

Objective:

The overall objective of my study is to gain a better understanding of the moderating effects of cultural values, acculturation, and racial/cultural identity in the relation between gender and the psychological well-being of poor, Latino adolescents. The study proposed in this application will serve as my Master's Thesis.

Specific Goals and Research Questions:

1. As predicted by the literature, are there gender differences in reports of psychological well-being among Latino adolescents in a poor, inner-city sample of high school students?
2. Do Latino cultural values (e.g. marianismo, machismo, and familismo) influence the psychological well-being of Latino adolescents and the relation between poverty and psychological well-being?
3. Are gender differences in depressive and anxious symptomatology influenced by cultural values, family gender roles, and acculturation?
4. Can a strong racial/ bicultural identity moderate the relation between poverty and the psychological well-being of Latino adolescents?

Theoretical Justification:

Latinos comprise the fastest growing ethnic minority group in the United States (Marotta and Garcia, 2003). In 2000, there were 32.8 million Hispanics residing in the United States, representing 12% of the total U.S. population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2001). Compared to non-Latino whites, Latinos are more likely to be under the age of 18 and to be living in poverty (Smokowski and Bacallao, 2006).

Latino youth tend to report lower levels of psychological well-being compared to non-Hispanic white children. Latino adolescents suffer from depression and dysphoria more often than non-Latino white adolescents (Locke, Newcomb, Duclos, and Goodyear, 2007). Compared to other ethnic minority children and non-Latino white adolescents, Latinos report lower rates of self-esteem (Portes and Zady, 2002). Overall, Latina girls tend to do worse on these outcomes than Latino boys. Researchers often link lower levels of psychological well-being among immigrant children to acculturative stress (Cuellar and Roberts, 1997; Portes et al., 2002; Hovey and King, 1996).

Many Latino adolescents have to adjust to American culture. This involves navigating and negotiating between their culture of origin and mainstream US culture. Latino adolescents may feel pulled by American culture and may desire to fit in and identify with the benefits of belonging to the mainstream US culture. At the same time, they may be afraid to displease their

parents who may want their children to maintain their cultural roots and values (Portes et al., 2002). These negotiations can be challenging for immigrant children and take a heavy toll on their mental health (Hovey et al., 1996). This may be particularly true for Latina adolescents. Researchers have found that compared to Latino boys, Latina girls have lower self-esteem, more depressive symptoms, and higher rates of suicide attempts and ideation (Portes et al., 2002; Cuellar et al., 1997; Zayas, Lester, Cabassa, and Fortuna, 2005).

Researchers have investigated cultural values and authoritarian parenting strategies, observed in many traditional Hispanic families, in explaining these gender differences (Zayas et al., 2005, Hovey et al., 1996). Familismo reflects the cultural socialization of the family. It emphasizes the maintenance of family cohesion, obligations to relatives, and the role of the family in an individual's self-identity. In Hispanic culture, females are "socialized to be passive, demure, and hyper responsible for the family" (Zaya et al., 2005). Furthermore, many Hispanic parents exert authoritarian parenting strategies with their daughters. In contrast, American mainstream culture values individuality and autonomy and thus, researchers posit that acculturated daughter's of low acculturated parents may experience greater conflict in the home due to the clashing values of the two cultures. These conflicts may lead to an alienation between parents and their adolescent daughters (Zayas et al., 2005). Girls may want to exert their autonomy while maintaining a healthy relationship with their parents. The dissonance that arises in the negotiation of these contrasting qualities may compromise the psychological well-being of Latina adolescents.

Although, many Latina girls live between two cultures, not all Latina adolescents show signs of poor psychological well-being. What protects some girls and not others from the negative effects of having to meet the demands of two contrasting cultures? Can a strong racial/cultural identity or a strong bicultural identity protect girls from the negative affects of moving between cultures? Some researchers theorize that flexible parenting strategies can have protective qualities for adolescents while others have found that language brokering leads to higher levels of self-esteem (Zayas et al., 2005; Weisskirch, R.S, & Alatorre Alva, S., 2002).

While many explanations to account for gender differences in psychological well-being have been posited, few studies address and examine these assumptions in research studies. In this study, we operationalized constructs measuring cultural values, acculturative stress, family functioning, language usage, and psychological well-being. This will allow us to test for the moderating effects of these variables in the psychological well-being of Latina girls.

There is tremendous diversity among Latino families with regard to immigration histories, socioeconomic status, acculturation levels, skin color, English language proficiency, and socio-cultural values. Most studies have focused on the experiences of Mexican American, Puerto Rican, and Cuban adolescents. This study will add to the current literature by focusing on the unique experiences of a sample of predominantly poor Dominican adolescents.

Specific Activities and Duration of the Project

This project is part of Dr. Rosario Ceballo's ongoing project "The Latino Family Study." To date, Dr. Ceballo has recruited 83 Latino adolescents who have completed self-administered surveys in their schools in New England. Data collection for this study occurred in New England in order to obtain a large sample of urban, Latino adolescents that included Dominican students.

On November 13 – 14th, Dr. Ceballo's research team has been invited to administer surveys to a ninth grade class of 90 Latino students in Lawrence, MA. I am applying for funds that will allow me to participate in this data collection trip. Increasing the study's sample size to over 100 students is particularly important in order to provide greater statistical power for a comparative gender analysis and for the future publication of our research findings. While Dr. Ceballo's research funds covered travel costs for all students on the first data collection trip in the winter of 2007 and can cover the costs of subject payments (\$30 movie gift cards) for additional participants, her funds cannot cover student travel expenses for the next data collection trip to New England. In addition, I would like to return to the school, at a future time, to conduct in-depth, qualitative interviews with a small subsample of 10 Latina female adolescents.

After collecting data in November, Dr. Ceballo's research team will spend 2 – 3 months coding, entering, and cleaning the data. With a final data set ready for analyses in February of 2008, I will be able to complete my Master's Thesis by August of 2008. This will be a great advantage for me in meeting the many heavy demands of a joint doctoral program.

How Will This Project Contribute to the Completion of My Degree?

I am a first year doctoral student in the joint doctoral program in clinical psychology and women's studies. The data collected in this project will be utilized for the completion of my master's thesis, a pre-requisite for reaching doctoral candidacy. Furthermore, any publications that result from this project will advance my professional career development.

Student's Expertise and Education

Prior to attending the University of Michigan, I worked as a research assistant for the Medical Effectiveness Research Center for Diverse Populations (MERC) at the University of California at San Francisco conducting research with Latina women diagnosed with breast cancer. I was involved in all aspects of the research process and have gained skills and knowledge that enable me to successfully accomplish this research project.

Budget Justification

Travel Expenses:

AirFair (trip 1): \$350.00

AirFair (trip 2): \$350.00

Rental Car for two days: \$ 35.00/day; Total: 70.00

Fuel: \$ 50.00

Meals for two days (3 meals/day): \$40.00/day; Total: \$80.00

Hotel Expenses for 2 nights: \$ 150.00/night; Total: \$300.00

Total Travel Expenses: \$ 1200.00

Recruitment Activities:

Gift Certificates for 10 Participants: \$ 30.00/participant; Total: \$ 300.00

(for follow-up qualitative interviews)

Total Recruitment Fees: \$ 300.00

	Total Amount \$
Air Fair	700.00
Rental Car	70.00
Fuel	50.00
Meals	80.00
Hotel	300.00
Gift Certificates	300.00
Total	1500.00

References

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