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Race/Ethnicity and Family Contact: Toward a Behavioral Measure of Familialism

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Abstract

Research from several disciplines has found that Latinos in the United States tend to score higher than other groups on measures of familialism. While most studies of Latino familialism use attitudinal measures rather than behavioral ones, I argue that examining behavioral measures of familialism can offer additional insights. This article develops a behavioral measure of familialism based on frequency of contact with family members and demonstrates this measure's utility using 2002 General Social Survey (GSS) data. Indices were created representing frequency of contact with nuclear and extended family using individual familial categories (i.e., mother, sibling, cousin). Frequency of contact with the individual familial categories was also tested. Analysis of the indices found that Latinos maintained more frequent contact with nuclear and extended family members than did White non-Hispanics but not Black non-Hispanics. More detailed findings from the analyses of individual familial categories, and suggestions for future research are discussed.

Keywords

Latino, familialism, familism, contact, interaction

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The concept of familialism plays an important role in social scientific research on Hispanic Americans (Sabogal, Marín, Otero-Sabogal, Marín, & Perez-Stable, 1987; Vega, 1990). A body of literature has examined a number of aspects of Latino familialism, such as its role in identity development of 1st-year college students (Torres, 2004), psychological care (Inclan & Hernandez, 1992), juvenile delinquency (Pabon, 1998), acculturation in the United States (Negy & Woods, 1992), and alcohol use among adolescent males (Gil, Wagner, & Vega, 2000). Bengtson's (2001) research contends that, in general (i.e., not differentiating based on race or ethnicity), multigenerational kinship networks are becoming increasingly important in the 21st century for a number of reasons including longer life expectancy and increased importance of grandparents and other extended family members in fulfilling functional roles in the family. Altogether, this research suggests that familialism has important implications to the well-being of Latinos, and seeking to understand familialism is a valuable endeavor for social scientists and policy makers alike.

The research on familialism draws a distinction between attitudinal and behavioral measures of familialism (Marin, 1993; Sabogal et al., 1987), though most social science research on familialism explores only attitudinal measures (Esparza & Sanchez, 2008; Gaines et al., 1997; Lugo Steidel & Contreras, 2003; Rodriguez, Mira, Paez, & Myers, 2007; Sabogal et al., 1987; Villarreal, Blozis, & Widaman, 2005). This preference for attitudinal measures of familialism is attributed to the view that attitudinal measures are more stable than behavioral measures when considering of the effects of language, generation, acculturation level, and so forth (Sabogal et al., 1987; Villarreal et al., 2005). While this view is not without validity, there is still much that can be learned about familialism by studying its behavioral dimensions. There is, however, a lack of research aimed at examining behavioral aspects of familialism. This study intends to examine one such behavioral dimension—frequency of family contact—in an effort to determine if Hispanic Americans interact with family members more frequently than do Black non-Hispanics or White non-Hispanics. Not only will this study provide additional insight into how familialism manifests itself in behavioral terms, but also will serve to encourage further examination of behavioral measures of familialism.

The literature on Latinos suggests that familialism, which can be defined as a sense of loyalty, identification, solidarity, and attachment to both nuclear and extended family, is a core component of Hispanic culture (Keefe, 1979; Marin, 1993; Torres, 2004; Vega, 1990). Furthermore, research suggests that Latinos tend to score higher in measures of familialism than White

non-Hispanics (Keefe, 1979). There are, however, studies that have observed high levels of familialism among other racial and ethnic groups, suggesting that it is not a uniquely Latino cultural characteristic (Hays & Mindel, 1973; Schwartz, 2007; Youn, Knight, Jeong, & Benton, 1999). In their study of 395 Black and White parents from a Midwestern city, Hays and Mindel found that the Black respondents interacted with twice as many family members at least once a week (4.08) than did the White respondents (2.00). The observed differences were statistically significant regarding interaction with siblings, secondary family members (aunts, uncles, and grandparents), and cousins, but not significant regarding interaction with parents. It is worth noting that, although the difference between Black and White respondents in terms of interaction with parents was not statistically significant, Black respondents did report less frequent interactions (.68) than did White respondents (.96). Overall, however, this study suggests that, like Latinos, Black non-Hispanics are characterized by comparatively high levels of behavioral familialism.

In her influential research pertaining to familialism and Mexican Americans, Keefe (1979) contends that, while research argues that urbanization and other influences lead to decreased levels of familialism, Mexican American families have maintained strong familial ties. Moreover, she identifies four key characteristics of Mexican American familialism. The first of these is that "the extended kin group normally consists of a wide circle of relatives including not only ego's parents, siblings, spouse, and children but also grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, siblings' spouses, nieces, nephews, and grandchildren" (p. 351). Secondly, this extended family generally lives in close proximity to each other. The third characteristic is that this extended family serves as the primary social unit for members, and the fourth characteristic is that the "extended kin group operates as a reciprocal aid system. Family members are relied on for temporary help and in times of crisis, furnishing both emotional and instrumental support" (p. 352).

Keefe (1979) further argues that the effects of Latino familialism tend to become stronger after the first generation in the United States, because Mexican immigrants to the United States tend to arrive with fewer direct family members, and grow their families over time through marriage, raising children, and the families into which their children marry. As such, subsequent generations tend to have a larger family network in the United States, with which they can interact. She further argues that the strong connection to extended family is not likely "tied to poverty and the search for resources outside the nuclear family" (p. 361). In other words, she argues that Latinos do not seek connections in extended family to fulfill resource needs that, due to poverty, the immediate family is unable to meet. As part of her study,

Keefe compared the number of visits with a related household, per week, among a sample of Mexican Americans and Anglo Americans from three Southern California Communities. Her analysis found that, on average, Mexican Americans visited more related households per week than did Anglos.

Although Keefe's research provides support for the view that Latinos have more frequent interactions with extended family when compared with White non-Hispanics, there are opportunities to address gaps in her analysis. First, her study only included Mexican Americans and Anglo Americans and, as seen in the Hays and Mindel study, there is reason to believe that Black non-Hispanics also maintain a comparatively high frequency of contact with extended family members. It would be valuable to compare all three of these major racial and ethnic groups, to gain a more complete picture of their comparative levels of family interaction. Second, her analysis does not control for potentially relevant variables, such as sex, age, education, income, or marital status. In addition, because Keefe's study examines the number of visits to related households per week, we are unable to determine whether the higher frequency of contact is attributable to simply having more family members residing in the same community area and therefore having more family with which to interact, or whether individual members of certain groups are actually more "familial" in their attitudes and behaviors. Finally, Keefe's analysis does not differentiate between any particular familial category, such as cousin, sibling, aunt, uncle, or adult children. Examining differences in frequency of contact with individual familial categories has the potential to provide deeper insight into behavioral familialism.

Purpose of the Current Study

The purpose of the current study was to compare the frequency of contact with nuclear family and extended family members among a sample of Latino, Black non-Hispanic, and White non-Hispanic respondents. Based on the previous literature on family contact, it was predicted that Latinos would be found to maintain more frequent contact with nuclear and extended family than do White non-Hispanics but not Black non-Hispanics, even when controlling for sex, age, education, income, and marital status. Furthermore, each individual familial category (i.e., mother, father, cousins, etc.) was examined independently to gain further insight into patterns of family contact.

Method

Sample

The hypotheses were tested using data from the 2002 General Social Survey (GSS), which included a nationally representative sample of 2,765 U.S. adult respondents. The 2002 GSS data were selected because they are from the most recent year to include the necessary survey questions pertaining to frequency of family contact. These data were weighted using WTSSALL[1] and filtered so that the final sample included only Hispanic, Black non-Hispanic, and White non-Hispanic respondents, ages 18 and older, with valid responses to relevant survey items. The final weighted samples for the models ranged in size from a low of 268 (the model for analysis of interaction with adult children) to a high of 771 (the model for analysis of index of interaction with extended family members).

Measures

The dependent variables used to test the hypotheses included two indices that were constructed in order to operationalize the concept of nuclear and extended family contact, and variables pertaining to contact with individual familial categories, such as mother, father, cousin, etc. The index of contact with nuclear family included the variables "How often does respondent visit the sister or brother with whom she or he previously indicated the highest frequency of contact" (sibvisit), "How often does respondent visit the adult son or daughter with whom she or he previously indicated the highest frequency of contact" (kidvisit), "How often does respondent visit father" (pavisit1), and "How often does respondent visit mother" (mavisit1). Responses were coded with higher values for more frequent contact, with possible values ranging from 1.0 to 6.0. The responses to nuclear familial categories were coded as follows: *she or he lives in the same household as I do* and *daily* = 6; *at least several times a week* = 5; *at least once a week* = 4; *at least once a month* = 3; *several times a year* = 2; and *less often* and *never* = 1. In cases where the respondent had no living relative of this type or did not know this relative, the response was coded as "system missing." Finally, the valid responses were averaged to create the index. In cases where one or more familial categories had no valid responses, the average was computed without the missing/nonvalid responses (e.g., in a situation where a respondent has no living relative in one or more of the categories, those categories were not included in the computing of the index). It was determined that

using averages instead of a summated scale was preferable, as it allowed for fewer cases to be omitted from the analysis.

The index of contact with extended family included the variables "How often does respondent contact cousin" (cousins), "How often does respondent contact uncles or aunts" (uncaunts), and "How often does respondent contact nieces and nephews" (niecenep). Responses were coded with higher values for more frequent contact, and averaged to create an index of contact with extended family, with possible values ranging from 1.0 to 3.0. The responses to extended familial categories were coded as follows: *more than twice in last 4 weeks* = 3; *once or twice in last 4 weeks* = 2; and *not at all in last 4 weeks* = 1. The valid responses to these items were averaged to create the index of contact with extended family, following the same method used in creating the index of contact with nuclear family. In addition, each item used in creating these indices was used as a dependent variable in the tests of each familial category (i.e., father, mother, cousin, etc.).

It is important to note that the items associated with nuclear family specifically used the term *visit*, while items associated with extended family used the term *contact* in the questions. As such, for nuclear family "family contact" is more specifically "in person" contact, while for extended family, this contact can include phone or other forms of contact, as well as visits. Furthermore, the items pertaining to nuclear familial categories that can include multiple individuals (i.e., siblings, and adult children, as opposed to mother/father) ask respondents to answer based on the member of that category with whom they maintain the most contact (i.e., the sibling with whom they have the most frequent contact). This is important, in that it decreases the likelihood that higher frequency of contact with nuclear family is simply a function of having larger families. In other words, we are looking at how frequently a respondent interacts with their "closest" sibling, rather than total interactions with all siblings. Because the survey items for extended family categories were written based on contact with any member of that category (i.e., contact with any cousin), the analyses of contact with extended family are likely to be influenced by the size of one's extended family.

The independent variables used in the analysis included two race/ethnicity dummy variables for White non-Hispanic and Black non-Hispanic, with Hispanic as the reference category. Gender was also treated as a dummy variable with female coded as "1" and male as the reference category. Marital status was recoded into a dummy variable with "married," "widowed," "divorced," and "separated" coded as 1, and "never married" treated as the reference category. In an attempt to control for individuals who do not live near family members, two dummy variables were created based on whether

the respondent currently resides in the same city and/or state as when they were age 16, with those who reside in the same city as when they were age 16 considered the reference category. The first of these dummy variables assigned a value of "1" if the respondent resides in a different city but the same state as when she or he was age 16. The second of these dummy variables assigned a value of "1" if the respondent resides in a different state than when she or he was age 16. These geographic mobility variables also served as a de facto control for immigration generation status. In other words, because the sample is drawn from the U.S. population, anyone who indicates that they live in the same city or state as when they were age 16, must have lived in the United States at age 16. The end result is that this variable controls for individuals who migrated to the United States as adults (after age 16). This control is important when we consider Keefe's (1979) argument that recent immigrants from Mexico to the United States tend to arrive with fewer direct family members than those who have been in the U.S. for a longer period of time. Education was measured based on highest year of school completed, age was measured in years with responses ranging from 18 to 89 or more, and income was measured using the GSS income brackets found within the variable "rincom98"(respondent's income).

Data Analysis

Means, standard deviations, and percentages were used to describe the sample for each analysis. To test the hypotheses regarding the effects of race and ethnicity on frequency of family contact, ordinary least squares (OLS) regression analysis was conducted.[2] Specifically, each of the nine measures (two indices and seven individual familial categories) of frequency of family contact was regressed on the two dummy variables representing race and ethnicity, and a set of control variables.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics of the samples used in the analyses of frequency of contact with family members. In general, the samples for the indices of contact with nuclear and extended family were similar across all categories, with the exception of the mean scores of the dependent variable indices (which is in large part due to the different range of possible response values in each index). When all controls and filters for missing values were

applied, the sample size for the analysis of nuclear family contact was 766, while the sample size for the analysis of extended family contact was 771. The mean score for the index of nuclear family contact was 3.468, which equates to having contact more frequently than once a month, but less frequently than once per week, while the mean score for the index of extended family contact was 1.843, which is just shy of the score for "once or twice in the last four weeks" (2.0), but well above the score associated with "not at all in the last four weeks" (1.0). For both the analysis of nuclear family contact and the analysis of extended family contact, about 78% of the sample was White non-Hispanic, while about 11% was Black non-Hispanic, and about 11% was Hispanic. In both analyses approximately 27% of the sample lived in a different city than when they were age 16, while about 30% lived in a different state than when they were age 16. Both samples consist of approximately 53% men and 47% women, with mean age of about 40 years. About 71% of both samples had ever been married, both samples were characterized by mean educational attainment just under 14 years of schooling, and both samples had a mean income score of approximately 14 on the GSS measure of income (US$22,500 to 24,999).

The descriptive statistics for the samples used in the analyses of individual familial categories were characterized by greater dissimilarity than was observed among the samples used in the analyses of the two indices. Many of the dissimilarities were in keeping with what one would expect from the sample, based on the nature of the familial relationship being analyzed. For example, the sample for the analysis of frequency of contact with adult children had a much older mean age (53 years) than any other category, while the ages among the samples for the analysis of frequency of contact with fathers (35 years), and mothers (37 years) were the youngest mean ages of any categories. These differences are intuitive, as a sample of those with adult children is likely to be older than a sample of the adult population as a whole, and a sample of those with parents who are still living is likely to be younger than a sample of the adult population as a whole. Furthermore, the difference in mean age between the samples for contact with fathers and mothers is likely related to the typically longer life expectancies among U.S. women. Also likely related to longer life expectancies among U.S. women, were noticeable differences between the percentages of females (53.5%) and males (46.5%) in the analysis of contact with adult children, and the samples from all other analyses (percent of females in other samples ranged from 45.1% to 47.6%, while males ranged from 52.4 percent to 54.9 percent). The frequency of contact also varied across familial categories. Among nuclear familial categories, respondents tend to maintain the most frequent contact with their

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for Tests of Contact With Family Members, U.S. Adults, 2002

Variables	Nuclear family index		Father		Mother		Sibling		Adult child		Extended family index		Aunt or uncle		Nephew or niece		Cousin	
	M (*SD*)	%	*M* (*SD*)	%	*M* (*SD*)	%	*M* (*SD*)	%	*M* (*SD*)	%	*M* (*SD*)	%	*M* (*SD*)	%	*M* (*SD*)	%	*M* (*SD*)	%
Contact with	3.468 (1.347)		3.191 (1.750)		3.714 (1.694)		3.092 (1.619)		4.353 (1.644)		1.843 (0.651)		1.730 (0.801)		2.063 (0.849)		1.748 (0.819)	
Hispanic (reference category)[a]		11.0		14.3		12.5		11.3		7.1		10.9		11.2		10.8		10.8
White Non-Hispanic[a]		77.6		75.2		75.6		77.1		81.5		78.0		77.9		77.8		78.0
Black Non-Hispanic[a]		11.4		10.4		11.9		11.6		11.5		11.1		10.9		11.4		11.2
Different city from age 16		26.7		26.0		26.6		27.7		28.8		26.5		26.7		27.4		26.3
Different state from age 16		29.7		28.2		27.1		29.0		34.8		29.9		29.5		31.1		30.1
Male[a]		52.9		54.9		52.8		53.0		46.5		53.2		52.4		53.5		53.2
Female[a]		47.1		45.1		47.2		47.0		53.5		46.8		47.6		46.5		46.9
Age	40.4 (13.412)		34.7 (10.483)		36.6 (11.401)		40.4 (12.936)		53.0 (9.403)		40.5 (13.425)		39.1 (12.915)		42.1 (13.063)		40.3 (13.389)	
Ever been married		70.8		62.9		65.1		71.3		97.1		70.7		69.2		77.1		70.0
Education (years completed)	13.8 (2.684)		13.8 (2.638)		13.7 (2.588)		13.8 (2.704)		13.7 (2.814)		13.8 (2.685)		13.8 (2.646)		13.7 (2.656)		13.8 (2.678)	
Income	13.8 (5.809)		13.4 (5.754)		13.5 (5.828)		13.9 (5.850)		14.8 (5.764)		13.8 (5.821)		13.9 (5.862)		14.1 (5.801)		13.8 (5.870)	
N	766		471		592		658		268		771		705		658		754	

Source: The 2002 General Social Survey.

[a]The sum of percentages may not equal 100% due to rounding.

adult children, while among extended familial categories respondents tend to maintain the most frequent contact with nieces/nephews. Also of note is that there appeared to be a higher frequency of contact with mothers than with fathers.

Frequency of Contact With Nuclear Family

Table 2 shows the results of the regression analyses for the indices of contact with nuclear and extended family, as well as the results of the analyses of contact with individual familial categories. The model for the index of frequency of contact with nuclear family was found to be a good fit ($R^2 = .265$; $p < .001$). In the equation, the difference in frequency of contact with nuclear family between White non-Hispanics and Hispanics was significant at the .05 level (one-tailed test)[3]; however, there was no statistically significant difference between Black non-Hispanics and Hispanics. The variables for residing in a different city from age 16, and residing in a different state from age 16, were statistically significant beyond the .001 level. Aside from the dummy variables for race/ethnicity and geographic mobility, "ever married" ($p < .001$), which had a negative effect on frequency of contact with nuclear family, was the only other statistically significant variable in the model. These findings support my hypothesis in that, while Hispanics maintain a higher frequency of contact with nuclear family than White non-Hispanics, there is no observed difference between Hispanics and Black non-Hispanics.

Among the analyses of individual nuclear family categories all models were statistically significant, with the model for contact with adult children the weakest model ($R^2 = .096$; $p < .01$), and contact with mothers the strongest model ($R^2 = .300$; $p < .001$). The dummy variable for White non-Hispanics was only significant in the models for fathers and adult children ($p < .05$, one-tailed test), suggesting that White non-Hispanics tend to have less frequent contact than Hispanics with fathers and adult children but not mothers or siblings. The dummy variable for Black non-Hispanics suggests a significantly lower frequency of contact with fathers ($p < .01$) but not with any other nuclear family category. Residing in a different state from age 16 was significant at the .001 level for all familial categories, while residing in the same state but a different city from age 16 had a significant negative effect ($p < .001$) for mothers and fathers, but no significance for adult children or siblings.[4] Sex was significant at the .01 level for adult children, suggesting that women have significantly more frequent contact with their adult children than do men. Age had a significant negative effect in the models for mothers ($p < .05$) and siblings ($p < .01$), while having been married has a significant

Table 2. Estimates of OLS Regression Models Predicting Respondents' Frequency of Contact With Family Members, U.S. Adults, 2002

Variable	Nuclear family index	Father	Mother	Sibling	Adult child	Extended family index	Aunt or uncle	Nephew or niece	Cousin
	b	*b*	*b*	*b*	*b*	*b*	*b*	*b*	*b*
White Non-Hispanic	−0.263†	−0.336†	−0.137	−0.255	−0.757†	−0.281†††	−0.154†	−0.326††	−0.298†††
	(.139)	(.209)	(.184)	(.186)	(.416)	(.073)	(.094)	(.108)	(.095)
Black Non-Hispanic	0.002	−0.793**	0.225	0.161	−0.500	0.089	0.192	−0.047	0.185
	(.180)	(.292)	(.241)	(.239)	(.496)	(.095)	(.122)	(.140)	(.122)
Different city from age 16	−0.565***	−0.808***	−0.781***	−0.232	−0.314	−0.160**	−0.213**	0.023	−0.225**
	(.105)	(.177)	(.146)	(.140)	(.245)	(.055)	(.071)	(.081)	(.071)
Different state from age 16	−1.373***	−1.527***	−1.795***	−1.022***	−0.885***	−0.305***	−0.286***	−0.299***	−0.323***
	(.107)	(.183)	(.152)	(.146)	(.244)	(.056)	(.072)	(.082)	(.072)
Sex (1 = *female*)	0.014	−0.236	0.015	−0.085	0.590**	−0.005	−0.008	0.101	−0.092
	(.089)	(.155)	(.125)	(.118)	(.214)	(.046)	(.060)	(.068)	(.060)
Age	0.007	−0.002	−0.013*	−0.015**	−0.001	−0.006**	−0.008**	−0.008**	−0.005
	(.004)	(.008)	(.006)	(.005)	(.012)	(.002)	(.003)	(.003)	(.003)
Ever been married	−0.618***	−0.798***	−0.575***	−0.659***	−0.318	−0.094	−0.159*	0.016	−0.131
	(.111)	(.179)	(.150)	(.150)	(.633)	(.058)	(.074)	(.088)	(.074)
Education	−0.017	−0.013	0.024	−0.040	−0.020	0.008	−0.001	0.005	0.012
	(.017)	(.030)	(.025)	(.023)	(.038)	(.009)	(.012)	(.013)	(.012)
Income	−0.012	−0.008	−0.016	−0.009	−0.020	−0.002	−0.008	0.006	−0.004
	(.008)	(.015)	(.012)	(.011)	(.038)	(.004)	(.006)	(.006)	(.006)
Constant	4.774***	5.115***	5.197***	5.410***	5.741***	2.416***	2.517***	2.508***	2.324***
	(.265)	(.446)	(.372)	(.357)	(.891)	(.138)	(.179)	(.205)	(.178)
R^2	.265	.236	.300	.214	.096	.136	.123	.070	.111
F	30.316***	15.776***	27.716***	19.665***	3.055**	13.338***	10.821***	5.384***	10.352***
N	766	471	592	658	268	771	705	658	754

Source: The 2002 General Social Survey.

Note: *b* = unstandardized regression coefficient with standard error in parentheses.

*$p \leq .05$. **$p \leq .01$. ***$p \leq .001$, two-tailed test.

†$p \leq .05$. ††$p \leq .01$. †††$p \leq .001$, one-tailed test.

negative effect ($p < .001$) in the models for mothers, fathers, and siblings, but no significant effect in the model for adult children.

Frequency of Contact With Extended Family

Similar to the analysis of frequency of contact with nuclear family, the OLS regression analysis of the index of frequency of contact with extended family resulted in a good fitting model ($R^2 = .136$; $p < .001$). The regression analysis found that Latinos demonstrated a significantly higher frequency of contact with extended family ($p < .001$, one-tailed test) than White respondents, but no statistically significant difference when compared with Black non-Hispanics. In addition to the White non-Hispanic variable, the control variables pertaining to residential mobility had negative statistically significant effects (same state/different city $p < .01$; different state $p < .001$), with the negative effect of age ($p < .01$) the only other statistically significant control variable. This suggests that Latinos have a higher frequency of contact with extended family than do White non-Hispanic respondents, but not Black non-Hispanic respondents, and therefore supports my hypothesis regarding extended family contact.

All of the models for the individual extended familial categories were statistically significant at the .001 level, however, the $R^2$of these models tended to be lower than was observed among most of the nuclear familial categories. The weakest model was associated with frequency of contact with nieces/nephews ($R^2 = .070$; $p < .001$), while the strongest model was associated with frequency of contact with aunts/uncles ($R^2 = .123$; $p < .001$). White non-Hispanics had significantly less frequent contact with aunts/uncles ($p < .05$, one-tailed test), nieces/nephews ($p < .01$, one-tailed test), and cousins ($p < .001$, one-tailed test) than did Hispanics, while Black non-Hispanic had no significant difference in frequency of contact with any extended family category. Same state/different city from age 16 had a significant negative effect in the models for aunts/uncles ($p < .01$), and cousins ($p < .01$), but no significant effect in the model for nieces/nephews. This is not surprising when one considers that the variable for different city/same state was not significant in the model for siblings, and siblings are the parents of nieces and nephews. In other words, visiting with siblings is likely to include visiting with one's nieces or nephews. Age had a significant negative effect ($p < .01$) in the models for aunts/uncles and nieces/nephews, but not in the model for cousins. Finally, having ever been married only had a significant negative effect on the model for frequency of contact with aunts/uncles ($p < .01$).

Discussion

Considering Keefe's (1979) research, it is not surprising to find that Hispanics tend to maintain more frequent contact with family members than do White non-Hispanics. Particularly informative are the findings that, among nuclear family members, there was no significant difference in contact with mothers or siblings. The fact that only two of the individual nuclear family categories were significant, while all extended family categories were significant, seems to be in keeping with Keefe's assertion that familialism includes a wide circle of familial connection that is inclusive of extended family as well as immediate family. As such, it appears that a key distinctive of familialism is the significance of extended family ties. In other words, while White non-Hispanics appear to draw more distinct lines between nuclear family and extended family, Hispanics and Black non-Hispanics seem to deemphasize the differences between nuclear family and extended family, at least in terms of contact.

The finding that, with the exception of fathers, there was no statistically significant difference between Hispanics and Black non-Hispanics in terms of frequency of familial contact runs counter to the view that high levels of familialism is a uniquely Hispanic characteristic. This finding is not surprising, however, when one considers the work of Hays and Mindel (1973) alongside that of Keefe (1979). Each study found that White non-Hispanics maintained less frequent contact with family members than the group upon which their study was focused (Black non-Hispanics for Hays and Mindel, and Hispanics for Keefe), but neither study compared the frequency of contact of Hispanics and Black non-Hispanics. The present study appears to confirm what a comparison of these previous studies suggests—both Hispanics and Black non-Hispanics are, more or less, equally familial in terms of frequency of contact. In addition, by controlling for income and education, this study supports the view that familialism is not correlated with socioeconomic status. In other words, as suggested by Keefe, familialism is not directly related to efforts to overcome the effects of poverty. It is still possible, however, that there is an indirect relationship between poverty and familialism, as the histories of marginalization and inequality experienced by Hispanics and Black non-Hispanics may have shaped cultural characteristics, such as familialism.

The findings of this study appear to fill in a few gaps in the work of Keefe (1979) and Hays and Mindel (1973). First, by including both Hispanics and Black non-Hispanics in the analysis, this study not only confirms the findings of Keefe and Hays and Mindel that Hispanics and Black non-Hispanics

maintain more frequent family contact vis-à-vis White non-Hispanics but also addresses the previously unanswered question of whether there is a difference in familial contact between Hispanics and Black non-Hispanics. This is an important finding, as it challenges the broad assumption that familialism is a uniquely Hispanic characteristic. Another gap in Keefe's study was that it did not control for the effect of having more available relatives with which to visit, as the result of larger families. The design of the GSS survey items for contact with nuclear family members allowed for this study controlled for the effect of larger families, as respondents were asked about contact with the most frequently contacted family member from categories in which it is common to have multiple family members (i.e., siblings and adult children). In other words, each respondent was asked about the frequency of contact with their "top" sibling, rather than contact with all siblings, thereby controlling for the number of siblings one might have, in examining the frequency of contact with siblings. This feature of the study helps to demonstrate that the more frequent contact observed by Keefe is not simply a function of larger families, but rather it likely also involves more frequent contact with individual family members. However, because the survey items pertaining to contact with extended family were constructed to include contact with any member of that familial category (i.e., any cousin, not just the most frequently contacted cousin), frequency of contact with extended family is likely still affected by the size of one's extended family. As such, there is an opportunity for future research to examine whether, controlling for number of extended family members, there is still a difference in frequency of contact between Latinos and White non-Hispanics. Furthermore, by examining frequency of contact with indices of nuclear family and extended family, as well as individual familial categories, this study was able to provide additional information about family contact that was not available in Keefe's study. One example of this is the aforementioned finding that differences in frequency of contact were observed between Hispanics and White non-Hispanics among all models for extended family members, but only two nuclear family categories. Another example is the finding that Black non-Hispanics maintain significantly less frequent contact with fathers. This might be partly explained by the overrepresentation of single-mother families among African Americans (Nichols-Casebolt, 1988), as it is conceivable that this has long-term effects on frequency of contact with fathers, among Black non-Hispanics. To control for the effect of single-mother households on the frequency of contact with fathers, future research should consider controlling for the marital status of the respondents parents (i.e., if the respondents' mother and father are still

married, is there still a significant difference between Black non-Hispanics and other groups in terms of contact with fathers?).

Although not the primary concern of this study, there are some interesting findings pertaining to the effect of age and marital status on familial contact. Age had a significant negative effect ($p < .01$) in the models for aunts/uncles and nieces/nephews, but not in the model for cousins. There are a number of possible explanations for this finding. It is possible that individuals are more likely to have contact with aunts and uncles while they are younger, because it is often part of interacting with cousins. In other words, when a young adult visits with cousins it may be at gatherings that include their cousins' parents (i.e., one's aunts and uncles). However, as one gets older, those aunts and uncles are more likely to have passed, and interactions with cousin are therefore less likely to include aunts and uncles. A similar explanation might be offered for the negative effect of age on contact with nieces and nephews, as, while they are children, interacting with nieces and nephews is part of interacting with siblings. As one becomes older, nieces and nephews become adults, and interacting with siblings is less likely to include those nieces and nephews. Also of note is that having ever been married was much more likely to have a negative effect on contact with nuclear family (with the exception of adult children) than extended family.

Overall, this study demonstrates the value of studying behavioral familialism, in addition to attitudinal familialism. By examining frequency of family contact, this study augments our understanding of familialism through behavioral measures. In addition, it is important to remember that frequency of contact with family is but one narrow measure of familialism, among a collection of patterns and tendencies that characterize this cultural phenomena. As such, future research should seek to further explore not only frequency of family contact but also patterns of reciprocal aid, the degree to which extended family relationships demonstrate characteristics of primary social relationships, and possible elements of familialism. Furthermore, future research should compare Latino familialism and Black non-Hispanic familialism, to determine similarities and differences between these groups, and whether the findings of research pertaining to Hispanics and familialism also apply to Black non-Hispanics. Such future research will expand our understanding of familialism and better inform research aimed at exploring the relationship between familialism and other areas such as education, health, and socioeconomic status. Moreover, research in this area can aid policy makers in areas such as human services, healthcare, and other areas where understanding the characteristics and needs of families adds value to policy.

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Author's Notes

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Notes

1. As the GSS selects one adult per household, unweighted data can be generalized to households but not individuals. The WTSSALL weight variable takes this sampling method into consideration and allows for findings to be generalized to individual adults.
2. Tolerance and variance inflation factor (VIF) were used to test for multicollinearity. All tolerance and VIF levels were found to be within an acceptable range. The lowest tolerance levels and highest VIF levels were observed among the variables for White non-Hispanic (tolerance = .360; VIF = 2.777) and Black non-Hispanic (tolerance = .378; VIF = 2.643), in the analysis of contact with adult children. All other tolerance levels were above .5, and all other VIF levels were below 2. The data were analyzed for outliers by comparing Mahalanobis distance to the appropriate chi-square score (27.877; $p = .001$, $DF = 9$). This analysis netted 6 outliers, which were omitted from the final analysis. Regression analyses were run with these outliers included to compare with the final analyses. Although the results of these regression analyses had some minor differences, there were no significant differences among the race/ethnicity dummy variables.
3. As the hypothesis regarding White non-Hispanics involves an expected direction (i.e., White non-Hispanics are predicted to have less frequent contact with family than are Hispanics), a one-tailed test was used to interpret the findings involving

the dummy variable representing White non-Hispanics. All other variables were interpreted using a two-tailed test.

4. In the regression model for contact with siblings, the *p* value for the dummy variable regarding residing in the same state but a different city from age 16 was .098 using a two-tailed test. Because the logical prediction regarding this variable involves an expected direction (i.e., a predicted negative effect on contact), one might interpret this using a one-tailed test, resulting in a *p* value that is below .05, and thereby significant. However, because this variable is a control variable and not central to the hypotheses, a two-tailed test was used for the purposes of this study.

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Bio

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