas others may affect the increased perception of barriers. Furthermore, most research on barriers to college have used a summed score, which allows for neither a detailed examination of the varying impact of individual barriers nor the relationship of supports to barriers (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 2000), and future work should continue to examine whether familism differentially affects specific barriers (e.g., ability to succeed vs. fitting in).

In terms of the effects of the stressors, partially supporting the hypotheses, our study found that the perception of racial/ethnic discrimination was significantly related to all three psychosocial outcomes, but neither economic stress nor acculturative stress predicted any outcomes once controlling for other variables in the model. This finding further supports the extensive literature documenting the negative effects of discrimination for Latino youth (e.g., Greene et al., 2006; Stein et al., 2012), and in fact, it highlights that peer discrimination can influence not only adolescents' current psychological functioning but also beliefs about their academic future. This finding is concerning in that it implies that one potential mechanism for Latino academic underachievement vis-à-vis college attendance may be discriminatory experiences with peers in school. By influencing the perception of these barriers, discrimination may lessen the motivation and drive that would be essential to overcome other barriers present for these youth (e.g., financial barriers). Discrimination could also be underlying McWhirter et al.'s (2007) finding that Mexican American students expected to encounter more barriers to their futures (e.g., ability, preparation, motivation, support) than did the comparison White students. This finding is consistent with the integrative model of child development in that inhibiting environments (i.e., peer discrimination at school) affect the child (i.e., beliefs about their future academic pursuits), which likely interferes with the development of competencies necessary for academic tasks (i.e., self-efficacy, self-confidence). Future research should examine what specific mechanisms link peer discrimination to perception of barriers. For example, do youth believe that they will continue to experience discrimination in these settings? Or, do youth feel overall less efficacious influencing their global perceptions of barriers?

Finally, the present article found no support for the moderational role of familism in the lives of Latino youth—especially when confronting peer discrimination. This is consistent with the only other article that explores this question in Latino teen mothers (Umaña-Taylor et al., 2011). Taking the two results together, it suggests that while familism is generally related to positive psychosocial outcomes, it does not attenuate the effects of these stressors. Encountering more peer discrimination leads to negative psychosocial outcomes regardless of familial cultural values. Interestingly, research examining other cultural variables (e.g., ethnic identity) has also not consistently found a protective effect either (e.g., Pascoe & Smart Richman, 2009). Therefore, we need to continue to explore whether the protective effects of these variables operate under specific conditions (e.g., only for second-generation youth; only for girls, at different developmental stages) and to identify the mechanisms at play that makes these cultural variables protective more generally. For example, a recent study found that experiences of discrimination actually led to an increase in cultural values (including familism) and this increase was protective for Latino youth (Berkel et al., 2010).

Although this study contributes to our understanding of Latino youth and their families, there are limitations that are important to take into account. First, the present sample of Latino youth and their families were recent immigrants and there was limited variability in generation status. Familism may function differently for youth and families who have been in the United States

longer, and this possibility should be explored in other samples. Second, our participants live in an emerging immigrant community, and thus familism may be more salient to these families when they are surrounded by fewer Latinos. Recent work suggests that level of familism at the neighborhood level influences child outcomes (Gonzalez et al., 2012), and thus future work should continue to examine whether the ecological context influences how familism affects youth outcomes. In a similar vein, the experiences of discrimination for these youth may be related to other barriers such as documentation status that may be unique to youth in certain settings. The present study was underpowered to examine gender differences, but the protective role of familism may differ according to gender as girls and boys experience familial cultural values differently (Raffaelli & Ontai, 2004). Finally, our study was cross-sectional and more work should examine the role of familism over time to understand its role in predicting development.

In terms of practical applications, our study suggests that schools and practitioners can take advantage of the values associated with familism to promote positive outcomes in Latino youth. Schools and practitioners may engage youth in conversation about their families, and in particular, about the obligations that may help them feel motivated and engaged in academic tasks. By asking about and building on these values, schools and practitioners can help foster an environment that will support their Latino families. In addition, our study highlights the deleterious effects of discrimination in terms of multiple outcomes for Latino youth. Thus, in order to combat the achievement gap, schools should focus on both academic instruction and the peer climate with regard to experiences of discrimination. School counselors and teachers should aid in the development of multicultural skills for all youth. In addition, family and child interventionists should continue to build on familial cultural values for youth in treatment, but should be careful to assess for experiences of peer discrimination as these may be particularly problematic for Latino youth.

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