
Toward an Asset Orientation in the Study of U.S. Latina/o Youth: Biculturalism, Ethnic Identity, and Positive Youth Development

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Abstract

Despite their significant and growing demographic importance, U.S. Latina/o youth are rarely the focus of research and almost never studied from a perspective that reflects counseling psychologists' emphases on social justice and the strengths of individuals. Such a perspective is likely to result in more effective approaches to the understanding and prevention of adverse outcomes and can expand the understanding of variables that have been traditionally used to study U.S. Latina/o youth. In this study, two specific asset variables—leadership and social responsibility—were used to test hypotheses about the role of biculturalism in adaptive psychological functioning among U.S. Latina/o youth. Results suggest that bicultural identity is meaningfully associated with asset variables, whereas bicultural involvement is not. Implications for research and practice are discussed.

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Youth are particularly salient among U.S. Latinas/os.¹ Although people under 18 years of age account for roughly 20% of the U.S. population, more than one out of every three U.S. Latinas/os fall in this age category (Pew Hispanic Center, 2011). Despite their importance, U.S. Latina/o youth are generally underrepresented in research (Isaacs et al., 2008; M. C. Rodriguez & Morrobel, 2004). Of 1,010 empirical articles published in six leading adolescent research journals over a 5-year period, only 26 focused on Latinas/os (M. C. Rodriguez & Morrobel, 2004). Moreover, this very limited research scholarship on U.S. Latina/o adolescents disproportionately focuses on the deficits and challenges that they can face, such as substance use and school dropout (M. C. Rodriguez & Morrobel, 2004).

Although deficit-focused research and practice can help clarify and address the development of adverse outcomes, the prevention of such outcomes in youth is most effective when focused on psychosocial variables associated with successful development (Catalano, Berglund, Ryan, Lonczak, & Hawkins, 2004; Kuperminc, Wilkins, Roche, & Alvarez-Jimenez, 2009). As such, efforts to address the underrepresentation of U.S. Latina/o adolescents in the empirical literature are most likely to be of benefit when they incorporate assets and strengths (M. C. Rodriguez & Morrobel, 2004), an approach that is consistent with counseling psychologists' emphases on social justice (e.g., Pieterse, Evans, Risner-Butner, Collins, & Mason, 2009) and on the strengths of individuals (e.g., Lopez et al., 2006).

Although the research focused on U.S. Latina/o youth evinces a clear deficit orientation, this is not always the case for the theories underlying it (Kuperminc et al., 2009; M. C. Rodriguez & Morrobel, 2004). For instance, a significant amount of research is framed by either ethnic identity models or cultural adaptation models, both of which posit conditions and processes involved in the positive development of U.S. Latina/o adolescents (Gonzales, Fabrett, & Knight, 2009; Quintana & Scull, 2009; Schwartz, Unger, Zamboanga, & Szapocznik, 2010). Unfortunately, the research based on these models routinely operationalizes positive development as the reduction or prevention of deficits and challenges rather than the presence of assets (Kuperminc et al., 2009; M. C. Rodriguez & Morrobel, 2004). The adaptive

psychological functioning of U.S. Latina/o youth has been conceptualized in far more detail than it has been empirically studied.

Not only is the incorporation of asset variables into the study of U.S. Latina/o youth likely to result in more effective approaches to the prevention of adverse outcomes, it can also clarify conceptual models traditionally used to understand these youth (Catalano et al., 2004; Kuperminc et al., 2009). For example, empirical findings do not unequivocally support ethnic identity models' assertion that this variable is related to adaptive psychological functioning in U.S. Latina/o youth (Greig, 2003; Schwartz et al., 2010). Some scholars attempting to explain this inconsistency have observed that the small number of studies examining asset variables tend to find a moderate but consistently positive relation, whereas the more typical deficit-focused studies tend to have greater variability in their findings (Greig, 2003). Although this observation has not yet been tested empirically, it illustrates the potential of asset variables in expanding and clarifying cultural constructs such as ethnic identity and cultural adaptation.

The goal of this study is to examine whether research on two important asset variables rarely studied among U.S. Latina/o youth, leadership and social responsibility, can contribute to the conceptual understanding of two variables often undergirding existing empirical research on these youth, cultural adaptation and ethnic identity. Ensuing sections introduce the models of cultural adaptation and cultural identity that frame this study and discuss the two asset variables being considered.

Cultural Adaptation and Cultural Identity

As an ethnic minority within a broader society, U.S. Latina/o youth must decide how to navigate the contrasts between mainstream U.S. culture and their Latina/o heritage and decide what influence these contrasts might have on their sense of self (Gonzales et al., 2009). The first of these tasks, learning to navigate two sometimes contrasting cultures, corresponds to the processes of cultural adaptation (Gonzales et al., 2009). The second, deciding what these contrasts might mean for one's sense of self, corresponds to a specific form of social identity, ethnic identity (Umaña-Taylor & Updegraff, 2007). Cultural adaptation and ethnic identity have been theoretically linked to the adaptive psychological functioning of U.S. Latina/o youth (e.g., Schwartz et al., 2010). The approaches to cultural adaptation and ethnic identity that frame this study are introduced in dedicated subsections below.

Cultural Adaptation

Cultural adaptation refers to the processes through which individuals become proficient in the values, beliefs, and behaviors of a given culture (Gonzales et al., 2009). Cultural adaptation to one's heritage culture is termed *enculturation* and cultural adaptation to a nonheritage culture is called *acculturation*. In the case of U.S. Latinas/os, cultural adaptation is typically focused on the contrast between a Latina/o heritage and mainstream U.S. values, beliefs, and behaviors (Gonzales et al., 2009).

This study builds on a tradition of cultural adaptation research stemming from the work of Berry and colleagues (e.g., Berry, Phinney, Sam, & Vedder, 2006), who have posited arguably the most influential conceptual model in this area (Schwartz et al., 2010). This model suggests that four categories can be created on the basis of individuals' enculturation and acculturation (Phinney, Berry, Vedder, & Liebkind, 2006; Schwartz et al., 2010). The first, assimilation, describes individuals who have become proficient in a second culture while discarding their heritage culture. The second, separation, describes individuals living in a second culture that do not become proficient in it but retain their heritage culture. A third category, which Berry called *integration* but is often referred to as biculturalism (Schwartz et al., 2010), describes individuals who have become proficient in a second culture while retaining their heritage culture. A final category, marginalization, refers to individuals living in a second culture who do not become proficient in it and also reject their heritage culture.

These categories are posited to be differentially associated with the adaptive psychological functioning of individuals who—like U.S. Latinas/os—live in a culture other than their heritage culture (Gonzales et al., 2009; Phinney et al., 2006; Schwartz et al., 2010). Because they can more easily adapt to social environments that at times will require proficiency in a heritage culture and at other times will require proficiency in a second culture, bicultural individuals are theorized to have greater levels of adaptive psychological functioning. Having proficiency neither in their heritage culture nor a second culture, marginal individuals are considered the least psychologically healthy. The psychological health of separated and assimilated individuals is believed to fall somewhere in between that of bicultural and marginal individuals. Although some studies involving U.S. Latinas/os support these hypotheses, others have not, highlighting the need to refine cultural adaptation theory and research (Rudmin, 2008a, 2008b; Schwartz et al., 2010).

One recently proposed improvement to cultural adaptation research involves the use of methods that do not rely on cut points to force individuals

into the four categories reflected in Berry's model of cultural adaptation (Schwartz et al., 2010). Forced categorization is problematic because it reflects an assumption that the four statuses described by Berry and others are reliable and valid, which—as stated earlier—is not always consistent with the findings of cultural adaptation research (Rudmin, 2008a, 2008b). As a response, researchers have begun using statistical methods to identify and describe cultural adaptation categories. For instance, using latent class analysis to examine data provided by Latina/o young adults in Miami, Schwartz and Zamboanga (2008) identified two variants of biculturalism and only limited evidence in support of the marginalized category.

Approaches such as that of Schwartz and Zamboanga (2008) complement and expand Berry's categorization scheme, providing an important direction for cultural adaptation scholarship. However, by continuing in the tradition of categorization, such approaches continue to impede an understanding of cultural adaptation as it occurs across categories. This study uses a complementary research strategy that, not relying on categorization, might provide additional insights. Specifically, cultural adaptation is conceptualized and tested as involving moderation. Briefly, moderation occurs when the relationship between two variables (e.g., Hispanic involvement and psychological health) changes in strength or direction at different levels of a third variable (e.g., American involvement; Aiken & West, 1996; Baron & Kenny, 1986). As illustrated by the variables used as examples, moderation appears to be implicit to Berry's model. Specifically, this model postulates that—given ethnic minority status—the relation between enculturation and psychological outcomes will change at different levels of acculturation.

Although moderation has been previously used to examine the potential for enculturation and acculturation to act as moderators of the relation among other variables (e.g., Torres, Driscoll, & Voell, 2012), the moderating effect of these two forms of cultural adaptation upon each other has not been examined in the published literature. This is unfortunate as—by not relying on categorization—moderation can render insights into cultural adaptation processes as they occur across categories, which in turn may help account for the inconsistencies of previous research framed by Berry's model. As such, this study will examine the utility of conceptualizing and testing cultural adaptation as moderation. Reflecting Berry's model, this study's first hypothesis is that the positive relations between enculturation and asset variables will be moderated by acculturation such that this relation will be strongest among highly acculturated individuals.

Ethnic Identity

Although based on the same social processes as cultural adaptation, ethnic identity refers to individuals' incorporation of heritage culture into their sense of self rather than their proficiency with cultural beliefs, values, or behaviors (Schwartz et al., 2010). The development of an ethnic identity is conceptualized as a key task for U.S. Latina/o adolescents that should foster adaptive psychological functioning (see Umaña-Taylor et al., XXXX, for an introduction). Perhaps because of this, ethnic identity plays a prominent role within the limited research focused on U.S. Latina/o youth (Quintana & Scull, 2009; M. C. Rodriguez & Morrobel, 2004). Although findings from this research often support the relation between ethnic identity and adaptive psychological functioning, there are notable exceptions. For example, ethnic identity is predictive of self-esteem in most (e.g., Umaña-Taylor & Updegraff, 2007) but not all (e.g., Cavazos-Rehg & DeLucia-Waack, 2009) samples of U.S. Latina/o adolescents. Contrary to theory, other research has found positive associations between ethnic identity and problem behaviors in U.S. Latina/o youth (e.g., Rafaelli, Zamboanga, & Carlo, 2005; Zamboanga, Rafaelli, & Horton, 2006).

Findings that are discrepant with the theoretically expected positive relation between ethnic identity and adaptive psychological functioning suggest the need for ongoing development of ethnic identity theory and research (Quintana & Scull, 2009; Schwartz et al., 2010). One promising future direction is the consideration of what has been called "the bicultural model counterpart to ethnic identity" (Schwartz et al., 2010, p. 244), American identity, a domain of identity that encompasses individuals' incorporation of U.S. culture into their sense of self (Schwartz et al., 2010). Importantly, findings from the few studies that have examined this construct and its relation to mental health suggest that it is distinct from ethnic identity (Phinney & Devich-Navarro, 1997; L. Rodriguez, Schwartz, & Whitbourne, 2010) and is associated with some indicators of psychological health (Phinney, Cantu, & Kurtz, 1997).

Considering the importance that scholars have placed on examining both domains of cultural adaptation, enculturation and acculturation, it is somewhat surprising that little research has focused on the roles of both ethnic and American identities in the psychological health of U.S. Latina/o youth (Schwartz et al., 2010). The application of Berry's cultural adaptation model to predict the relations of ethnic identity and American identity to adaptive psychological health might help clarify some of the unexpected findings from previous research (Schwartz et al., 2010). Conceptualizing ethnic and

American identities as parallels to enculturation and acculturation suggests that they might influence each other in the same manner as cultural adaptation processes and thereby be amenable to being conceptualized and tested using the moderation framework detailed in the preceding section. Accordingly, this study's second hypothesis is that the positive relations between ethnic identity and asset variables will be moderated by American identity such that this relation will be strongest among youth who are also high in American identity.

Leadership and Social Responsibility

Although the literature on cultural adaptation and cultural identities aligns with a positive development framework, it is important to emphasize that these variables should be considered in addition to, and not in place of, the large number of additional assets and strengths that is likely to foster the successful development of U.S. Latina/o youth (Gonzales et al., 2009; Kuperminc et al., 2009). Stated plainly, although cultural processes are salient developmental aspects for U.S. Latina/o youth, they are not the sum total of their development, potential, or strength.

As previously stated, the incorporation of asset variables into the study of U.S. Latina/o youth is likely to result in more effective approaches to understanding and preventing adverse outcomes and can also clarify the conceptual understanding of cultural adaptation and ethnic identity. Despite the clear benefits of incorporating asset variables into the study of U.S. Latina/o youth, the dearth of research that has done so provides little guidance as to which variables to begin with (Kuperminc et al., 2009; M. C. Rodriguez & Morrobel, 2004). Given this state of affairs, leadership and social responsibility were selected as variables of interest using a theory-based process reflecting the strength-based and social justice orientations prevalent in contemporary counseling psychology (Lopez et al., 2006; Pieterse et al., 2009). Specifically, these two variables were selected because they reflect a conceptualization of U.S. Latina/o youth as fully capable to enact personal and community advancement.

Leadership

Defined as the ability to influence others toward the realization of a shared goal, leadership has important implications for individuals and society (Davis, 1997; Shaunessy & Karnes, 2004). In the individual, leadership predicts a variety of additional positive outcomes including self-concept (Sisk &

Roselli, 1987) and personal development (Karnes & Chauvin, 2000). At a social level, leaders critically influence their community's development. For instance, leaders' behaviors influence the functioning and success of organizations focused on creating social change in historically disadvantaged communities (Ospina & Foldy, 2010). Culture influences the attributes that are associated with leadership (Bond & Smith, 1996). For example, whereas supervisors who socialize with their subordinates are perceived as better leaders in collectivist cultures that emphasize group norms, this is not the case in individualist cultures that emphasize individual rights (Smith, Peterson, Misumi, & Bond, 1992).

Despite the important personal and social effects of leadership, and the known role that culture plays in constructing leadership, this variable is almost entirely absent from the literature on U.S. Latino/a youth (Rodriguez & Morrobel, 2004). Bloomberg, Ganey, Alba, Quintero, and Alvarez Alcantara's (2003) research provides one important exception. In an attempt to respond to the social and academic needs of Chicano-Latino youth, these scholars designed and tested a program with five main goals: (a) to foster leadership skills that are consonant with Chicano-Latino youth, (b) to create a network of young Chicano-Latino leaders, (c) to encourage Chicano-Latino youth to participate in community decision making, (d) to enhance understanding of the Chicano-Latino culture, and (e) to prevent substance abuse in Chicano-Latino youth. Bloomberg et al. reported observing improvements in program participants' leadership skills, social skills, social responsibility, self-confidence, relationships with adult role models, graduation rates, postsecondary education enrollment, and employment. Moreover, they argue that program graduates' positive involvement in their community provided other youth with mentors and role models. Although Bloomberg et al.'s work points to the promise of working with U.S. Latina/o youth to develop culturally-responsive leadership; it is unfortunately the only known study of its kind.

The limited attention given to leadership among U.S. Latina/o youth might be related to broader patterns (Nieto, 2006). When asked to name the most important Latina/o leader in the country today, only 16% of the 1,375 U.S. Latina/o adults sampled in the 2010 National Survey of Latinos could name anyone (Taylor & Lopez, 2010). These findings align with what some scholars have called a leadership crisis among U.S. Latinas/os (Nieto, 2006). There is a suggestion that successful U.S. Latinas/os have a tendency to assimilate to the mainstream, compromising Latina/o communities by leaving them bereft of prosocial leaders (Nieto, 2006). The need for leaders within U.S. Latina/o communities underscores the importance of examining the factors

associated with leadership development among these communities' young people.

Social Responsibility

Defined as the personal importance of being engaged in—and informed about—broader community issues, social responsibility has a bidirectional relation with community involvement among youth such that it predicts behavioral involvement in community improvement efforts (Pancer, Pratt, Hunsberger, & Alisat, 2007) and increases as a result of involvement in the community (Scales, Blyth, Berkas, & Kielsmeier, 2000). Theory and research suggest that social responsibility is related directly to academic achievement and indirectly to cognitive development (Engberg & Mayhew, 2007; Scales et al., 2000; Wentzel, 1991). In children, one of the most important contexts for social responsibility is the school, and those that consider it important to be engaged and informed in school tend to be positively involved in their classrooms and to behave in a manner that is conducive to learning (Wentzel, 1991). There is evidence to suggest that the relation among social responsibility, academic involvement, and cognitive development continues to exist in middle school students (Scales et al., 2000) and even among first year college students (Engberg & Mayhew, 2007).

Because of its relation to the understanding of social processes and to community involvement, social responsibility is frequently considered the foundation for civic behavior, particularly within diverse societies such as the U.S. (Scales et al., 2000; Wentzel, 1991). Specifically, young people for whom it is important to be engaged in—and informed about—community issues are more willing to transcend socially constructed ethnic barriers in the service of community improvement (Engberg & Mayhew, 2007).

Social responsibility has been almost entirely absent from the literature on U.S. Latino/a youth (Rodriguez & Morrobel, 2004). As previously described, Bloomberg et al. (2003) included social responsibility as a focus within a program designed to foster leadership skills that were consonant with Chicano-Latino youth; however, no published research could be found that complements or expands on this work. Given its important effects and its critical role within diverse societies, social responsibility was included in this study as an asset variable.

To summarize, this study investigated the relationships between cultural involvement, cultural identity, and developmental assets. The specific hypotheses being tested were as follows:

Table 1. Sample Means and Standard Deviations on Background and Study Variables

Variable	M	SD
Background variables		
Age	17.2	1.18
Years in the U.S.	7.25	5.39
Grade in school	11.02	0.95
GPA	3.25	0.58
Mother's education	13.02	3.49
Father's education	12.36	3.9
Study variables		
Hispanic involvement	3.62	0.56
American involvement	3.08	0.80
Ethnic identification	3.55	0.83
American identification	3.04	0.84
Leadership	3.57	0.73
Social responsibility	3.50	0.72

Note: GPA = grade point average.

Hypothesis 1: The positive relations between enculturation and asset variables will be moderated by acculturation such that this relation will be strongest among highly acculturated individuals.

Hypothesis 2: The positive relations between ethnic identity and asset variables will be moderated by American identity such that this relation will be strongest among youth who are also high in American identity.

Method

Participants

Data were gathered from 124 Latina/o youth (69% Female) from Hillsborough County, Florida, participating in a 3-day community program to increase their bicultural effectiveness, leadership, social responsibility, and academic engagement. Participants' self-identified Latina/o heritage included Colombian (38% of participants), Cuban (26%), Puerto Rican (10%), Mexican (5%), Dominican (4%), Peruvian (2%), Honduran (2%), Ecuadorian (2%), Guatemalan (2%), Argentine (2%), and Uruguayan (1%). An additional 6% of participants reported either a mixed Latina/o ancestry or did not identify a Latina/o heritage. Table 1 summarizes means and standard deviations

on each of the background and study variables considered in this research. As can be observed, participants were on average 17.2 years old ($SD = 1.18$) and had lived in the U.S. an average of 7.25 years ($SD = 5.39$). They tended to be high-school juniors (average grade in school = 11.02, $SD = .95$) and to have a grade point average (GPA) of 3.25 ($SD = .58$). Participants' fathers and mothers had completed an average of 12.36 ($SD = .3.9$) and 13.02 ($SD = 3.49$) years of schooling, respectively.

Measures

Background Information. Participants were asked to report their age, ethnic self-label, number of years lived in the U.S. GPA, and parents' educational level.

Hispanic Involvement and American Involvement. Participants were asked to use a 4-point scale (ranging from 1 = *not at all* to 4 = *very much*) to respond to the 14 items from the Hispanic Involvement and American Involvement scales (Szapocznik, Kurtines, & Fernandez, 1980) of the Bicultural Identification Questionnaire (BIQ; Guo, Suarez-Morales, Schwartz, & Szapocznik, 2009; Szapocznik et al., 1980). These items ask participants to rate the degree to which they enjoy seven specific Hispanic activities (e.g., "Hispanic Music") and seven parallel American activities (e.g., "American Music") and allow for the calculation of two composite scores that serve as measures of enculturation and acculturation (Guo et al., 2009; Szapocznik et al., 1980). Prior research supports the internal consistency of these two scales among U.S. Latina/o youth and their guardians (Guo et al., 2009) and has found theoretically predicted relations between scores on these scales and psychological adjustment (e.g., Szapocznik et al., 1980). The internal consistencies of these Hispanic involvement and American involvement scales in the current sample were $\alpha = .92$ and $\alpha = .88$, respectively.

American Identification and Ethnic Identification. Participants were asked to use a 4-point scale (ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 4 = *strongly agree*) to indicate their agreement with the seven items of the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure's ethnic identification scale (Roberts et al., 1999; for example, "I understand pretty well what my ethnic group membership means to me") and seven parallel statements used to measure American identification (e.g., "I understand pretty well what my American group membership means to me"). Identification (also called affirmation or belonging) is the component of cultural identities that represents a positive and committed sense of belonging to a group and typically accounts for the relation between cultural

identities and psychological health (Roberts et al., 1999; Spencer, Icard, Harachi, Catalano, & Oxford, 2000). Previous research has found theoretically expected relations between ethnic identification scores and indicators of psychological adjustment (Roberts et al., 1999). The internal consistency of the American identification and ethnic identification scales in the current sample were $\alpha = .92$ and $\alpha = .97$, respectively.

Leadership. Considering the effects of culture on leadership and the dearth of prior research on this construct among U.S. Latina/o youth, this study used a community-involved process to help create an experimental measure of U.S. Latina/o youth leadership. To promote ecological validity, this process involved focus-group discussions with 18 high-school aged Latina/o youth (60% female) with active long-term involvement in a community-based youth development organization with a mission “to empower multicultural Hispanic American youth to become world-class leaders that make a positive impact in their communities.” The organization hosts weekly meetings and workshops and is responsible for the development, planning, and implementation of the 3-day youth program. At the outset of the focus groups, participants were provided with a list of behavioral items gleaned from available youth leadership measures developed in non-Latina/o samples and asked to assess their relevance to U.S. Latina/o youth. The six items identified by participants as the most relevant to leadership in U.S. Latina/o youth were then selected for use in this study.

Participants in this study were asked to use a 4-point scale (ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 4 = *strongly agree*) to indicate their agreement with the personal importance of the six behaviors identified as characteristic of U.S. Latina/o youth leaders (e.g., “I should provide support and appreciation to others”). To examine internal validity, a principal components analysis of these responses suggested a one factor explanation accounting for 84% of scale variance (individual item loadings ranging from .83 to .96). Given this preliminary evidence of internal consistency, an average value was calculated and used in subsequent analyses. In the current sample, the Cronbach’s alpha value for this collection of items was .94. Preliminary results include a full correlational table to provide convergent and divergent validity for this measure.

Social Responsibility (Pancer et al., 2007). Because no existing measures of youth social responsibility have been examined in samples of U.S. Latina/o youth, two criteria were used to guide a selection of five items from the Youth Social Responsibility Scale (YSRS; Pancer et al., 2007): the strength of their

loading onto the original YSRS composite score and their consistency with a definition of social responsibility as the personal importance of being engaged in, and informed about, broader community issues. Scores on the full YSRS predict patterns of community involvement among youth (Pancer et al., 2007). Participants were asked to use a 4-point scale (ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 4 = *strongly agree*) to indicate their agreement with each of the selected items (e.g., “Teens should volunteer some time for the good of the community”). In the current sample, this collection of YSRS items had an internal consistency of $\alpha = .92$. Preliminary results include a full correlational table to provide convergent and divergent validity for this measure.

Procedure

Written parental consent was required for participants’ involvement in the program. The parental consent form offered parents the opportunity to refuse their children’s involvement in any data collection activities, clarifying that refusal would in no way affect their children’s participation. Upon registration during the first day of the program, participants whose parents had consented were taken through an informed assent procedure that explained the purpose of the data collection, clarified that assenting was not a requirement to program participation, and asked about their willingness to participate. Assenting participants completed measures before the program activities took place. This research was approved by the Internal Review Board of the first author’s home institution.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 summarizes means and standard deviations on background and study variables. Although average scores across all study variables were high, participants tended to score relatively higher on Hispanic involvement ($M = 3.62$, $SD = 0.56$) compared with American involvement ($M = 3.08$, $SD = 0.80$), $t(124) = 6.43$, $p < .01$, and higher on ethnic identification ($M = 3.55$, $SD = 0.83$) compared with American identification ($M = 3.04$, $SD = 0.84$), $t(124) = 7.52$, $p < .01$. Participants also reported high average scores on leadership ($M = 3.57$, $SD = 0.73$) and social responsibility ($M = 3.50$, $SD = 0.72$). As a whole, this sample seems best characterized as one that is highly bicultural and prosocial.

Table 2 presents the bivariate correlations among all study variables and provides preliminary convergent and divergent validity for the experimental measures used in this study. Leadership showed convergent validity through its relationship to GPA ($r = .26, p < .01$), and social responsibility ($r = .91, p < .01$), and divergent validity through its lack of relationship with parent education and years in the U.S.

As expected, the number of years that a participant had lived in the U.S. was significantly related to their average scores on both American involvement ($r = .41, p < .001$) and American identification ($r = .32, p < .001$). It was notable that ethnic identification was strongly positively correlated with American identification ($r = .59, p < .001$) and to a lesser but still significant degree with American involvement ($r = .29, p < .01$). Indeed, the correlation between ethnic identity and American identification was of a similar magnitude and direction to that between American identification and American involvement ($r = .48, p < .001$).

Participants' GPA was significantly related to at least one of the predictor variables in each of the main analyses (i.e., American involvement and ethnic identification) and to both of the criterion variables (i.e., leadership and social responsibility). Because of this, it was statistically accounted for in the main analyses to control for the possibility that this pattern of correlations might lead to artifactual results.

Main Analyses

Analytic Strategy. A primary objective of the current study was to examine the utility of a moderation approach to the study of biculturalism that might complement and expand approaches based on Berry's categorization scheme (e.g., Schwartz & Zamboanga, 2008). This study followed recommendations by Frazier, Tix, and Barron (2004) and employed Aiken and West's (1996) multiple regression approach for the testing of moderation effects. A full discussion of this approach is available from source materials (e.g., Aiken & West, 1996; Baron & Kenny, 1986). Predictor variables were centered to aid interpretation and reduce potential multicollinearity with the interaction term. Main results are presented separately by hypothesis.

Hypothesis 1. Table 3 summarizes the results of a multiple regression approach to testing this hypothesis with leadership and social responsibility as asset variables. As can be observed, in both multiple regressions, significant portions of the variance in leadership and social responsibility were accounted for by GPA ($\beta = .25, p < .05$; $\beta = .24, p < .05$, respectively) and Hispanic

Table 2. Bivariate Correlations Among Study Variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Age	—										
2. Years in the U.S.	-.03	—									
3. Grade in school	.81****	.03	—								
4. GPA	.09	.01	-.05	—							
5. Mother's education	.11	.05	.04	.09	—						
6. Father's education	-.16	-.03	.07	.01	.41****	—					
7. Hispanic involvement	.04	.02	.17	.04	-.04	-.01	—				
8. American involvement	-.04	.41****	.07	.23**	.01	-.05	.10	—			
9. Ethnic identification	.06	.17	-.08	.20**	.07	.13	.23**	.29**	—		
10. American identification	.03	.32****	-.05	.15	-.02	.00	.09	.48****	.59****	—	
11. Leadership	.18**	.02	-.17	.26***	.06	.08	.19**	.11	.40****	.29****	—
12. Social responsibility	.19**	.02	-.19**	.26***	.06	.08	.24***	.12	.42****	.30***	.91****

Note: GPA = grade point average.
 *** $p < .05$. **** $p < .01$. ***** $p < .001$.

Table 3. Summary of Hierarchical Regression Results Relating Cultural Adaptation to Leadership and Social Responsibility After Accounting for GPA

Variable	DV = Leadership				DV = Social Responsibility			
	Model <i>F</i>	<i>B</i> (<i>SE</i>)	β	ΔR^2	Model <i>F</i>	<i>B</i> (<i>SE</i>)	β	ΔR^2
Step 1	(1, 109) = 7.88			.07***	(1, 109) = 8.09			.07***
GPA		.34 (.12)	.26***			.34 (.12)	.26***	
Step 2	(3, 107) = 4.12			.04	(3, 107) = 5.08			.06**
GPA		.33 (.12)	.25**			.31 (.12)	.24**	
Hispanic involvement		.25 (.12)	.19**			.29 (.12)	.22**	
American involvement		.02 (.09)	.02			.06 (.09)	.06	
Step 3	(4, 106) = 7.24			.11****	(4, 107) = 6.06			.06***
GPA		.34 (.12)	.25***			.32 (.12)	.25***	
Hispanic involvement		-.04 (.14)	-.03			.08 (.14)	.06	
American involvement		.08 (.09)	.08			.10 (.09)	.10	
Interaction term		-.61 (.16)	-.40****			-.45 (.16)	-.30***	

Note: DV = dependent variable; GPA = grade point average.

** $p < .05$. *** $p < .01$. **** $p < .001$.

involvement ($\beta = .19, p < .05$; $\beta = .22, p < .05$, respectively) at Step 2. American involvement did not account for significant amounts of the variance in either leadership ($\beta = .02, ns$) or social responsibility ($\beta = .06, ns$) at Step 2. The addition of the interaction term at Step 3 accounted for significant proportions of the variance in both leadership, $\Delta R^2 = .11, \beta = -.40, F(1, 106) = 15.01, p < .001$, and social responsibility, $\Delta R^2 = .06, \beta = -.30, F(1, 106) = 7.99, p < .001$, suggesting that American involvement moderates the effect of Hispanic involvement on each of these variables.

Figure 1 illustrates the moderation effect by graphing the predicted relationship between Hispanic involvement and each asset variable at low (i.e., one *SD* below the mean), average, and high (i.e., one *SD* above the mean) levels of American involvement. As can be observed, and contrary to Hypothesis 1, the relation between Hispanic involvement and each of the asset variables is positive at low levels of American involvement but negative at high levels of American involvement. The simple slope for Hispanic involvement and leadership was $\beta = -.40, p < .05$, one *SD* above the mean of

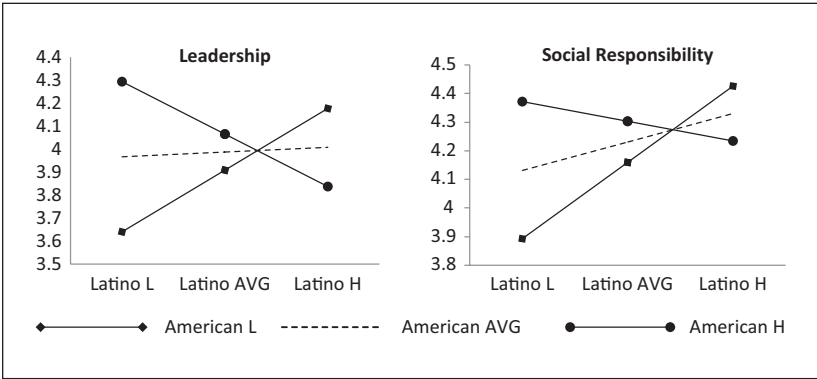


Figure 1. Illustration of the moderating effect of American involvement on the relation between Latino involvement and asset variables

American involvement, and was $\beta = .34, p < .01$ one *SD* below the mean of American involvement. The simple slope for Hispanic involvement and Social responsibility was $\beta = -.22, ns$, one *SD* above the mean of American involvement, and was $\beta = .33, p < .01$ one *SD* below the mean of American involvement.

Hypothesis 2. Table 4 summarizes the results of a multiple regression approach to testing this hypothesis with leadership and social responsibility as asset variables. As can be observed, in both multiple regressions, significant portions of the variance in leadership and social responsibility were accounted for by GPA ($\beta = .18, p < .05$; $\beta = .19, p < .05$, respectively) and ethnic identification ($\beta = .33, p < .01$; $\beta = .33, p < .01$, respectively) at Step 2. American identification did not account for significant amounts of the variance in either leadership ($\beta = .05, ns$) or social responsibility ($\beta = .06, ns$) at Step 2. The addition of the interaction term at Step 3 accounted for significant proportions of the variance in leadership, $\Delta R^2 = .03, \beta = .31, F(1, 106) = 4.74, p < .05$, and trended toward statistical significance in the prediction of social responsibility, $\Delta R^2 = .02, \beta = .26, F(1, 106) = 3.24, p < .10$.

Figure 2 illustrates the moderation effect by graphing the predicted relationship between ethnic identification and each asset variable at low (i.e., one *SD* below the mean), average, and high (i.e., one *SD* above the mean) levels of American identification. As can be observed, and consistent with Hypothesis 2, American identification appears to have an effect on the magnitude of the relation between ethnic identification and each of the asset

Table 4. Summary of Hierarchical Regression Results Relating Cultural Identities to Leadership and Social Responsibility After Accounting for GPA

Variable	DV = Leadership				DV = Social Responsibility			
	Model F	B (SE)	β	ΔR^2	Model F	B (SE)	β	ΔR^2
Step 1	(1, 109) = 7.87				.07***			
GPA		.34 (.12)	.26***			.34 (.12)	.26***	
Step 2	(3, 107) = 8.91				.13***			
GPA		.24 (.11)	.18**		(3, 107) = 9.33	.24 (.11)	.19**	.14***
Ethnic identification		.29 (.10)	.33***			.28 (.10)	.33***	
American identification		.05 (.10)	.05			.06 (.10)	.07	
Step 3	(4, 106) = 8.10				.03**			
GPA		.24 (.11)	.18**		(4, 106) = 7.95	.24 (.11)	.18**	.02*
Ethnic identification		.50 (.14)	.57***			.45 (.13)	.53***	
American identification		.07 (.10)	.07			.08 (.09)	.09	
Interaction term		.14 (.06)	.31**			.11 (.06)	.26*	

Note: DV = dependent variable; GPA = grade point average.
 * $p < .10$. ** $p < .05$. *** $p < .01$. **** $p < .001$.

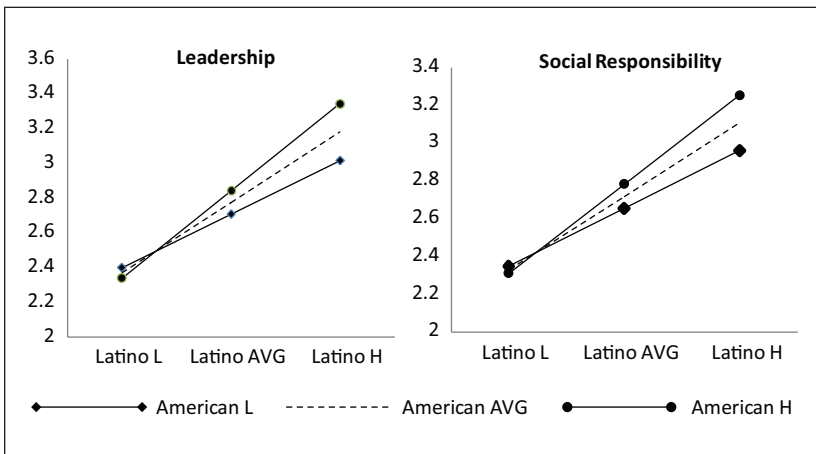


Figure 2. Illustration of the moderating effect of American identification on the relation between ethnic identification and asset variables

variables such that this positive relation is more pronounced at high levels of American identification. The simple slope for Ethnic Identification and Leadership was $\beta = .71, p < .05$, one *SD* above the mean of American

identification and was $\beta = .44$, $p < .01$ one *SD* below the mean of American identification. The simple slope for Ethnic identification and Social Responsibility was $\beta = .64$, *ns*, one *SD* above the mean of American identification, and was $\beta = .42$, $p < .01$ one *SD* below the mean of American identification.

Discussion

Despite their significant and growing demographic importance, U.S. Latina/o youth are rarely the focus of research and almost never studied from a positive development perspective aligned with counseling psychologists' emphases on social justice and the strengths of individuals. The study of U.S. Latina/o youth from a positive development perspective is likely to result in more effective approaches to the understanding and prevention of adverse outcomes and can expand the understanding of other variables traditionally used to study these youth. In this study, two specific asset variables—leadership and social responsibility—were used to test moderation models for the relation of cultural adaptation and ethnic identity to adaptive psychological functioning among U.S. Latina/o youth. Dedicated sections addressing the specific hypotheses tested by this research ensue, followed by discussions of the limitations of the current research and overall conclusions.

Hypothesis 1

In contrast to predictions based on Berry's model, results suggest that the relation between enculturation and asset variables is only positive among individuals with low acculturation levels and is in fact negative among highly acculturated individuals. That is, individuals with high levels of involvement with both cultures tended to report lower levels of leadership and social responsibility. One possibility is that high levels of involvement in both cultures limit the time and other resources that adolescents would need to foster leadership and social responsibility. Future research on the role of acculturation and positive assets should explore this possibility.

These results add to the number of studies, including large scale research, that have failed to support Berry's assertion that bicultural involvement is always optimally related to psychological health (Rudmin, 2008a, 2008b). For instance, using data from the International Comparative of Study of Ethnocultural Youth, a survey involving more than 7,500 immigrant and nonimmigrant youth living in 13 receiving nations, Vedder, van de Vijver, and Liebkind (2006) found evidence that—compared with integration patterns—unicultural patterns were more strongly predictive of some

domains of psychological health and equally predictive of others (Rudmin, 2008a). In conjunction with these previous findings, current results underscore the need to further refine existing cultural adaptation theory.

One promising direction that might help account for discrepant findings is the use of advanced statistical procedures to identify and describe cultural adaptation categories. As previously described, research using these procedures has identified several categories of biculturalism (Schwartz & Zamboanga, 2008). It is possible that some forms of biculturalism result in greater psychological health, whereas others do not.

Hypothesis 2

Consistent with predictions based on Berry's model, results demonstrated a positive relation between ethnic identification and leadership that was significantly stronger among youth who were also high in American identity. A similar pattern was found between ethnic identification and social responsibility; however, the interaction was only significant at a trend level (i.e., $p < .10$). These findings support conceptual arguments suggesting that incorporating ethnic identity's bicultural equivalent might render insights that clarify and expand cultural adaptation and ethnic identity models (Schwartz et al., 2010). From a cultural adaptation point of view, current results suggest that cultural identities should be considered alongside acculturation and enculturation in the psychological study of immigrant and ethnic minority populations (Schwartz et al., 2010). From an ethnic identity point of view, they highlight the benefits of accounting for ethnic identity in the context of other related social identities—in particular American identity (Phinney & Devich-Navarro, 1997; Phinney et al., 1997; L. Rodriguez et al., 2010; Schwartz et al., 2010).

Contrary to the findings of prior research examining bicultural identification among U.S. Latina/o youth (e.g., Phinney et al., 1997; L. Rodriguez et al., 2010), there was a strong relation between ethnic and American identification. It is possible that this relationship results from the approach used to assess American identification. Prior studies used either qualitative interviews or single-item measures, whereas this study utilized a multi-item quantitative measure that paralleled the assessment of ethnic identity. The close alignment between measures increases the relevance of comparisons between them but raises the possibility of artificially inflating their relation. However, the convergent and divergent validity evidence produced in this study (e.g., American identification—but not ethnic identification—was related to years lived in the U.S. American identification was more strongly related to

American involvement than ethnic identity) suggests that these constructs are related but distinct types of cultural identification. Another possible explanation for the relationship between these cultural identities is their expected relation to overall identity: U.S. Latina/o youth with a developed overall identity should have a strong ethnic identification and a strong American identification (Ashmore, Deaux, & McLaughlin-Volpe, 2004; L. Rodriguez et al., 2010). That is, successful identity development often requires individuals to integrate a changing perspective of the self in relation to changing social contexts. From this perspective, individuals who foster a strong sense of self in relation to their ethnic background and current American culture have an important resource for understanding, leading, and improving the community.

Further research is needed to confirm and expand upon this study's findings regarding cultural identification. It might be particularly beneficial to examine whether different approaches to the assessment of American and ethnic identities affect the relation of these variables to each other and to overall identity. Such studies would strengthen the methodological underpinnings of research to develop bicultural models of ethnic identity.

Limitations and Future Directions

There are characteristics of this study's sample, methods, and design that limit its findings. The current sample is best described as a highly bicultural, highly prosocial, group of U.S. adolescents with varied Latina/o heritages who self-selected into a community program. The geographic area where the sample was recruited has a strong Latina/o history and presence that might make Latina/o heritage a more welcome aspect than it is in other U.S. communities (Medina, 2004), which is important because cultural processes are affected by the attitudes of the broader community in which ethnic minority members live (Schwartz et al., 2010). Although the current sample is appropriate given the study's focus on assets among U.S. Latina/o youth, the generalizability of findings constitutes an important direction for future research.

As is the case with much psychological research, this study introduced the possibility of self-presentational bias by relying on self-report measures (Schwarz, 1999). Future research might use measurement approaches less sensitive to this bias such as informer ratings of leadership (e.g., Shaunessy & Karnes, 2004), behavioral assessments of community involvement (e.g., Pancer et al., 2007), and measurement of actual rather than perceived cultural proficiency (e.g., David, Okazaki, & Saw, 2009). Because of the limited

research examining assets in U.S. Latina/o youth, two measures were either developed or adapted for this study. Although some evidence of internal and external validity was provided, future research should further develop measures of assets variables appropriate for U.S. Latina/o youth.

The study's correlational and cross-sectional design allows for descriptions of relations among variables rather than the identification causal effects. Future research with longitudinal, quasi-experimental, and experimental designs will help build toward a causal understanding.

It should also be noted that results provide information about the statistical significance of relations among variables, not the meaningfulness of these relations. Further research is needed to ascertain the real-world relevance of statistically significant moderation effects.

Implications for Practice

Cultural Adaptation and Cultural Identities. Results identify differences in the relationship of biculturalism to adaptive psychological functioning that depend on whether cultural adaptation or cultural identities are being considered. Should findings be confirmed by future research, an implication for practice is the consideration that the psychological health of U.S. Latina/o youth may relate to bicultural identity but not to bicultural adaptation. This would be consistent clinical evidence indicating that the consequences of a strong Latina/o identity for personal values, beliefs, and behaviors can differ dramatically even among Latina/o-identified members of the same nuclear family (Acevedo-Polakovich & Gering, 2011). The distinction between cultural identities and cultural adaptation is perhaps best summarized in the comments of one of the U.S. Latina/o adolescents involved in the study who—reflecting on the differences in values, beliefs, and behaviors across Latinas/os in this country—stated, “*they are all Latino, no one owns the copyright.*” Indeed, while there are values, beliefs, and practices commonly shared among Latina/o heritages, there is also meaningful variation across these heritages and among the individuals that ascribe to them (Umaña-Taylor & Fine, 2001). Accordingly, it might be most beneficial for counselors and applied psychologists to support U.S. Latina/o youth in the understanding of their own identity, its cultural components, and its social and relational implications (e.g., Acevedo-Polakovich & Gering, 2011).

Asset Variables. Although the scholarship on strengths and assets among U.S. Latina/o youth is still in its infancy (Kuperminc et al., 2009; Rodriguez & Morrobel, 2004), interventions such as that developed by Bloomberg et al.

(2003) and described earlier in this article provide initial evidence supporting asset-focused approaches to practice with U.S. Latina/o youth. Although such approaches should account for cultural processes and their effects on these youth, the psychosocial functioning of U.S. Latina/o youth should neither be reduced to these important processes nor considered in their absence. Cultural identities and cultural adaptation must be considered in addition to, and not in place of, the large number of additional assets and strengths that foster the successful development of all U.S. youth (Kuperminc et al., 2009; Rodriguez & Morrobel, 2004).

Academic Performance. Although the assessment of academic performance was not a focal point of this study, it is notable that GPA remained a significant predictor of asset variables across all analyses. The child development literature documents positive relationships between social responsibility and academic performance, and suggests several developmental pathways by which leadership may relate to academic performance. It is thought that social and academic competence may be shared goals among high functioning youth, and that socially responsible behavior may enhance the learning environment by strengthening student-educator relationships and reducing disruptive behavior (Wentzel, 1991). These relationships are demonstrated among youth who engage in service learning and also demonstrate greater academic performance (Scales et al., 2000). Given the prior evidence of multidirectional relationships between assets and academic performance, counseling psychologists may wish to consider the potential academic implications of fostering these assets among U.S. Latina/o youth, a group that is suffering a veritable academic crisis.

Conclusion

This study expands the research on U.S. Latina/o youth toward a more balanced perspective that considers assets. Although further research is needed to fully understand leadership, social responsibility, and other assets among these youth, current results strengthen the base for such research and demonstrate how asset variables can inform other foci of inquiry such as cultural adaptation and cultural identity. Findings raise important questions about existing cultural adaptation models and point to the importance of accounting for both ethnic and American identity among U.S. Latina/o youth. Results suggest that the adaptive aspects of psychosocial functioning among U.S. Latina/o youth should neither be reduced to the important cultural processes that affect these youth nor be considered in their absence.

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Note

1. Throughout this article, the term *Latinas* is used to refer to females with a heritage in a Latin American country. The term *Latinos* is used in reference to males with this same heritage, and the terms *Latina/o* and *Latinas/os* are used in reference to mixed gender groups. Other terms are used when the literature being cited in the article's preferred nomenclature would obscure a relation to the established literature (e.g., when referring to the Hispanic involvement scale or to the National Survey of Latinos).

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