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Sources of Parental Knowledge in Mexican American Families

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Abstract

We examined correlates of sources of parental knowledge of youths' experiences in Mexican American families, including *child self-disclosure*, *parental solicitation*, *spouse*, *siblings*, and *individuals outside the family*. Home and phone interviews were conducted with mothers, fathers, and their seventh-grade male and female offspring in 246 Mexican American families. Results indicated that mothers and fathers relied on different sources of knowledge; parent-child relationship quality and cultural orientations predicted parents' sources of knowledge; and different sources had different implications for youth adjustment. Specifically, child disclosure to mothers and fathers' reliance on their spouse were consistently linked to better youth outcomes. Moderation analyses revealed that correlates of parents' knowledge sources were not always uniform across mothers and fathers or daughters and sons.

Keywords

Cultural orientations; Mexican American families; parent-child relationships; parental monitoring; sources of knowledge; youth adjustment

Mexican Americans are among the largest and fastest growing ethnic minority populations in the U.S. (Ramirez & Patricia de la Cruz, 2002), but are underrepresented in family research. Without research on underrepresented groups, our understanding of family processes remains limited. Mexican American youth are also at increased risk for a variety of problems relative to other racial-ethnic groups in such areas as academics (Okagaki & Frensch, 1998), internalizing problems, (Roberts & Chen, 1995), and externalizing problems (De La Rosa, Holleran, Rugh, & MacMaster, 2005), indicating a clear need for research on factors that support or undermine youth well-being in this population. This study took an ecological approach to understanding the well-being of Mexican American youth by focusing on parents' sources of knowledge about their offspring's daily experiences, given the benefits of parental knowledge for youths' psychosocial functioning (e.g., Stattin & Kerr, 2000).

Researchers have extensively studied processes surrounding parental knowledge of youths' experiences, including levels of knowledge and the implications of knowledge for youth

well-being (e.g., Stattin & Kerr, 2000; Waizenhofer, Buchanan, & Jackson-Newsom, 2004). Investigations have clearly indicated benefits of higher levels of parental knowledge for diverse youth populations (Cota-Robles & Gamble, 2006; Halgunseth, Ispa, & Rudy, 2006; Plunkett & Bámaca-Gomez, 2003; Stattin & Kerr; Waizenhofer et al.). However, our understanding of *how* parents acquire this knowledge is limited, and few investigations have focused on sources of knowledge (exceptions include Crouter, Bumpus, Davis, & McHale, 2005; Stattin & Kerr; Waizenhofer et al.), particularly in ethnic minority families. Knowing parents' sources of knowledge and how these sources are linked to youth functioning can assist us in better understanding family processes and youth outcomes in Mexican American families.

Theoretical Framework

Ecological theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, 1986) highlights the importance of context in understanding family processes and development. Parental knowledge does not occur in isolation, but parents acquire knowledge from a variety of sources across multiple ecological systems. For example, youths themselves may tell their parents about their experiences (*child self-disclosure*), or parents may ask their children about them (*parental solicitation*). Child self-disclosure and parental solicitation both involve direct parent-child communication and occur at the most basic dyadic unit of the family microsystem. Other potential sources of knowledge in the microsystem include the *spouse* and children's *siblings*. When parents rely on other members of the family to learn about their child's experiences, a third party is brought into the knowledge acquisition process, making it triadic in nature. Sources *outside of the family*, such as neighbors or teachers, represent the mesosystem. Some parents may have to rely on these external sources because their sources inside the family microsystem are ineffective, which may indicate problematic family processes. A more positive scenario is that some parents may interact with people outside the family as a function of their involvement in their children's lives, such as through involvement in school or extracurricular activities.

Other aspects of the ecological system are also likely to impact how parents acquire their knowledge and serve as pathways to sources of knowledge. The nature of parent-child relationships, a key element of the dyadic unit of the microsystem, may influence parents' sources of knowledge. Additionally, parents' cultural orientations and educational attainment, representing culture and class, position families in the macrosystem. Culture and class help shape how parents socialize their children (Garcia Coll et al., 1996), making them important potential correlates of parents' sources of knowledge. In addition, ecological theory specifies that a child's development is shaped by roles, relationships, and activities across ecological systems, leading us to explore whether and how parents' sources of knowledge were linked to youth psychosocial outcomes.

Sources of Parental Knowledge in Mexican American Families

No known studies have examined different sources of knowledge in Mexican American families. Given their tendency towards a more controlling and protective style of parenting (Domenech-Rodríguez, Donovanick, & Crowley, 2009; Halgunseth et al., 2006), Mexican American parents may rely more on active methods of acquiring knowledge, such as parental solicitation, than on passive methods such as child self-disclosure. Furthermore, the emphasis on family solidarity in Mexican American families (e.g., Fuligni, 1998) led us to expect greater use of sources within the family than those outside the family.

Individual, Family, and Cultural Contexts as Correlates of Sources of Knowledge

Gender

Research on parental knowledge processes in European American families has demonstrated that mothers and fathers differ in how they acquire knowledge about their children (Crouter et al., 2005; Waizenhofer et al., 2004). Compared to fathers, mothers rely more on their children as a source of knowledge, through disclosure and solicitation, whereas fathers tend to rely more on their spouse than do mothers (Crouter et al.; Waizenhofer et al.). Research on Mexican American families documents gender differentiation in mothers' and fathers' parenting roles and in the socialization of daughters versus sons (Azmitia & Brown, 2002; Crockett, Brown, Russell, & Shen, 2007; Domenech-Rodríguez et al., 2009; Raffaelli & Ontai, 2004). The endorsement of "traditional" gender roles in Mexican American families (Cota-Robles & Gamble, 2006) may result in the use of different sources by mothers and fathers for sons and daughters. Mexican American parents may see girls as more vulnerable and in greater need of protection than boys (Cota-Robles & Gamble), and may therefore use more active methods to acquire knowledge about girls. Mexican American adolescents have also described relationships with mothers as closer and more open than relationships with fathers (Crockett et al.), which suggests that mothers may rely more on sources that reflect open communication (e.g., child disclosure). Indeed, Mexican American girls reported more maternal monitoring than did boys (Cota-Robles & Gamble), and Mexican American mothers knew more about their children's daily experiences than did fathers (Updegraff, Delgado, & Wheeler, 2009). Given these patterns of gender differentiation we also explored whether the correlates of sources of knowledge differed for mothers versus fathers and for daughters versus sons.

Parent-child relationships

The small body of research linking the quality of parent-child relationships to sources of knowledge is largely specific to European and European American families (for an exception using a multi-ethnic sample see Yau, Tasopoulos-Chan, & Smetana, 2009); we expected to find links among Mexican American families as well. Close parent-child relationships have been associated with greater child self-disclosure (Stattin & Kerr, 2000; Yau et al.), possibly because disclosure reflects openness and trust (Kerr, Stattin, & Trost, 1999). In contrast, knowledge acquired from sources outside the family may reflect less functional relationships if these external sources are a last resort (Crouter et al., 2005).

Parent-child relationships also vary in terms of shared time. Parents may engage in more solicitation or elicit more disclosure when they spend more time with their children, because joint activities lend themselves to conversation (Bumpus, Crouter, & McHale, 2006). Joint activities outside the home may also expose parents to sources of knowledge outside the family (e.g., coaches, teachers, other parents). Low amounts of parent-child time together, however, may also lead parents to turn to indirect sources other than youth themselves.

Cultural orientations

Because Mexican Americans have been migrating to the U.S. for decades and because families vary in terms of how much their social networks reinforce Mexican orientations or encourage Anglo perspectives, there is substantial variability in cultural orientations between and within Mexican American families. Cultural orientations play important roles in parent-child relations and youth psychosocial functioning (Fuligni, 1998; Gonzales, Knight, Morgan-Lopez, Saenz, & Sirolli, 2002; Updegraff, McHale, Whiteman, Thayer, & Crouter, 2006) and may also be important determinants of parents' sources of knowledge

about their offspring for several reasons. Research has suggested that some aspects of family solidarity, specifically obligations towards family and using the family as a referent, are more salient in families with stronger Mexican orientations and appear to diminish as families become more oriented to Anglo culture (Fuligni; Parke et al., 2004; Rodriguez, Mira, Paez, & Myers, 2007; Sabogal, Marín, Otero-Sabogal, Marín, & Perez-Stable, 1987). Thus, Mexican American parents who identify more with Mexican culture or less with Anglo culture may be more likely to use sources within the family and less likely to use sources outside the family. In addition, language barriers, which are more common among parents who are more oriented towards Mexican culture or less oriented towards Anglo culture, may reduce parental involvement in children's extrafamilial activities (Fuligni & Yoshikawa, 2003; Plunkett & Bámaca-Gómez, 2003), thereby limiting parents' communication with people outside the family and necessitating greater reliance on sources inside the family.

Sources of Knowledge as Correlates of Youth Adjustment

As mentioned previously, higher levels of parental knowledge have been linked to better youth outcomes in European and Mexican American samples, but little is known about the youth adjustment implications of parents' use of different sources of knowledge. Previous research in European and European American samples has linked child disclosure to more positive adjustment, including less delinquent behavior (Stattin & Kerr, 2000). However, relying on others outside the family has been linked to higher levels of problem behavior (Crouter et al., 2005).

Research has documented links between parent-child relationships (Steinberg, 2001; Updegraff et al., 2009), parental cultural orientations (Gonzales et al., 2002; Updegraff et al., 2006), youth gender (e.g., Byrnes, Miller, & Schafer, 1999), and socioeconomic status (Garcia Coll et al., 1996) and youth adjustment. We explored associations of sources of knowledge with youth adjustment, controlling for these individual and contextual characteristics, to better understand the unique implications of sources of knowledge for Mexican American youth functioning. Given patterns of gender differentiation in Mexican American families, we also explored whether links between sources and adjustment differed for sons versus daughters.

Research Questions

Given the importance of better understanding family processes and youth functioning in Mexican American families, this study took a comprehensive, ecological approach to address gaps in the literature by exploring the following questions:

1. Do Mexican American mothers and fathers differ in the ways in which they acquire knowledge of their sons' and daughters' daily experiences?
2. How are parent-child relationship qualities and cultural orientations linked to parents' sources of knowledge? Do these links vary by parent and/or youth gender?
3. How are Mexican American parents' sources of knowledge linked to youths' externalizing problems, internalizing problems, and academic outcomes? Do these links differ for boys versus girls?

Method

Participants

Given the variability within the population of Mexican American families, particularly in their identification with Mexican versus Anglo culture, this study used an ethnic-

homogeneous design (see Updegraff, McHale, Whiteman, Thayer, & Delgado, 2005). Criteria for participation included: (1) a biological mother and a biological or long-term adoptive father who lived in the home (non-biological fathers had lived in the home for at least 10 years), (2) a mother of Mexican origin, (3) a non-learning disabled seventh grader and at least one older adolescent sibling living at home, and (4) a father who worked at least 20 hours per week. Although not a criterion, 93% of fathers also were of Mexican descent. Families were recruited through schools in and around a Southwestern metropolitan area.

Family contact information came from junior high schools in five public school districts and from five parochial schools, representing a wide range of socioeconomic levels. Letters and brochures (in English and Spanish) were sent to 1,851 families with a non-learning disabled Hispanic seventh grader (to ensure youth understood the interview questions). Letters described the study's focus on Mexican American families with teenagers, given the rewards and challenges of raising teenagers in today's world. Follow-up phone calls determined interest and eligibility. Contact information was incorrect for 438 families (24% of the original roster), making them impossible to locate, and 148 (8%) refused eligibility screening. Of 421 eligible families (23% of the initial roster; 32% of those screened), 284 (67%) agreed to participate, 95 (23%) refused, and 42 (10%) moved between initial screening and final contact. Thirty-eight eligible families agreed, but did not complete interviews, leaving 246 families who completed interviews. In this study, sample sizes fluctuated between 227 and 246, because of missing data in school grades and parent-child time together; analyses focused on the seventh graders for whom there were data on the constructs of interest.

On average, mothers were 39.0 years old ($SD = 4.63$), fathers 41.7 years old ($SD = 5.77$), and youth 12.8 years old ($SD = .58$). Both parents had completed about 10 years of education, on average (mothers $M = 10.34$, $SD = 3.74$; fathers $M = 9.88$, $SD = 4.37$), and 50.8% of youths were female. Median family income was \$40,000 (Range = \$3,000 to over \$100,000); 18.3% of families met federal poverty guidelines. Just over one-third (37.8%) of youths were born outside the U.S. Most youth interviews (84.2%) were conducted in English; most parent interviews (67.8% of father interviews; 66.3% of mother interviews) were conducted in Spanish.

Procedures

Data were collected through in-home interviews and telephone calls. During in-home interviews, parents and youths reported on personal qualities and family relationships. Bilingual interviewers conducted individual interviews in separate areas, using laptop computers. Interviews lasted an average of 3 hours for parents and 2 hours for youth.

During the three or four weeks following the home interviews, bilingual interviewers telephoned families on 7 non-consecutive evenings (5 weekdays and 2 weekend days). On each day, parents and youths reported on their activities from 5 p.m. the previous day to 5 p.m. the day of the call. Youths participated in all calls; to reduce respondent burden, parents participated in 4 calls each, with one call involving both mother and father. Families were paid \$100 for participating in the home interviews and another \$100 for participating in phone interviews.

Measures

All measures in the study were forward and back translated into Spanish (for the local Mexican dialect) following the procedures described by Foster and Martinez (1995). Final translations were reviewed and discrepancies resolved by a Mexican American staff member.

Sources of knowledge were measured using several indices with high face validity despite lack of prior use in Mexican American samples. Disclosure was indexed by 6 items (e.g., “How often does your [child] tell you about how his/her day went without being asked?”), and 5 items assessed solicitation (e.g., “How often do you start conversations with your [child] about his/her free time activities?”), both from Stattin and Kerr (2000). We added 9 items to measure additional sources of knowledge. For three different scenarios (i.e., misconduct, school assignments, and free time), parents were asked how frequently they acquired information from each of three sources: spouse, sibling(s), or other sources outside the family (e.g., teacher, neighbor, or friend). All items were rated on a five-point scale from 1 (almost never) to 5 (almost always). Items were averaged to create scales; higher scores indicate greater use of the source (disclosure $\alpha = .78, .76$; solicitation $\alpha = .77, .79$; spouse $\alpha = .90, .87$; siblings $\alpha = .87, .86$; outside family $\alpha = .89, .89$, for mothers and fathers respectively).

Parental acceptance was measured using an 8-item subscale of the Child’s Report of Parent Behavior Inventory (CRPBI) developed by Schaefer (1965) to assess the positive emotional tone of the parent-child relationship (e.g., “I tell or show [child] that I like him/her just the way he/she is”). This scale has been shown to be reliable and valid with Latino populations in English and Spani (Knight, Viridin, & Roosa, 1992). Mothers and fathers responded on a 5-point scale from 1 (almost never) to 5 (almost always). Items were averaged; higher scores indicate greater parental warmth/acceptance ($\alpha = .82$ for both parents).

Parent-child time together was calculated from information youths provided in the telephone interviews. During each of 7 phone calls, youths reported on with whom and for how long they participated in each of 86 activities (e.g., household tasks, home and personal activities, athletic activities, computers, outdoor activities). Time was calculated in minutes, summed across the 7 daily reports, and converted to hours. We used an index of inclusive time with each parent -- time during which others may have been present along with the focal parent. Youths’ reports of time with parents were used to reduce mono-reporter bias and because youths participated in more calls than parents. Correlations between parents’ and youths’ reports of shared time for the four calls in which they both participated ($n = 239$) were $r = .80, p < .001$, and $r = .81, p < .001$, for mother- and father-child time, respectively.

Cultural orientation indices were drawn from Cuéllar, Arnold, and Maldonado’s (1995) 30-item Acculturation Rating Scale for Mexican Americans–II (ARSMA-II). This scale includes 17 items that assess Mexican orientation (e.g., “I speak Spanish”) and 13 that assess Anglo orientation (e.g., “I like to identify myself as an American”). Mothers and fathers responded on a 5-point scale from 1 (not at all) to 5 (extremely often or almost always). For each scale, items were averaged and higher scores indicate stronger orientation (Mexican orientation $\alpha = .89$ for mothers, $\alpha = .91$ for fathers; Anglo orientation $\alpha = .90$ for both parents).

Risky behavior was assessed using a revised version of the Risky Behavior Measure (Eccles & Barber, 1990), which was developed using an ethnically diverse sample. Youths responded to 24 questions on a scale from 1 (never) to 4 (more than 10 times in the past year). The most common behaviors were disobeying parents on an important issue (58.1% of our sample reported doing this at least once in the past year) and getting in trouble at school (56.5% reported doing this at least once in the past year). Items were averaged with higher scores indicating greater delinquency ($\alpha = .92$). Because delinquency was positively skewed (skewness = .92). Because delinquency was positively skewed (skewness = 2.22), it was log transformed (skewness = 1.33).

Depressive symptoms were assessed using the Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale (CES-D; Radloff, 1977), which has satisfactory reliability with Mexican American adolescents (Roberts & Chen, 1995). The CES-D measures depressive symptoms in the general, non-psychiatric population. Youths responded to 20 items (e.g., “I thought my life had been a failure”) on a scale from 1 (rarely or none of the time) to 4 (most of the time). Items were averaged, with higher scores indicating more depressive symptoms ($\alpha = .82$).

Grade point average was calculated from youth reports of their grades in four subjects (Math, Science, Social Studies/History/Government, and English/Language Arts/Literature). Grades were coded so that A = 4, B = 3, C = 2, D = 1, and E/F = 0. The grades were averaged, with higher scores indicating higher GPAs ($\alpha = .83$). The correlation between report card grades and self-reported grades for youth who had both available ($n = 222$) was $r = .89$, $p < .001$, supporting the reliability of self-reported grades.

Parental education was used to control for family socioeconomic status. Each parent indicated their highest level of education completed on a scale from 1 (1 year of school) to 21 (MD, JD, Ph.D., etc.), and mothers' and fathers' scores were averaged ($r = .65$, $p < .001$).

Results

Descriptive Data on Mothers' and Fathers' Sources of Knowledge

To explore mothers' versus fathers' sources of knowledge about sons versus daughters, we conducted a 2 (parent) \times 2 (youth gender) \times 5 (source) mixed model ANOVA in which parent and source of knowledge were treated as within groups factors and youth gender was treated as a between groups factor. These analyses revealed significant parent, $F(1, 241) = 5.11$, $p < .05$, and source of knowledge effects, $F(4, 964) = 98.16$, $p < .001$, which were qualified by Source of Knowledge \times Parent, $F(4, 964) = 61.67$, $p < .001$, and Source of Knowledge \times Youth Gender interactions, $F(4, 964) = 3.21$, $p < .05$. As shown in Table 1, follow-up Tukey tests of the Source \times Parent interaction revealed that mothers reported greater use of *parental solicitation* than the other sources, and fathers relied more on their *spouse* than the other sources of knowledge. A second set of follow-ups revealed that mothers reported greater use of *child self-disclosure* (Cohen's $d = .41$; medium effect size) and *parental solicitation* (Cohen's $d = .29$; small effect size) than did fathers, and fathers reported greater use of their *spouse* (Cohen's $d = -1.05$; large effect size) than did mothers. There were no significant mother-father differences in the use of *siblings* or *someone outside of the family*. A follow-up of the Source of Knowledge \times Youth Gender interaction revealed one small effect (Cohen's $d = -.23$): Parents relied on those *outside of the family* to acquire knowledge more for sons ($M = 2.96$; $SD = .95$) than for daughters ($M = 2.73$; $SD = 1.06$).

Individual, Family, and Culture Correlates of Different Sources of Knowledge

Bivariate correlations revealed links between the individual, family, and culture variables and the sources of knowledge for both mothers and fathers (see Table 1). Two-level multilevel models (parents within families) were then conducted to explore the correlates of sources of knowledge simultaneously, using parental acceptance, parent-child time together, parental Mexican orientation, and parental Anglo orientation (at level one), and youth gender (at level two) to predict reliance on different sources. Parents' education was included in all models as a control for socioeconomic status. To establish whether associations differed for mothers versus fathers, sons versus daughters, or for the four possible parent and youth gender combinations, we examined two-way interactions involving gender (youth or parent) and acceptance, time together, and the two indices of

cultural orientation, as well as three-way interactions involving those variables and both youth and parent gender. Interactions were first tested one at a time and then all significant interactions were included in the final models (see Table 2). To follow up interactions, we examined mothers and fathers and/or daughters and sons separately.

As shown in Table 2, parental acceptance, parent-child time together, and parents' Anglo orientation were all linked to greater *child disclosure* as well as greater *parental solicitation*: the more accepting parents were, the more time parents and offspring spent together, and the more Anglo-oriented parents were, the more youth disclosed and the more parents asked questions. Parental acceptance and parent-child time together were also linked to greater reliance on the *spouse*. A two-way interaction between Mexican orientation and youth gender revealed that for parents of sons, the more Mexican-oriented they were, the more they relied on their spouse as a source of knowledge, $\gamma = .30, p < .01$; this association was not significant for parents of daughters, however, $\gamma = .01, ns$. A two-way interaction between parent-child time together and youth gender also emerged but was qualified by a three-way interaction between parent-child time together, parent gender, and youth gender. Follow-ups revealed significant findings for mothers but not fathers. Specifically, when mothers spent more time with their daughters, they relied more on their spouse, $\gamma = .03, p < .05$, but when mothers spent more time with their sons, they relied less on their spouse, $\gamma = -.03, p < .05$.

Parents who spent more time with their children and those who were more Mexican-oriented relied more on their children's *siblings*. A two-way interaction between Anglo orientation and youth gender also emerged, which was qualified by a three way interaction between Anglo orientation, parent, and youth gender. In follow-ups, no significant findings emerged for fathers. For mothers, significant findings emerged for sons but not for daughters. Specifically, the less Anglo-oriented mothers were, the more they relied on their sons' siblings as sources of knowledge, $\gamma = -.28, p < .05$. Finally, parents who spent more time with their children as well as parents with sons relied more on those *outside the family*. Qualifying these main effects, however, were two, two-way interactions. An interaction between time together and youth gender indicated that parents who spent more time with their daughters also relied more on outside sources to acquire information about their daughters, $\gamma = .03, p < .01$; however, this finding was not significant for sons, $\gamma = -.00, ns$. An interaction between Anglo orientation and parent gender demonstrated that fathers who were more Anglo oriented relied more on sources outside of the family, $\gamma = .39, p < .01$, a finding that was not apparent for mothers, $\gamma = .11, ns$.

Sources of Knowledge and Youth Adjustment Correlates

Bivariate correlations revealed links between disclosure, solicitation, and sources outside the family and youth outcomes for mothers and links between disclosure and reliance on the spouse and youth outcomes for fathers (see Table 1). Regression analyses were then conducted separately for mothers and fathers, using the sources of knowledge to predict youth delinquency, depression, and GPA. Given that parental acceptance, parent-child time together, parental Mexican and Anglo orientations, and youth gender were significant predictors of the sources of knowledge in the above analyses and that previous research has linked them to youth adjustment, these variables and parental education were included in these models as controls. Interactions between the sources and youth gender were also tested one at a time, but only one significant interaction emerged between fathers' reliance on siblings and youth gender: Daughters had better grades when their fathers relied less on their siblings, $\beta = -.30, B = -.26, SE B = .10, p < .05$; this finding was not true for sons, $\beta = .15, B = .12, SE B = .10, ns$. Given the likelihood that this interaction emerged due to chance, we focused on the main effect models (see Table 3).

When more than one source was a significant predictor (in the same direction) of a given outcome for a specific parent, or when the same source was a significant predictor of a given outcome for both mothers and fathers, structural equation models were used to compare these pairs of sources (significant at $p < .10$) and to determine whether they had equal or unequal links to youth outcomes. This was done by comparing the chi-square tests for models in which each source was freely estimated with models in which the two sources were constrained to be equal. These findings allowed us to make inferences about the relative importance of the different sources of knowledge for youth psychosocial functioning.

Beginning with *delinquency*, as expected, the more youths disclosed to their mothers, the less delinquent behavior youths reported. In contrast, the more mothers relied on sources outside the family, the more offspring tended to engage in delinquent behavior. Fathers' reliance on the spouse was also significantly linked to less delinquent behavior. Greater child disclosure to mothers and fathers and less solicitation from fathers were linked to fewer *depressive symptoms*. When fathers relied on their spouse, youths also tended to report fewer depressive symptoms. Structural equation models suggested that disclosures to mothers and fathers were equally protective for depression, $\chi^2 = 1.60$; $df = 1$; *ns*. Comparing disclosure to fathers and fathers' reliance on the spouse indicated that these sources were also equally protective for depression, $\chi^2 = .0034$; $df = 1$; *ns*. Analyses predicting *grade point average* revealed that the more youths disclosed to mothers and the more fathers relied on the spouse, the higher youths' GPAs.

Discussion

This research makes a significant contribution to understanding family processes in Mexican American families by taking an ecological approach to studying parents' sources of knowledge and youths' psychosocial functioning. The conditions under which parents relied on different sources of knowledge were revealed and highlighted the salience of parent-child relationship quality (both acceptance and time together) and parental cultural orientations. This investigation also demonstrated gender differentiation in parental knowledge processes among Mexican American families. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, this study documented that the different ways in which parents acquire knowledge about their children's experiences have different implications for youths' psychosocial functioning.

Parent-Child Relationships

Parent-child relationship qualities emerged as important predictors of sources of knowledge. Interestingly, both components of parent-child relationship quality studied here (i.e., acceptance and shared time) were consistent predictors of sources of knowledge that involve direct interaction between parents and their offspring (i.e., child self-disclosure, parental solicitation). Parent-child relationships should have an impact on direct parent-child interaction, given that interpersonal interactions are part of what forms relationships, and both of these family processes occur within the dyadic unit of the microsystem. Both aspects of parent-child relationships also predicted reliance on the spouse as a source of knowledge, which may be a reflection of closeness and communication throughout the family microsystem. The temporal component of parent-child relationships also predicted greater reliance on siblings and sources outside the family, perhaps reflecting greater exposure to sources beyond the parent-child dyad when parents spend more time with their children.

Parental Cultural Orientations

As expected, results indicated greater use of sources within the family and less use of sources outside of the family when parents were more Mexican-oriented or less Anglo-

oriented. For example, more Mexican-oriented parents relied more on siblings and more on their spouse (for information about their sons), less Anglo-oriented mothers relied more on siblings (for information about their sons), and more Anglo-oriented fathers relied more on those outside the family. More Anglo-oriented fathers may rely more on outside sources because they have become more permissive in their parenting (Driscoll, Russell, & Crockett, 2008) and therefore may allow their children to spend more time outside the family. Less Anglo-oriented fathers may also be more recent immigrants, and have smaller networks of sources outside the family. Together, these findings also reflect the greater focus on the family in Mexican compared to Anglo culture (Fuligni, 1998; Parke et al., 2004; Rodriguez et al., 2007).

This family focus in Mexican culture, however, did not translate to sources within the family microsystem that involved direct communication between parent and child (i.e., disclosure and solicitation). Higher levels of Anglo orientation were associated with greater use of both disclosure and solicitation. Because youth are often exposed to American culture through activities with peers and school, children often become oriented towards Anglo culture faster than their parents do (Szapocznik & Kurtines, 1980). Parents who are also more Anglo oriented may better communicate with their children and follow what is going on in their lives, thereby engaging in more solicitation and encouraging more disclosure. In fact, earlier generation Mexican American youths have indicated greater concern for parental disapproval as a reason for not disclosing compared to later generation youths (Yau et al., 2009), suggesting that disclosure (and perhaps also solicitation) may depend more on parents' Anglo orientation than do the other sources we studied in the family microsystem.

Gender Differentiation

Consistent with previous literature on Mexican American families (e.g., Azmitia & Brown, 2002; Raffaelli & Ontai, 2004), this study revealed several instances of differentiation by both parent and youth gender: Mothers and fathers relied on different sources of knowledge, and correlates of the sources differed by both parent and youth gender, but this pattern was the case primarily for predictors of sources, not youth outcomes. Overall, gender differentiation findings were consistent with previous research on Mexican American families that suggests mothers are closer to their offspring, especially to daughters, than are fathers (e.g., Crockett et al., 2007), and parents are more protective of daughters and provide more autonomy to sons (e.g., Domenech-Rodríguez et al., 2009; Raffaelli & Ontai, 2004). For example, mothers reported greater reliance on disclosure and solicitation than did fathers, suggesting more direct communication between mothers and their offspring, corroborating the closeness in these relationships. Highlighting the closeness of mothers and daughters, we found that when mothers spent more time with their daughters, they also relied more on their spouse. Mothers may feel it is important to get more information from their spouse even when they are already spending greater amounts of time with their daughters, because fathers may provide mothers with knowledge about their daughters' experiences outside of mother-daughter shared time if fathers are more connected to the outside world through their employment. Mothers may rely on this expanded knowledge from their spouse to foster close relationships with their daughters. In addition to highlighting closeness in the mother-daughter relationship, this finding and others may also reflect greater protectiveness of daughters compared to sons. In addition, interactions between cultural orientation variables and gender suggest that gender differentiation occurs when parents are more Mexican- or less Anglo- oriented, which is consistent with research on Mexican American families.

Sources of Knowledge and Youth Psychosocial Functioning

Of all the sources of knowledge used by mothers, child self-disclosure, occurring at the basic dyadic unit of the microsystem, was the only source to significantly predict all three youth outcomes. Disclosure to mothers was linked to lower levels of delinquency and depression, and better performance in school. Disclosure to fathers was equally protective for youth depression as was disclosure to mothers, however. These findings highlight the importance of child self-disclosure, which parallels previous work on European samples (Stattin & Kerr, 2000). Child self-disclosure may be beneficial because when youths talk about their experiences, parents may be better able to effectively prevent or solve their children's problems. Alternatively, better functioning youth may tell their parents more.

Fathers' reliance on the spouse, a triadic process of the microsystem, was also linked to all three youth outcomes: The more fathers relied on their spouse as a source of knowledge, the fewer delinquent behaviors and depressive symptoms and the better grades youth reported. Fathers' reliance on the spouse may be beneficial because mothers tend to know more about their children than fathers do (e.g., Updegraff et al., 2009), and therefore, fathers may be most knowledgeable and best able to encourage positive well-being in their offspring when they acquire their information from their wives. Relying on one's spouse may also reflect a positive marital relationship. Somewhat surprisingly, paternal solicitation was positively linked to youth depressive symptoms. Perhaps for Mexican American youth, extensive paternal questioning is seen as intrusive and controlling, given that fathers can be seen as less emotionally supportive than mothers and that father-adolescent relationships tend to be more distant in Mexican American families (Crockett et al., 2007). Alternatively, fathers may engage in solicitation when they perceive that something is troubling their child. Overall, sources of knowledge in the microsystem at both dyadic and triadic levels (with the exception of siblings) appeared to be most consistently linked to youth functioning.

Limitations and Future Directions

Given our cross-sectional design, it is not possible to identify the direction of the links found here. Future research should use longitudinal designs to learn more about the direction of effects and whether these associations stay the same or change as youth develop and as parents' cultural orientations change. Research could also be extended through studying the extended family as a source of knowledge among Mexican American families, given that this population tends to be family oriented (Sabogal et al., 1987). Finally, this study is the first to examine knowledge sources in a sample of Mexican American families, and replication will be important.

Implications for Intervention Research

Despite its limitations, the findings from this study suggest potential directions for intervention research focused on modifying parenting practices to improve the well-being of Mexican American youth. This study provided evidence of the potential importance of child self-disclosure and fathers' reliance on the spouse for youth well-being, as well as the importance of the quality of parent-child relationships for both of these sources of knowledge. Intervention research should examine the effects of programs aimed at improving parent-child relationships on child self-disclosure and on communication between parents about their children's experiences to determine whether disclosure and reliance on the spouse are additional processes by which interventions can improve youth well-being. One such intervention might be *Familias Unidas* (Coatsworth, Pantin, & Szapocznik, 2002), a family-centered intervention aimed at reducing Hispanic youths' problem behavior. As was done with *Familias Unidas*, future intervention research should consider cultural influences and the utility of cultural adaptations to interventions (e.g., Kumpfer, Alvarado,

Smith, & Bellamy, 2002), when targeting Mexican American families, in hopes of ameliorating the prevalent problem behavior among Mexican American youth.

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Table 1

Correlations, Means (and Standard Deviations) for Study Variables (N = 244)

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	Means (SD)
1. Disclosure	.27 ^{***}	.46 ^{***}	.16 [*]	.10	.07	.35 ^{***}	.17 ^{**}	-.02	.18 ^{**}	-.14 [*]	-.34 ^{***}	-.21 ^{***}	.29 ^{***}	.11	3.71 _{h,z} (.71)
2. Solicitation	.58 ^{***}	.05	.11	.18 ^{**}	.17 ^{**}	.43 ^{***}	.24 ^{***}	.05	.15 [*]	-.15 [*]	-.09	-.08	.15 [*]	.04	4.02 _{h,z} (.66)
3. Spouse	.23 ^{***}	.23 ^{***}	.08	.54 ^{***}	.30 ^{***}	.11	.04	.11	-.06	.01	-.02	-.04	-.01	.05	3.22 _{c,z} (1.23)
4. Sibling	.24 ^{***}	.16 [*]	.39 ^{***}	.23 ^{***}	.44 ^{***}	.06	.09	.29 ^{***}	-.21 ^{***}	-.10	.06	.00	-.03	-.12	3.49 _{d,y} (1.12)
5. Outside Family	.20 ^{**}	.14 [*]	.18 ^{**}	.43 ^{***}	.23 ^{***}	-.02	.05	.05	.04	.06	.16 [*]	.05	-.06	.02	2.92 _{e,y} (1.33)
6. Acceptance	.44 ^{***}	.48 ^{***}	.17 ^{**}	.13 [*]	.08	.23 ^{***}	.13 [*]	.14 [*]	.02	.00	-.17 ^{**}	-.11	.15 [*]	-.14 [*]	4.32 (.57)
7. Time	.18 ^{**}	.13 [*]	.03	.16 [*]	.09	-.02	.73 ^{***}	.01	.06	-.26 ^{***}	-.13 [*]	.04	-.00	.00	16.52 (8.40)
8. Mexican Orientation	.04	.03	.12	.24 ^{***}	-.07	.11	-.00	.62 ^{***}	-.50 ^{***}	.06	-.11	-.08	-.05	-.35 ^{***}	4.02 (.70)
9. Anglo Orientation	.12	.12	-.02	-.21 ^{***}	.20 ^{**}	.05	-.00	-.56 ^{***}	.68 ^{***}	-.04	.04	-.10	.16 [*]	.57 ^{***}	2.92 (.96)
10. Youth Gender	-.02	.05	-.05	.01	.13 [*]	.05	.01	.11	-.03	—	.17 ^{**}	-.09	-.21 ^{**}	-.03	.49 (.50)
11. Delinquency	-.15 [*]	-.06	-.17 ^{**}	.02	.07	-.18 ^{**}	-.07	-.06	-.05	.17	—	.51 ^{***}	-.35 ^{***}	-.01	.28 (.24)
12. Depression	-.15 [*]	-.03	-.10	.02	.00	-.19 ^{**}	-.02	.02	-.10	-.09	.51 ^{***}	—	-.29 ^{***}	-.21 ^{***}	1.82 (.50)
13. Grades	.15 [*]	.10	.24 ^{***}	.02	-.05	.12	-.02	-.09	.04	-.21 ^{**}	-.35 ^{***}	-.29 ^{***}	—	.19 ^{**}	2.74 (.92)
14. Parent Education	-.00	.04	-.04	-.19 ^{**}	.06	-.11	-.01	-.43 ^{***}	.54 ^{***}	-.03	-.01	-.21 ^{***}	.19 ^{**}	—	10.10 (3.68)
Means (SD)	3.41 _{a,y} (.75)	3.82 _{h,y} (.71)	4.31 _{c,y} (.79)	3.59 _{d,y} (1.05)	2.77 _{e,y} (1.25)	4.11 (.59)	13.79 (7.93)	3.90 (.79)	2.97 (.92)	.49 (.50)	.28 (.24)	1.82 (.50)	2.74 (.92)	10.10 (3.68)	—

Note. Correlations and means (SD) for mothers appear above the diagonal; correlations and means (SD) for fathers appear below the diagonal; correlations between mothers and fathers appear in bold on the diagonal. All variables are parent report, except time and youth outcomes. Gender is coded 0 = female, 1 = male. Ns range from 234 – 246 due to missing data. 244 was the most common N. Means for sources of knowledge with different subscripts are significantly different at $p < .05$ (a, b, c, d, e for within parent differences; y, z for between parent differences).

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

*** $p < .001$.

Table 2

Multilevel Model Results Predicting Sources of Knowledge (N = 239 families)

	Child Disclosure		Parental Solicitation		Spouse		Sibling		Outside Family	
	Coeff.	SE	Coeff.	SE	Coeff.	SE	Coeff.	SE	Coeff.	SE
Parental Acceptance	.45***	.05	.52***	.05	.22**	.08	.13	.09	-.01	.10
Parent-Child Time Together	.01**	.00	.01***	.00	.03**	.01	.02*	.01	.03**	.01
Mexican Orientation	.06	.05	.07	.04	-.01	.09	.26**	.08	.11	.10
Anglo Orientation	.11**	.04	.09*	.04	-.06	.07	-.04	.10	.07	.10
Youth Gender	-.10	.07	-.04	.06	.04	.14	-.16	.14	.33*	.13
Parent	-.16**	.06	-.05	.05	1.30***	.09	.15	.13	-.09	.11
Parent Education	.01	.01	.01	.01	.03	.02	-.00	.02	-.00	.03
Time Together*Youth Gender	—	—	—	—	-.06***	.02	—	—	-.03*	.01
Time Together*Parent	—	—	—	—	-.02	.02	—	—	—	—
Mex Orientation*Youth Gender	—	—	—	—	.34**	.13	—	—	—	—
Anglo Orientation*Youth Gender	—	—	—	—	—	—	-.29*	.14	—	—
Anglo Orientation*Parent	—	—	—	—	—	—	-.14	.13	.31**	.12
Youth Gender*Parent	—	—	—	—	-.12	.19	.13	.17	—	—
Time*Youth Gender*Parent	—	—	—	—	.05*	.02	—	—	—	—
Anglo*Youth Gender*Parent	—	—	—	—	—	—	.47*	.19	—	—

Note. Youth gender is coded 0 = female, 1 = male; parent is coded 0 = mother, 1 = father.

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

*** $p < .001$

Table 3

Summary of Regression Analyses Predicting Youth Outcomes

	Mothers						Fathers											
	Delinquency (N = 238)		Depression (N = 238)		GPA (N = 227)		Delinquency (N = 238)		Depression (N = 238)		GPA (N = 226)							
	B	SEB	β	B	SEB	β	B	SEB	β	B	SEB	β						
Disclosure	-.12	.02	-.36***	-.14	.05	-.19***	.30	.09	.23**	-.04	.03	-.12	-.11	.05	-.17*	.15	.10	.12
Solicitation	.03	.03	.08	.02	.06	.03	.00	.11	.00	.04	.03	.13	.14	.06	.20*	-.05	.10	-.04
Spouse	-.01	.01	-.06	.01	.03	.01	-.03	.06	-.04	-.05	.02	-.16*	-.08	.04	-.12 [†]	.29	.08	.25***
Sibling	.03	.02	.12	-.00	.04	-.01	-.01	.07	-.01	.02	.02	.10	.03	.04	.06	-.05	.07	-.05
Outside Family	.02	.01	.12 [†]	.03	.03	.07	-.03	.05	-.04	.01	.01	.07	.01	.03	.03	-.05	.06	-.07
Acceptance	-.03	.03	-.06	-.07	.06	-.08	.18	.12	.11	-.07	.03	-.18*	-.19	.06	-.23***	.15	.12	.10
Time Together	-.00	.00	-.07	.00	.00	.05	-.01	.01	-.10	-.00	.00	-.09	-.00	.00	-.03	-.00	.01	-.03
Mexican Orientation	-.05	.02	-.13 [†]	-.13	.05	-.18*	.04	.10	.03	-.03	.02	-.11	-.02	.05	-.04	-.09	.09	-.08
Anglo Orientation	.02	.02	.07	-.01	.04	-.02	.02	.08	.02	-.02	.02	-.07	.03	.05	.05	-.15	.09	-.14
Youth Gender	.05	.03	.11 [†]	-.10	.07	-.10	-.35	.12	-.19***	.07	.03	.15*	-.09	.06	-.09	-.32	.12	-.17**
Parent Education	-.00	.00	-.06	-.03	.01	-.25***	.05	.02	.19*	-.00	.01	-.05	-.04	.01	-.28***	.07	.02	.26***
R ²	.20		.13		.21		.12		.14		.18		.14		.18		.18	
F	5.19***		3.11***		4.82***		2.74**		3.38***		4.13***		3.38***		4.13***		4.13***	

Note. Gender is coded 0 = female, 1 = male.

[†] p < .10.

* p < .05.

** p < .01.

*** p < .001