The Psychological Well-Being of Latino/a Adolescents: Acculturation, Latino/a Cultural Values, Cultural Risk and Protective Factors

Latinos and Latinas compromise the fastest growing ethnic minority group in the United States (Marotta &Garcia, 2003). In 2000, there were 32.8 million Latinos/Latinas residing in the United States, representing 12% of the total U.S. population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2002). A large proportion of Latinos/as are living in poverty and are under the age of 18 (Smokowski & Bacallao, 2006), representing the fastest growing group of young people in the US (Chapa & Valencia, 1993). Latina adolescent girls make up 15.2 % of all the girls in the United States, constituting the largest minority group of girls in the United States (COSSMHO, 1999). Latino/a adolescents and children in the United States tend to report lower levels of psychological well-being compared to non-Latino white children, African American children, and youth from Mexico (Locke, Newcomb, Duclos, and Goodyear, 2007; Roberts and Sobhan, 1992; Roberts, Roberts, & Chen, 1997; Hovey & King, 1996; Emslie, Weinberg, Rush, Adams, & Rintelmann, 1990; Roberts, Roberts, & Chen, 1997; Roberts and Chen, 1995; Swanson, Linskey, Quintero-Salinas, Pumariego, & Holzer, 1992; Portes et al., 2002). Latina girls tend to do worse on these outcomes than Latino boys (Roberts et al., 1992; Locke et al., 2007; Benjet & Hernandez-Guzman, 2001; Rutter, 1986; Swanson et al., 1992; Roberts et al., 1997; Roberts et al., 1995; Cuellar, & Roberts, 1997; Umaña-Taylor & Updegraff, 2006). As Latino/as become part of the U.S. society it is critical to understand the factors influencing the psychological well-being of Latino/a children. This paper will provide a brief review of current research on the psychological well-being of Latino/a adolescents. In particular, this paper will focus on the challenges of the acculturation process for these children, Latino cultural values, as well as cultural risk and

protective factors often linked in research to the mental health and problem behaviors of acculturating Latino/a children in the United States.

Methodological Considerations

While Latino/a populations vary tremendously in terms of nationality, migration histories, language, cultural nuances, levels of experienced discrimination, class, socioeconomic status, skin color, reasons for immigration, and educational level, research conducted with this group tends to generalize findings from one subgroup (e.g. Mexican American) to the larger group (e.g. Latinos/Latinas) (Smith, 2004). However, generalizations that are often made across ethnic minority subgroups can be at times inaccurate and misleading (Umaña-Taylor & Fine, 2001). For example, while 36% of Mexican households are composed of five or more people, only 14% of Cuban households are composed of five or more people (Thierren & Ramirez, 2000). Despite these within-group differences, generalizations like the following are commonly made; "Hispanics live in family households that are larger than those of non-Hispanic Whites (Umaña-Taylor et. al., 2001)" providing misleading descriptions of Latino/a subgroups. There is a similar tendency to make brought generalizations in psychological research with cultural minorities. For example, in one study, Portes & Zady (2002) compared Colombian, Cuban in private schools, Cuban in public schools, Mexican, and Nicaraguan 8th and 9th graders in regard to self-esteem. They found that these groups differed significantly in their predictors of self-esteem suggesting that Latino adolescents adapt differently to different circumstances which warrants attention to within-group differences.

Research with Latino/as is just beginning to tease apart differences between various Latino/a subgroups (Epstein, Botvin, & Diaz, 2002; Erkut and Tracy, 2002) making it difficult to distinguish the implications of within-group differences on psychological phenomena,

acculturation, as well as cultural values, traditions, and beliefs. While most research has been done with Mexican Americans, Cuban Americans, and Puerto Ricans, little is known about other Latino/a subgroups. Thus, culture or group-specific research with other Latino subgroups is needed. While, the author acknowledges the importance of including and distinguishing between the various Latino/a subgroups, in this paper, the author follows the tradition of referring to the general category of "Latinos/as" when reviewing research findings and descriptions of Latino/a cultural values because doing otherwise would be difficult if not impossible.

Acculturative Stress and the Psychological Well-being of Latino/a Adolescents

Acculturative stress has been defined as the stress caused by the acculturation process (Berry & Kim, 1988; Williams & Berry, 1991). Acculturation entails the cultural, social, and psychological changes that occur in groups and individuals when they are in continuous contact and interaction with groups and individuals from another culture (Williams et al., 1991). Stressors include discrimination, negative stereotypes, intergenerational acculturation gaps, and the pressure to speak two languages (LaFromboise, Coleman, & Gerton, 1993; Romero & Roberts, 2003; Szapocnik & Kurtines (1980). Acculturation related changes can result in feelings of depression, anxiety, feelings of alienation, and identity confusion.

Researchers propose that many Latino/a immigrant adolescents experience stress due to clashing values between their culture of origin and American culture (ie. acculturative stress) (Portes et al., 2002; Zayas et al., 2005; Szapocnik et al. 1980). These adolescents may have to negotiate their space between two or more cultures and they may have to navigate between multiple cultures and languages in school and at home. Ethnic minority adolescents may feel pulled by American culture and may desire to fit in and identify with the benefits of belonging to mainstream US culture. At the same time, they may be aware that they are rejected by American society (e.g. discrimination), and they may be afraid of displeasing their parents who may want

their children to maintain their cultural roots and values. In addition, acculturating adolescents may be afraid to displease their community and lose the social support they receive from their community (Portes et al., 2002; Hovey, Kim, & Seligman, 2006). These negotiations can be challenging for immigrant children and take a heavy toll on their mental health (Hovey & King, 1996; Romero, Carvajal, Valle, & Orduña, 2007; Hovey et al., 2006).

Latino/a youth tend to report lower levels of psychological well-being compared to non-Hispanic white children, other ethnic minority children, and youth in Mexico. Latino adolescents suffer from depression and dysphoria more often than non-Latino white adolescents, African American adolescents, and youth from Mexico (Locke et al. 2007; Roberts et al., 1992; Roberts et al., 1997; Hovey et al., 1996; Emslie et. al., 1990; Roberts et al., 1997; Roberts et al., 1995; Swanson et al., Portes et al., 2002). Compared to Asian American children and non-Latino white adolescents, Latinos also report lower rates of self-esteem (Portes et al., 2002).

Overall, Latina girls tend to do worse on these outcomes than Latino boys (Roberts et al., 1992; Locke et al., 2007; Benjet & Hernandez-Guzman, 2001; Swanson et al., 1992; Roberts et al., 1997; Roberts et al., 1995; Cuellar, & Roberts, 1997; Umaña-Taylor & Updegraff, 2006), and they tend to have higher rates of suicide attempt compared to other ethnic minority girls and non-Latina white girls (Razin, O'Dowd, Nathan, Rodriguez, Goldfield, Martin, Goulet, Scheftel, Mezan, & Mosca, 1991; Zayas, Lester, Cabassa, & Fortuna, 2005). Researchers often link lower levels of psychological well-being among Latino adolescents to acculturative stress (Cuellar et al., 1997; Portes et al., 2002; Hovey et al., 1996; Hovey & King, 1997; Razin et al., 1991; Romero et al., 2007; Vega, Gil, Zimmeran, & Wahrheit, 1993; Roberts et al., 1995;), and they posit that gender differences in psychological well-being among Latino adolescents exist because

girls experience more family conflict, and thus, more acculturation related stress than boys (Gil & Vazquez, 1996; Zayas et al., 2005; Umaña-Taylor et al., 2006).

Berry refers to acculturation as a process of resocialization because it takes place after an individual or group of individuals has been socialized into their culture of origin (Williams et al., 1991). In order to understand the challenges of the resocialization process of ethnic minority immigrant children, researchers often examine how the cultural values, traditions, and expectations of the child's family clash with the cultural values, traditions, and expectations of the host culture (Zayas et al., 2005; Szapocnic et al., 1980).

Latino Cultural Values

Cultural values depicted in the literature as influencing the socialization of the Latino child often include the values of "familismo", "marianismo", "machismo", and the interrelated value of "respeto" (Torres, 1998; Umaña-Taylor, 2006). ***Familismo*** reflects the cultural socialization of the family. It emphasizes the maintenance of family cohesion, obligations to relatives, strong feelings of loyalty, reciprocity, solidarity among family members, familial interconnectedness, and the role of the nuclear and extended family in an individual's self-identity and social world. Many Latino adolescents are socialized into the belief that the family comes before the individual. They may be expected to sacrifice their own needs and desires if they interfere with the needs of the family. Many Latino children may be expected to remain near their families in order to be involved in every day activities. Familismo includes deference and respect to parents' and the family's needs (Lugo Steidel & Contreras, 2003). ***Respeto*** governs all positive reciprocal interpersonal relations. It dictates appropriate deferential behavior towards older people, parents, and relatives (Torres, 1998)

In contrast to American culture, familismo emphasizes interdependence. American mainstream culture values individuality and autonomy and thus, researchers posit that more acculturated adolescents of low acculturated parents may experience greater conflict in the home due to the clashing values of the two cultures (Portes et al., 2002; Szapocnik et al., 1980). This seems to be particularly true when Latino children acculturate to the host culture at a faster pace than their parents. This acculturation gap can lead to conflict between the parents and the child (Szapocnik, Scopetta, & King, 1978; Szapocnik et al., 1980; Szapocznik & Williams, 2000).

Researchers often propose that differences in gender role socialization and expectations are linked to gender differences in psychological well-being among Latino boys and Latina girls (Smith, 2004; Zayas et al., 2005; Gil et al.1996; Umaña-Taylor et al., 2006). While girls are being socialized into the ***marianismo*** belief, boys are being socialized into the ***machismo*** belief. Females are "socialized to be passive, demure, and hyper responsible for family obligations, unity and harmony" (Zayas et al., 2005; Gil et al., 1996). They are expected to be passive, obedient, and homebound. They are perceived as defenseless and vulnerable and as needing protection from their fathers, brothers, husbands, and sons. The "marianismo" belief is rooted on the cult of the Virgin Mary. Women are considered spiritually superior to men and better capable than men to endure all suffering (Torres, 1998; Bracero, 1998). Furthermore, females are expected to self-sacrifice in favor of their mothers, fathers, brothers, children and husbands. Girls and women are expected to accept male authority (Ramos-McKay, Comas-Diaz, & Rivera, 1988; Torres, 1998). Latino boys, on the other hand, are socialized to perceive themselves as dominant of women. Boys are socialized into believing that they have authority over their sisters, wives, and children. The machismo belief emphasizes self-respect and responsibility for protecting and providing for the family (Torres, 1998). Men and boys are expected to protect their family from

dangers (Gil et al., 1996; p. 5) The machismo belief also teaches boys and men to be gentlemen. Men are taught to offer the best seat at the movies to their "dama", to stand up to give a woman his seat on the subway, to carry heavy packages, to always open the door for a lady, and to help with the heavy household chores.

Both boys and girls are socialized into the belief that boys have options and women have duties. They learn to believe that "a man's place is in the world, and a woman's place is in the home." For girls this means their brothers are praised for being ambitious and for going out on dates, while girls are discouraged for that same qualities and behaviors (Gil et al., 1996; p. 6)

Researchers posit that Latina girls experience more acculturative stress than Latino boys because of the greater dissonance between the expectation of American and Latino culture for girls. Latino culture allows and expects boys to be more independent than girls (Ho, 1987). Thus, girls may experience more conflict than boys in the home and greater emotional dissonance due to the bigger culture clash between the girl's family expectations and the demands of American culture (Zayas et al., 2006). The following excerpts from two interviews with Latina girls shows how gender role expectations can play out in the family context and create family conflict.

> *"Chela (15 years): Because I would say, I would complain about my brother. I would complain that my brother didn't do nothing around the house, and he (dad) would say, "Oh, well, he goes to work and you guys have to clean." And one time I was, like, I go to work, I go to school, I clean, I babysit! I was, like, so what. And I guess he got mad at me for telling him, but I guess finally he (dad) realized that I was right. So I told him, "If it's my job to be here and to clean, why bother going to school, or going to work?" He was, like-I guess he realized, I guess he was mad, but he realized it. So that was the situation and that lasted for a while."(Gallegos-Castillo, A. (2006) in Latina Girls, p. 52)*

> *"Interviewer: Have you ever been treated unfairly because you're a girl?"*
> *Michelle (16 years): Only with my mother….She's always saying, like my brother can go out all the time, me, I have to tell her and I give the phone number of where I'm going, a list of things before I go out, beforehand, like I have to be home at a certain time and if I'm not there, she'll come out looking for me, only because I'm a girl."*
> *(Ayala, J. (2006) in Latina Girls, p.35)*

Furthermore, researchers have observed that many Hispanic families exert authoritarian parenting supported by cultural beliefs that emphasize deference and "respeto" to parents, restriction on adolescent autonomy, and family unity. Parents may wish that their children grow in understanding both cultures. They may not want to lose their children to American society or allow their children to act in ways that conflict with the values of their culture of origin. They may want to protect their children from harm caused by the rejection from a discriminating host culture (Portes et al., 2002). The adolescent's desire for autonomy, to fit in, and the demands from the broader social-cultural environment about adolescent individuality and autonomy can create intense family conflict and emotional dissonance in the acculturating Latino/a child. The child may be worried about parental disapproval and feel that family unit is in danger (Zayas et al. 2005; Portes et al, 2002). The dissonance between a child's independent self and his or her related self may present an existential threat to the child (Zayas et al., 2005). The child's feelings of inadequacy in the presence of such stressors may promote depression (Rumbaut, 2001), low self-esteem, anxiety, and hopelessness. These conflicts may lead to alienation between parents and their adolescent daughters and sons (Portes et al., 2002; Cuellar et al., 1997; Zayas et al., 2005; Szapocnik et al., 1980).

While many cultural explanations to account for low levels of psychological well-being among Latino/a adolescents and gender differences have been posited, few studies address and examine these assumptions in research studies. Researchers suggest identifying and examining the precise aspect of culture that relate to acculturation and psychological well-being in ethnic minority adolescents. Cross-cultural studies compare groups on different measures and conclude that differences are due to differences in cultural values, but only few examine and unpack culture directly (Betancourt & Lopez, 1993). While many studies have examined the role of

familismo and family support in the lives of Latino/a children (Vega et al., 2000; Locke et al., 2007; Loukas & Prelow, 2004; Salgado de Snyder, 1987). to the author's knowledge only one study has examined the role of differences in gender role sozialiation in the lives of Latina girls and Latino boys. Researchers call for incorporating group-specific measures for culture-specific values (e.g. marianismo, familismo, respeto when pertinent to the conceptual model) in order to examine and unpack the role of culture on psychological well-being (Betancourt et al., 1993). This is particularly important as traditional cultural values in immigrants may vary according to their acculturation level. Traditional cultural values are often reshaped and redefined (Thomas et al., 2006) as immigrants meet the challenges of their new cultural context (Bracero, 1998; Barry, Bernard, & Beitel, 2006) and as immigrants acculturate to their host culture. Therefore, future research studies should aim at examining directly and at unpacking those cultural values linked in research to the acculturation process and psychological well-being in the lives of Latina/o adolescents.

Although, many Latino boys and Latina girls live between two cultures, not all Latino/a adolescents experience high levels of acculturative stress and not all Latino/a adolescents show signs of poor psychological well-being. What protects some girls and boys and not others from the negative effects of having to meet the demands of two contrasting cultures?

Cultural Risk and Protective Factors

While researchers propose that culture and cultural traditions can influence emotional and behavioral problems of youth (Bird, 1996; Canino, Bird, & Canino, 1997; Canino & Guarnaccia, 1997), few studies exist that have examined cultural predictors of psychological well-being among Latino/a adolescents. Even fewer studies exist that have examined gender specific cultural predictors of psychological well-being among Latino/a children (Locke et al., 2007). The purpose of this section is to provide a brief review of current knowledge on cultural

risk and protective factors on the psychological well-being of Latino/a children. This section will focus on research that has examined the role of the cultural value of familismo, global Latino/American cultural orientation, language, ethnic identity, and intergenerational acculturation differences on the mental health of Latino/a children.

Familismo

A number of studies with Latino/a adolescent have explored the role of the cultural value of familismo, the importance of family connections, and family support on the emotional well-being and problem behavior of Latino/a populations (Vega, et al., 2000; Locke et al., 2007; Loukas et al., 2004; Salgado de Snyder, 1987). For example, Vega et al. (2000) in a study with Latino adolescent males found that acculturation and acculturative stress influenced alcohol use mainly through the deterioration of Latino family values (ie. familismo and parental respeto), attitudes, and familistic behaviors. Structural equation models showed that acculturation was associated with increased alcohol use through acculturative stress and the reduction of traditional Latino cultural values of familismo and parental respect. They also found that lifetime alcohol use was higher for U.S. born than for immigrant (ie. foreign born) children. The researchers propose that these findings "attest to the importance of exposure to U.S. societal norms, and also to the importance of residual influence of Latino culture for those who have been in the U.S. for shorter periods of time." Furthermore, they suggest differentiating between foreign born and U.S born adolescents in future research because immigrant and U.S. born children may have different acculturation experiences and may experience different stressors related to the acculturation process. In another study with young adult Latinas, Locke et al. (2007) found that family connection was the strongest protective factor related to dysphoria in this group of young Latinas. In particular, they found that establishing and maintaining good relationships with parents was the strongest protective factor for these girls. Smokowski et al. (2006) examined the

role of familismo on parent-adolescent conflict and aggression in a sample of U.S. and foreign born Latino/a adolescents and found that the cultural value familismo was associated with less parent-adolescent conflict and lower adolescent aggression. These findings suggest that familismo, family connections, and family support may protect Latino/a children from stress associated with the acculturation process.

Little is know about the role of other Latino cultural values in the lives of Latino/a children. It is possibility that adherence to other Latino cultural values may serve as buffers to acculturative stress. Therefore, future studies should aim at examining the relationship of other Latino cultural values (e.g. respeto, marianismo, machismo) on different psychological phenomena in Latino/a adolescents, and future research should also investigate the role of familismo on a broad rage of psychological phenomena (e.g. depression and anxiety) in order to increase generalizability of current findings across conditions and behaviors.

Global Cultural Orientation

Umaña-Taylor & Updegraff (2007) explored the moderating effect of global cultural orientation (mainstream versus Latino) on the relationship between perceived discrimination and depressive symptoms. Furthermore, they examined gender differences in the moderating role of global cultural orientation on the relation between perceived self-esteem and discrimination. The researchers hypothesized that mainstream culture orientation may be a salient risk factor for boys and Latino cultural orientation may be an important protective factor for girls. They based their reasoning on the observation that Latino boys and girls have differing socialization experiences. They hypothesized that boys may be at greater risk for experiencing discrimination than girls because in Latino/a culture boys are allowed more freedom and opportunities to spend time away from home than girls. They hypothesized that global Latino/a cultural orientation may be more protective for girls than boys because in Latino culture girls compared to boys are expected to

provide more assistance in the home and spent less time outside the home. The researchers found that boys' global cultural orientation moderated the relation between perceived discrimination and both self-esteem and depression. However, global cultural orientation did not moderate the relation of discrimination and psychological well-being for girls. Boys who reported high levels of orientation toward mainstream culture also reported high levels of discrimination, low levels of self-esteem, and high levels of depression. There was no significant association between discrimination, self-esteem, and depression when boys reported high levels of Latino cultural orientation. The researchers posit that engagement in Latino/a culture may serve as a protective factor for boys because it may minimize the effect of discrimination on the adjusment of Latino boys. In regards to the findings for girls, the researchers propose that for girls specific cultural values instead of global cultural values (e.g. familismo) may be more salient to protect them from the negative effect of discrimination (e.g. low self-esteem and high levels of depression). The different patterns for boys and girls in this study suggest that differences in socialization experiences may lead to gender differences in protective and risk factors stressing the need to examine gender differences in future studies. Findings also stress the need to investigate the moderating role of adherence to specific cultural values (versus global cultural orientation) on the psychological well-being of Latino/a adolescents. For boys Latino cultural orientation seemed to act as a buffer against the negative effects of discrimination. Specific Latino cultural values may protect Latina girls from the negative effects of acculturation related stressors. Future studies should aim at clarifying how adherence or non-adherence to Latino cultural values influence the mental health of Latino/Latina children.

Language

Another cultural factor that has been identified in research as influencing the psychological well-being of Latino/a adolescents is Latino/a children's language preference and

usage (ie. English versus Spanish). Researchers generally report that Latino/a adolescents who primarily speak Spanish with family and friends are less likely to use alcohol and other drugs than adolescents who primarily speak English with family and friends (Epstein et al., 1996; Welte, & Barnes, 1995; Zapata, & Katims, 1994). However, at least one study found that increased use of English (ie. acculturation) was related to decreased risk of depression and suicidal ideation among adolescents of Mexican origin. In a study with Latino adolescent males in South Florida, Vega el al. (2000) found that scores of language conflicts among Latino adolescent males decreased with increased acculturation level (ie. use of the English language). However, for foreign born immigrant adolescents but not US born adolescents, perceived discrimination and other acculturation problems persisted even after language conflicts decreased. These findings support the researchers earlier conclusion that immigrant and US born Latino adolescent may experience the acculturation process and acculturative stress differently stressing the need to distinguish between US born and immigrant adolescents in future studies. Portes & Rumbaut (2001) found that bilinguilism was related to higher self esteem and it allowed students to bridge the two cultures. In another study, Portes et al. (2002) found that Latino adolescent boys and girls with higher English proficiency showed higher self-esteem compared to Latino/a adolescent with lower English proficiency. Overall, it is difficult to determine if and how language preference and use influences the psychological well-being of Latino/a adolescents. This may be due to differing language measures and outcome variable. This may also be due to an artifact of combining U.S. born and immigrant adolescents in some studies but not other studies. Therefore, future research studies should aim at investigating in a systematic manner how language preference and use influences the mental health of Latino/a adolescents.

Ethnic Identity

The role of ethnic identity in ethnic minority populations has also been studied in relation to buffers against psychological maladjustment in ethnic minority adolescents. Ethnic identity has been defined as one's identity or sense of self as being a member of an ethnic group, one's thinking, perceptions, and feelings that are part of being a member of that group (Phinney, 2003). Generally, authors posit that a strong sense of ethnic identity may protect against mental health problems. Phinney, Chavira, & Williamsom (1992) investigated the adaptation and self-esteem of Spanish-speaking adolescents and found that integration or a strong ethnic identification and a positive mainstream orientation was related to higher self-esteem. Research with Mexican Americans has found an associating between ethnic identity and high self-esteem and fewer depressive symptoms (Roberts et al., 1999). Other researchers propose that biculturalism is the ideal cultural adaptation strategy for Latinos/as negotiating competing demands of two cultural worlds (Weisskirch & Alva, 2002). A related study found that bicultural Mexican American youth who had integrated both Mexican and US identities reported a more positive self-concept than did non-bicultural Mexican American youth (Bautista de Domanico, Crawford, & DeWolfe, 1994). Furthermore, it seems that a high sense of ethnic identity is protective against the experience of discrimination among Mexican American individuals (Sanchez & Fernandez, 1993). Along the same lines, Umaña-Taylor et al. (2006) found that ethnic identity exploration and resolution positively predicted self-esteem for both boys and girls. Overall, it appears that a strong ethnic identity (bicultural, American, or Latino identity) protects the mental health of Latino/a adolescents. However, this relation should be investigated further in different Latino/a adolescent subgroups. Gender differences in the role of ethnic identity on the well-being of Latino/a girls should also be investigated in future studies.

Intergenerational Acculturation Differences

Some researchers suggest that acculturation gaps between adolescents and parents can create intense family conflicts, which in turn can take a heavy toll on Latino/a adolescent mental health (Szapocznik & Kurtines, 1980; Szapocznik, Scopetta, & Tillman, 1979). Researchers propose that immigrant children commonly become involved in U.S. culture faster than their parents, creating an acculturating gap between parents and children that can result in parent-adolescent conflict. The acculturation gap can result in alienation between parents and adolescents and fuel adolescent rebellion (Szapocznik & Williams, 2000). In a study on Latino adolescent aggression, Smorowski et al. (2006) hypothesized that adolescent U.S. cultural involvement and parent-adolescent conflict would be positively associated with adolescent aggression. They found parent-adolescent conflicts predicted higher levels of adolescent aggression, but that adolescent U.S. cultural involvement and acculturation conflicts did not have a direct effect on adolescent aggression. Furthermore, adolescent culture of origin involvement was positively related to parent-adolescent conflict. Thus, these findings did not support the theorized relation between acculturation gap and increased parent-adolescent conflict. However, Razin et al. (1991) compared Latina girls admitted for suicidal behavior with demographically identical nonsuicidal subjects by means of structured interviews. The researchers assessed both the girls and the mothers of the girls. They found that the nonsuicidal subjects and their families were more acculturated than the suicidal subjects and their families whereas parents of nonsuicidal subjects were often born in the United States. Parents of the suicidal subjects were often born outside the United States. Therefore, researchers concluded that suicidal and nonsuicidal girls differed in the parents' acculturation levels. The researchers concluded that the nonsuicidal families did not experience intense cultural conflicts compared to the suicidal families. It is not clear why Smorowski et al. (2006) did not find support for the theorized

relation between acculturation gap and parent-adolescent conflict and why Razin et al. (1991) did find support. One possibility is that Razin et al.'s (1991) study focused on the experiences of Latina girls exclusively whereas Smorowski et al.'s (1991) study did not investigate gender differences. It may be that conflict due to the acculturation gap between daughters and their mothers may be more pronounced for Latina girls than boys because girls are socialized differently than boys in traditional Latino culture. It is difficult to conclude from these studies if and how intergenerational acculturation differences influence the psychological well-being of Latino/a children. Therefore, future research should try to clarify if and how acculturation gaps between parents and their children impact the well-being of Latino/a children. Researchers have proposed that girls and boys are socialized differently in Latino/a culture. Therefore, it is possible that intergenerational acculturation differences affect boys and girls in different ways. Therefore, studies aiming at identifying gender differences are needed.

Conclusion

Latino/a adolescents represent the fastest growing group of young people in the United States. Latino/a youth tend to report lower levels of psychological well-being compared to non-Latino white children, African American children, and Mexican youth. Latina girls tend to do worse on these outcomes than Latino boys. Researchers often link low levels of psychological well-being in Latino/a youth to acculturative stress.

While there's great variation among Latinos/as, researchers often fail to acknowledge within-group differences. Therefore, future studies should aim at teasing apart the different Latino/a subgroups.

Many cultural explanations have been posited to account for lower levels of psychological well-being among Latino/a children, but few studies have examined and unpacked

culture directly. Therefore, future studies should aim at examining and unpacking cultural concepts linked to psychological well-being in Latino/a children.

Few studies have explored cultural risk and protective factors for the mental health and problem behaviors in Latino/a children. It is difficult to draw firm conclusions from existing studies. Therefore, future research studies should aim at clarifying the relations between Latino/a cultural values, language, ethnic identity, and intergenerational acculturation differences. In addition, future studies should aim at identifying gender differences. In traditional Latino families boys and girls are socialized differently. This suggests that culture may influence the psychological well-being of Latino boys and Latina girls in different ways.

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