



Published in final edited form as:

Fam Process. 2015 June ; 54(2): 205–216. doi:10.1111/famp.12135.

What Can We Learn from the Study of Mexican-Origin Families in the U.S.?

Kimberly A. Updegraff¹ and Adriana J. Umaña-Taylor²

¹T. Denny Sanford School of Social and Family Dynamics, Arizona State University, P.O. Box 873701, Tempe AZ 85287-3701; kimberly.updegraff@asu.edu.

²T. Denny Sanford School of Social and Family Dynamics, Arizona State University, P.O. Box 873701, Tempe AZ 85287-3701; adriana.umana-taylor@asu.edu.

Abstract

Mexican-origin families are a large and rapidly increasing subgroup of the U.S. population, but they remain underrepresented in family scholarship. This paper introduces a special section of four papers on Mexican-origin families designed to contribute to the advancement of research on how cultural, family, and gender socialization processes unfold across key developmental periods and life transitions in this cultural context. Two longitudinal studies of Mexican-origin families provided the data for these four papers: (a) *The Juntos Project*, an eight-year longitudinal study of mothers, fathers, and adolescent sibling pairs in 246 Mexican-origin families; and (b) *The Supporting MAMI Project*, a study following 204 adolescent mothers and their mother figures from the third trimester of pregnancy through their young children's 5th birthdays. In this introductory paper we highlight four themes, including (a) differential acculturation and reciprocal socialization, (b) interdependence in families, (c) the intersection of culture and gender, and (d) methodological issues, then offer suggestions for future research.

Keywords

culture; family; fathers; gender; Mexican-origin/Mexican American; mothers; siblings

Latinos are the largest and fastest growing segment of the U.S. population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014), and they accounted for more than half of the population growth between 2000 and 2010 (Passel, Cohn, & Lopez, 2011). Within the Latino population, individuals of Mexican descent make up the largest subgroup (65% or 33.5 million individuals; Lopez, Gonzalez-Barrera, & Cuddington, 2013), and they are responsible for three-fourths of the growth in the Latino population from 2000 to 2010 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). In fact, outside of Mexico, the U.S. has the largest Mexican-origin population worldwide (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013). In light of these trends, research on Mexican-origin families is critical to enhance our understanding of this important subgroup of U.S. families.

Mexican-origin families are a heterogeneous group, as they are characterized by substantial variability in their cultural backgrounds, values and practices, and socioeconomic resources

(Baca Zinn & Wells, 2000). Scholars who study ethnic minority families have increasingly recognized the need to study variability *within* specific cultural groups to better understand how cultural and family processes are interrelated (McLoyd, 1998; Umaña-Taylor, 2009). The study of a single ethnic or cultural group, referred to as an *ethnic-homogenous design* (McLoyd, 1998), also allows researchers to pay close attention to processes that are highly relevant to a particular group (e.g., familism values among Mexican-origin individuals). In this special section, we draw on two longitudinal studies of Mexican-origin families that share an emphasis on how cultural, family, and developmental processes unfold from adolescence to young adulthood. The first study, *Juntos (Together): Families Raising Successful Teens Project* (Killoren, Wheeler, Updegraff, Rodríguez, & McHale, this issue; Perez-Brena, Updegraff, & Umaña-Taylor, this issue, *Paper A*), includes data from mothers, fathers, and two adolescent siblings over an eight-year period. The second study, *The Supporting MAMI (Mexican-origin Adolescent Mothers and Infants) Project*, examines the transition to parenthood and first five years of teenage parenting for Mexican-origin adolescent females and their mother figures (Perez-Brena, Updegraff, Umaña-Taylor, Jahromi, & Guimond, this issue, *Paper B*; Toomey, Updegraff, Umaña-Taylor, & Jahromi, this issue). This paper highlights four interrelated themes in this work, discusses gaps in our current knowledge, and provides directions of future research.

Differential Acculturation Within Families and Reciprocal Socialization

A key aspect of family life for ethnic minority, and particularly, immigrant families is the transmission of culture from one generation to the next. For Mexican-origin families in the U.S., this task involves negotiating the values and practices of Mexican *and* U.S. culture. The process of cultural adaptation is complex when studied at the individual level, as it involves multiple dimensions in reference to at least two cultures (Schwartz, Unger, Zamboanga, & Szapocznik, 2010). It is substantially more complicated when studied as a *within-family* phenomenon because similarities and differences must be considered among the different dyads or subgroups within the family (Telzer, 2010; Updegraff & Umaña-Taylor, 2010). Much of the scholarly interest in cultural adaptation as a within-family construct originated from Szapocznik and colleagues' work with Cuban American families, and their proposed acculturation gap-distress model (Szapocznik & Kurtines, 1993). This model purports that differential acculturation¹ within families, and particularly when immigrant youth assimilate to U.S. culture at a faster rate and/or to a greater extent than their parents, leads to acculturation *discrepancies* between parents and youth. These discrepancies are expected to increase the likelihood of youth rejecting their ethnic culture and their parents' authority, resulting in family conflict, and consequentially, youth maladjustment (Szapocznik & Kurtines, 1993). Although empirical tests of the acculturation gap-distress model have yielded inconsistent support (Telzer, 2010), emerging research points to the need for more nuanced approaches that consider: (a) different dimensions of cultural adaptation in reference to the ethnic and host culture; and (b) the moderating role of

¹We use the term acculturation to refer to the broader process of cultural adaptation, which includes both adaptation to a mainstream culture, as well as maintaining or enhancing aspects of the heritage culture (differentiated with the use of the term 'enculturation' in some work; Gonzales, Fabrett, & Knight, 2009).

the family and sociocultural context in the cultural adaptation process (Birman, 2006; Telzer, 2010; Updegraff & Umaña-Taylor, 2010).

A substantial proportion of the research testing the acculturation gap-distress model has focused on the period of *adolescence* (Telzer, 2010). The emphasis on this developmental period may have resulted, in part, because the initial goal of this body of work was to explain youth's internalizing and externalizing problems (Szapocznik & Kurtines, 1993), both of which increase exponentially during adolescence (Zahn-Waxler, Shirtcliff, & Marceau, 2008). Adolescence also is a time when youth assume a more *active* role in their cultural socialization (Bernal, Knight, Garza, Ocampo, & Cota, 1990; Umaña-Taylor, Zeiders, & Updegraff, 2013). As such, it becomes increasingly important in adolescence to recognize that parents *and* adolescents may be active socialization agents and influence one another's cultural development.

Another limitation of research on Mexican-origin families emerges from acculturation being conceived of as a *developmental process*, but rarely studied as such (Schwartz et al., 2010), particularly in the family context (Telzer, 2010; Updegraff & Umaña-Taylor, 2010). Research on differential (parent-child) acculturation in Mexican American/Latino families relies almost exclusively on the assessment of parents' and youth's acculturation at a *single point in time*, as linked to concurrent (Bámaca-Colbert, Umaña-Taylor, & Gayles, 2012; Elder, Broyles, Brennan, & Zuniga de Nuncio, 2005; Updegraff, McHale, Whiteman, Thayer, & Crouter, 2006) or prospective indices of family and individual well-being (Lau et al., 2005; Schofield, Parke, Kim, & Coltrane, 2008). Thus, we are limited in our understanding of how culture unfolds within families across different developmental periods, and during key life transitions. Extending research in this direction, two papers in this special section investigated the associations among parents' and offspring's cultural values using longitudinal designs (Perez-Brena, this issue, *Paper A*; Toomey et al., this issue). Collectively, these studies focused on three cultural values, familism values, respect for elders, and traditional gender role attitudes, and encompassed the developmental period from adolescence to young adulthood (Perez-Brena et al., this issue, *Paper A*) and the transition to adolescent motherhood (Toomey et al., this issue).

Together, the results of these studies offer valuable insights about the development of Mexican American cultural values within the context of the parent-adolescent dyad. For example, we find evidence of both *youth socialization*, characterized by youth-to-parent associations in the absence of parent-to-youth associations, and of *reciprocal socialization*, characterized by simultaneous parent-to-youth and youth-to-parent associations. Interestingly, the latter emerged in father-youth dyads, but not in mother-youth dyads, for familism and respect for elders values in two-parent families (Perez-Brena et al., this issue, *Paper A*). This pattern of youth's active socialization role in the father-adolescent dyad is consistent with the idea that fathers (relative to mothers) promote individuation and autonomy during adolescence (Parke & Buriel, 2006). Thus, fathers may be more likely than mothers to encourage adolescents' active role in their cultural socialization.

In contrast to findings with two-parent Mexican-origin families, Toomey et al. (this issue) documented reciprocal socialization in traditional gender role attitudes among mother-

daughter dyads in our teen parenting sample. Such reciprocity may reflect the structure of the mother-daughter dyad during the transition to adolescent motherhood. Specifically, mothers and daughters are likely to function as a coparenting dyad as adolescent daughters become new mothers (Pittman & Coley, 2011). This dynamic, in turn, may promote reciprocal socialization as mothers and daughters work together in their new coparenting roles, potentially influencing one another throughout this process. An open question is whether such reciprocal socialization in mother-daughter dyads is specific to cultural values pertinent to Mexican-origin females' development, such as traditional gender role attitudes, given the emphasis in this cultural context on females' responsibilities in the home (Cauce & Domenich-Rodríguez, 2002). Future research might profitably examine reciprocal socialization effects between mothers' and daughters' traditional gender role attitudes in two-parent families with non-pregnant/parenting teens, as well as cultural socialization in father-daughter dyads across the transition to adolescent motherhood.

Interdependent Family Systems

Evidence of reciprocal socialization processes is congruent with a family systems perspective (Cox & Paley, 1997), which emphasizes that families are comprised of different subsystems (i.e., individual family members, dyads, triads, and so on) and that these subsystems are interdependent and embedded within larger systems (e.g., family unit, community). In addition to the findings of Perez-Brena et al. (this issue, *Paper A*) and Toomey et al. (this issue), which demonstrate interdependent and reciprocal socialization processes among *individual* family members (i.e., fathers and adolescents, mothers and adolescents), several papers in this special section illustrate the interrelations among *dyadic* subsystems within Mexican-origin families: coparental, sibling, and parent-youth. Perez-Brena et al. (this issue, *Paper B*), for example, focuses on the coparental subsystem and its relations to the mother-daughter subsystem in the context of adolescent motherhood, and identifies how unique coparenting patterns are informed by the mother-daughter relationship. Similarly, Killoren and colleagues (this issue) underscore how features of the parent-adolescent subsystem inform the sibling subsystem. Together, these findings provide support for the notion that systems adapt to one another and according to the needs of the broader systems in which they are embedded.

The *coparental subsystem* is defined as any two (or more) parental figures who work together to coordinate and share parenting responsibilities (Cox & Paley, 1997). The majority of the research has focused on coparental subsystems comprised of married or divorced heterosexual parents from European American backgrounds (Cabrera, Shannon, & Jolley-Mitchell, 2013; Feinberg, 2003; McHale, J., Kuersten-Hogan, & Rao, 2004). As such, our empirical understanding of coparenting processes and their implications for family dynamics and children's well-being in diverse family structures and ethnic and racial minority family contexts is limited (Cabrera et al., 2013; Feinberg, 2003; McHale et al., 2004). Nevertheless, efforts to evaluate whether existing conceptual models of coparenting are applicable to Latinos are promising. A recent review of coparenting in Latino families (Cabrera et al., 2013), and several empirical studies of coparenting focused specifically on Mexican-origin families (Cabrera, Shannon, & LaTaillade, 2009; Solmeyer, Killoren,

McHale, & Updegraff, 2011), provide initial evidence for the cross-cultural applicability of current conceptual models of coparenting (Feinberg, 2003; Van Egeren & Hawkins, 2004).

Importantly, our understanding of coparenting in Latino families is even more limited when considering the coparental relationships between adolescent mothers and their mother figures. In the context of adolescent motherhood, the coparental dyad is often comprised of adolescent mothers and their own mother figures because most adolescents live with their mothers during pregnancy and the early years of parenting (Manlove, Mariner, & Papillo, 2000) and rely on them as a primary means of support (Contreras, Narang, Ikhlas, & Teachman, 2002). Given the high rates of adolescent pregnancy among Mexican-origin females (i.e., more than double the rates of adolescent females from any other ethnic group in the U.S.; Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2011), efforts to examine the adolescent-mother figure coparenting dyad in this family context is critical (Pittman & Coley, 2011). Perez-Brena et al. (this issue, *Paper B*) used a pattern-analytic approach to identify different subgroups that varied in their patterns of coparental communication, involvement, and conflict. In line with a family systems' perspective, the mother-daughter relationship *prior* to the transition to adolescent motherhood predicted membership in the coparental subgroups. Further, the coparental relationship was associated with concurrent adjustment for both mothers and adolescents and with adolescents' parenting efficacy. These findings suggest that there was meaningful variability in the coparental relationship, which was predicted by the quality of the mother-adolescent relationship before the arrival of the child, and was associated with each member's individual well-being in the first year of parenthood.

Moving beyond the coparental subsystem, the *sibling* subsystem is a prominent part of the landscape in Mexican-origin families. Demographic trends indicate that Mexican-origin families in the U.S. have high fertility rates and, subsequently, children have more siblings in this as compared to other ethnic/racial groups (McHale, Updegraff, & Whiteman, 2012). Further, time-use data reveal that Mexican-origin youth spend more time during their non-school hours with siblings than with parents or extended family (Updegraff, McHale, Whiteman, Thayer, & Delgado, 2005) or peers (Updegraff, McHale, Whiteman, Thayer, & Crouter, 2006). These trends, in combination with strong family-oriented values emphasizing solidarity, loyalty, and support among family members in Mexican American culture (Cauce & Domenich-Rodríguez, 2002; Marín & Marín, 1991), suggest that siblings may be an important source of support, companionship, and influence in Mexican American culture. In immigrant families, in particular, when mothers and fathers are less familiar with U.S. culture, language, and customs, siblings may be particularly important resources for one another as they negotiate contexts outside of the family, such as peer relationships, dating, and school (Updegraff, McHale, Killoren, & Rodríguez, 2010).

Grounded in a family systems perspective, with the goal of exploring the *interdependence* among parent-adolescent and adolescent-sibling relationships, Killoren et al. (this issue) investigated the associations between acceptance from parents and emotional intimacy with siblings using data from older and younger siblings over a five-year period. Interestingly, the findings of Killoren et al. suggested that interdependence among parent-adolescent and sibling relationships was more characteristic of older siblings than younger siblings. In

particular, parental acceptance was associated with increases in older siblings' reports of sibling intimacy five years later, but no associations were found for younger siblings. Further, familism values in middle adolescence were associated with closer sibling relationships for older sisters in young adulthood, extending our cross-sectional findings (Updegraff et al., 2005) to reveal these associations longitudinally. As we address in more detail in the next section, gender constellation of the sibling dyad also moderated parent-sibling relationship associations, such that mothers' and fathers' acceptance was differentially linked to older siblings' intimacy depending on the gender composition of the sibling dyad. In combination, the current findings highlight the importance of studying the interdependence among family relationships as they are embedded within the larger family and cultural context.

The Intersection of Gender and Culture

A third theme essential to understanding family dynamics and functioning in Mexican-origin families centers upon the role of gender. Gender is as an organizing feature of family life in Mexican American culture (Cauce & Domenich-Rodríguez, 2002; Umaña-Taylor & Updegraff, 2012), and has implications for the roles of mothers and fathers and the socialization of girls and boys. Much of the early scholarship focused on gender dynamics in marriage, but research in the past two decades directs our attention to the role of gender in the parental and familial socialization of Mexican-origin girls and boys (for a review, see Umaña-Taylor & Updegraff, 2012). Qualitative research provides initial insights about the dimensions along which girls and boys may experience differential socialization within the family context (Crockett, Brown, Russell, & Shen, 2007; Raffaelli & Ontai, 2004; Valenzuela, 1999). Collectively, this work suggests that parents may place more demands on daughters to provide family assistance and support and require them to spend more time within the home setting as compared to boys (Raffaelli & Ontai, 2004; Valenzuela, 1999). Relatedly, parents also indicate being more protective of daughters than of sons via more limited autonomy and fewer opportunities to spend time with peers and romantic partners and in the community (Azmitia & Brown, 2002; Raffaelli & Ontai, 2004). The role of parent gender also is evident in this body of work. In particular, mothers' parenting has been characterized by high levels of involvement in day-to-day activities and greater emotional support relative to fathers', whereas fathers are noted for their instrumental support and role as an authority figure in comparison to mothers (Crockett et al., 2007; Umaña-Taylor & Updegraff, 2012).

Findings on how gender plays a role in Mexican-origin families become more complex when the *gender constellation* of the parent-youth dyad is considered. Several studies document that the links between fathers' cultural orientations/parenting and youths' outcomes vary depending on whether they have a son or daughter (e.g., Dumka, Gonzales, Bonds, & Millsap, 2009; White, Roosa, Weaver, & McNair, 2009), although findings are mixed. Evidence of parent-youth gender constellation effects comes from the work of Dumka and colleagues (2009), which found that fathers' parenting was linked *only* to boys' academic outcomes. Mothers' parenting, in contrast, was associated with both girls' and boys' academic success, but sometimes in different ways.

Central to understanding gender dynamics in Mexican-origin families and making sense of these different patterns is consideration of how gender socialization processes may vary as a function of the characteristics of the larger family and sociocultural context. That is, the division of parenting along gendered lines and the gender differentiated treatment of sons versus daughters may be stronger in some family and sociocultural contexts than others (McHale, Updegraff, Shanahan, Crouter, & Killoren, 2005). From an ecological perspective, these ideas are reflected in person-context and person-process-context models of development (Bronfenbrenner & Crouter, 1983). McHale et al. (2005), using the first phase of the *Juntos* Project, found that the differential treatment of sisters versus brothers (using a within-family design) varied by parents' cultural orientations. When parents had strong ties to Mexican culture, gender differentiated treatment of sibling pairs was evident in families with mixed-sex dyads, such that brothers received more privileges and had fewer family responsibilities relative to their sisters. When parents had stronger ties to U.S. culture, however, brothers and sisters had more similar privileges and responsibilities. These findings are consistent with the premise that there is substantial *within-group* variability in gender roles and processes in Mexican-origin families that may be explained, at least in part, by variability in cultural beliefs, practices, and values.

Highlighting the intersection of gender and culture, Toomey et al. (this issue) found that the development of mother figures' gender role attitudes over time varies as a function of mothers' immigrant status. For Mexico-born mother figures, gender role attitude trajectories are characterized by declines across time, consistent with the idea that exposure to U.S. culture leads to declines in traditional attitudes (Valentine & Mosley, 2000), but Mexican-origin mothers who were born in the U.S. had stable gender role attitudes across time. Such findings illustrate how cultural ties may introduce variability in the development of gender-linked attitudes. Perez-Brena et al.'s findings (this issue, *Paper A*) revealed that the immigration status of the parent-youth dyad was associated with variability in mother-youth, but not father-youth, cultural socialization patterns, illustrating how parent gender and immigrant background may interact in explaining cultural socialization processes. Lastly, Killoren et al. (this issue) illustrates how a family context characteristic, *sibling dyad gender constellation*, moderates the associations between parental warmth and sibling intimacy in this cultural context.

In related research, McHale and colleagues (2003) have characterized the gender constellation of the sibling dyad as a feature of the family context that may invoke differential involvement of mothers and fathers, such that fathers may be "pulled in" by sons and the benefits may be evident for their sisters as well (McHale, Crouter, & Whiteman, 2003). In fact, our findings suggest that links between sibling intimacy and *paternal* warmth are only evident when sibling pairs included both a son and a daughter, consistent with the idea that boys may engage fathers and these benefits may spill over to sisters (McHale et al., 2003). Similar associations with maternal warmth, on the other hand, were evident only for older sister-younger sister pairs. These findings illustrate the complexity that parent gender-sibling gender combinations introduce into family gender socialization processes within this cultural context. In the future, it will be important to further examine whether such patterns are exacerbated when families have stronger ties to Mexican culture (McHale et al., 2005).

Methodological Considerations

We have devoted the majority of this article to reviewing substantive advances in research on Mexican-origin families. It is noteworthy, however, that this work also draws our attention to a number of *methodological* innovations missing in much of the current research on Mexican-origin families and points to the need to be strategic in the design of future research. Thus, the final theme we present is closely intertwined with the three prior themes, but pertains specifically to methodological advances necessary to increase the quality of research conducted with this rapidly growing and increasingly diverse ethnic population in the U.S. We present four recommendations: (a) increasing the use of longitudinal designs; (b) sampling in a manner that captures within-group variability; (c) increasing collaborative efforts; and (d) addressing processes, mechanisms, and the dynamic nature of family life.

Longitudinal designs

There is a substantial need for more research that addresses how individual, cultural, and family processes unfold over time in ethnic minority families (Cabrera & The SRCD Ethnic and Racial Issues Committee, 2013; Umaña-Taylor et al., 2014). As illustrated in this special section, family members influence one another's development over time (Toomey et al., this issue), and the degree and direction of influence can vary based on the developmental period, relationship dyad, and aspect of culture under study (Perez-Brena et al., this issue, *Paper A*). Further, with two unique samples of Mexican-origin families, we provided empirical support for the notion that cultural adaptation is a dynamic process that changes over time--an area of focus that is central to the advancement of research on Mexican-origin families living in the U.S. However, these important questions of change over time and variability in degree of influence by developmental period must be addressed with longitudinal data.

We are aware of the challenges inherent in recruiting and retaining these samples over a substantial amount of time to capture developmental periods and key life transitions. One consideration for future research may be the use of cohort-sequential designs with planned missing data (Enders, 2010), which reduces participant burden and research costs (e.g., all participants do not have to participate in all waves of data collection; participants can complete a subset of measures within each wave). Similarly, as we elaborate upon below, developing collaborative efforts across multiple research teams makes this type of work increasingly possible.

Capturing within-group variability

Scholars underscore the substantial within-group variability that exists among Mexican-origin families (Umaña-Taylor, 2009; Updegraff & Umaña-Taylor, 2010), and this special section illustrates this diversity within two distinct samples of Mexican-origin families. Perez-Brena et al. (this issue, *Paper A*) found, for example, that parent-adolescent nativity status introduced important variability into the transmission of cultural values across generations; among Mexico-born parent-youth dyads, youth's values predicted increases in parents' values five years later, whereas this pattern was not evident in U.S.-born parent-youth dyads. Similarly, Toomey et al. (this issue) found that mothers' trajectories of gender

role attitudes varied significantly by immigration status underscoring the need to examine how variability in immigrant status can inform changes in cultural values over time. Importantly, to examine the within-group variability that exists in family processes and adjustment among Mexican-origin families, study samples must include an adequate representation (i.e., large enough sample size) of families with diverse cultural characteristics. Although there has been an increase in research on ethnic minority populations, much of this research over-represents selected subgroups (e.g., English-speaking immigrants; Knight, Roosa, & Umaña-Taylor, 2009).

The *Juntos* Project (Killoren et al., this issue; Perez-Brena et al., this issue, *Paper A*) was designed to recruit a socioeconomically diverse Mexican-origin sample, so as to avoid overrepresentation of one segment of this diverse population. The sampling frame was school-based and private and public schools in both urban and suburban areas that ranged in socioeconomic resources were sampled to increase the diversity within the sample. On a larger scale, Roosa and colleagues devised a community-based sampling frame to recruit a Mexican-origin sample that was diverse in social class and cultural orientation (Roosa, Liu, Torres, Gonzales, Knight, & Saenz, 2008). Their approach included using qualitative observations to rate indicators of community support for traditional values and lifestyles (e.g., availability of traditional foods) and quantitative indicators (e.g., Latino population density). By recruiting from diverse cultural contexts, and consistently monitoring the acculturation and socioeconomic levels of families being recruiting (and modifying recruitment as needed), a diverse sample of approximately 750 Mexican-origin families was recruited (Roosa et al.). These efforts demonstrate successful strategies for recruiting diverse samples of Mexican-origin families.

Increasing Collaborative Efforts

The sampling and recruitment efforts described above, coupled with the need to recruit samples large enough to obtain adequate statistical power to examine longitudinal processes, will require researchers to reach out to collaborators and design studies that capitalize on collective resources. As illustrated in this special section, the nuances of family processes and individual development are more easily captured with multi-informant designs that follow participants across critical developmental and life course transitions, and that include samples with sufficient variability in key dimensions of culture and large enough samples to examine within-group variability. Recruiting such a sample can be challenging and, in some cases, impossible because the community from which Mexican-origin participants are being recruited can become saturated. Collaborating with colleagues in other geographical regions is a possibility, particularly because this increases the opportunities for recruitment of the targeted population and also adds to the variability captured in the sample. By pooling data across multiple sites, researchers also have the opportunity to test the generalizability of hypothesized patterns in distinct regions across the U.S.

Collaborative efforts also can be fruitful because they capitalize on staff resources and research ingenuity. For instance, a challenging aspect of conducting high quality work with a diverse sample of Mexican-origin families is the need to have measures that are valid and reliable in both English and Spanish (Knight et al., 2009). Research teams expend much

time and resources on the translation and examination of measurement equivalence across languages. Within a collaborative project, however, such resources could be shared across teams.

Processes, Mechanisms, and the Dynamic Nature of Family Life

The final consideration we raise is based on our observation that each paper in this special section addresses the dynamic interplay of individual and context characteristics, albeit in unique ways. For example, in Killoren et al. (this issue), family processes were examined with attention to the role of sibling and family context characteristics (e.g., birth order, sibling gender constellation, parent gender) and the interaction among these characteristics were essential to understanding the interrelations of parent-adolescent and sibling relationships in this cultural context. In Perez-Brena et al. (this issue, *Paper A*), the development of family members' cultural values were examined as a function of the interactions between the broader cultural context (e.g., parent-youth nativity status), the parenting context (e.g., mother and father), and the period within which development was occurring (e.g., early to late adolescence versus middle adolescence to early adulthood). Findings from this set of papers repeatedly illustrate the interactive nature of individual, family, and cultural contexts over time, and suggest that to increase our conceptual understanding of family processes, research must model the dynamic nature of multiple systems within the family and how these systems interact with the broader cultural context in which they exist.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the papers in this special section illustrate several key ideas that can guide future research. First, attention to the variability that exists *within* cultural groups is critical to identify how cultural processes are related to individual and family functioning. By focusing on variability within an ethnic group, we are able to pay attention to the cultural mechanisms that are most pertinent to that ethnic group (McLoyd, 1998). Importantly, insights gleaned from ethnic-homogeneous designs complement those from ethnic-comparative research, and together, advance our understanding of how individual, family, and sociocultural processes unfold over time in different sociocultural contexts. Second, it is essential that we pay more attention to the different *subsystems* that comprise families and the ways in which they are interrelated and influence one another (Cox & Paley, 1997). Compared to research on Mexican-origin mother-youth dyads, we know considerably less about father-youth and sibling relationship dyads in this cultural context, and we have much to learn about how these and other subsystems within the family are *interrelated*. Finally, insights about how development unfolds within the family and cultural context across key development periods and life transitions is at the core of a solid foundation of empirical knowledge about Mexican-origin families and will contribute to the development of culturally appropriate interventions and family-based policies in the U.S (see Stein & Guzman, this issue). As Latinos are projected to comprise almost one third of the U.S. population in the next 50 years (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013), efforts to understand youth development within the most significant context of their daily lives – family – is essential.

Acknowledgments

This work was supported by NICHD R01HD39666 (Kimberly Updegraff, PI) and R01HD061376 (Adriana J. Umaña-Taylor, PI).

References

- Azmitia, M.; Brown, JR. Latino immigrant parents' beliefs about the "path of life" of their adolescent children.. In: Contreras, JM.; Kerns, KA.; Neal-Barnett, AM., editors. *Latino Children and Families in the United States: Current Research and Future Directions*. Praeger; Westport, CT: 2002. p. 3-26.
- Baca Zinn, M.; Wells, B. Diversity within Latino families: New lessons for family social science.. In: Demo, DH.; Allen, KR.; Fine, MA., editors. *Handbook of family diversity*. Oxford University Press; New York: 2000. p. 252-273.
- Bámaca MY, Umaña-Taylor AJ, Gayles JG. A Developmental-contextual Model of Depressive Symptoms in Mexican-Origin Girls. *Developmental Psychology*. 2012; 48:406–421. doi: 10.1037/a0025666. [PubMed: 21967564]
- Bernal ME, Knight GP, Garza CA, Ocampo KA, Cota MK. The development of ethnic identity in Mexican-American children. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences*. 1990; 12:3–24. doi: 10.1177/07399863900121001.
- Birman, D. Measurement of the "Acculturation Gap" in immigrant families and implications for parent-child relationships.. In: Bornstein, MH.; Cote, LR., editors. *Acculturation and parent-child relationships: Measurement and development*. Lawrence Erlbaum; Mahwah, NJ: 2006. p. 113-134.
- Bronfenbrenner, U.; Crouter, AC. The evolution of environment models in development research.. In: Mussen, PH., editor. *Handbook of Child Psychology*. Vol. 1. John Wiley; New York: 1983. p. 358-414.
- Cabrera, NJ.; Shannon, JD.; Jolley-Mitchell, S. Coparenting in Latino families.. In: Chuang, SS.; Tamis-LeMonda, CS., editors. *Gender roles in immigrant families: Advances in immigrant family research*. Springer; NY: 2013. p. 9-26.
- Cabrera NJ, Shannon JD, La Taillade JJ. Predictors of coparenting in Mexican American families and links to parenting and child social emotional development. *Infant mental health journal*. 2009; 30:523–548. doi:10.1002/imhj.20227. [PubMed: 20174599]
- Cabrera NJ, The SRCDD Ethnic and Racial Issues Committee. Positive development of minority children. *Social Policy Report*. 2013; 27:1–30. from http://www.srcdd.org/sites/default/files/documents/washington/spr_272_final.pdf.
- Cauce, AM.; Domenech-Rodríguez, M. Latino families: Myths and realities.. In: Contreras, JM.; Kerns, KA.; Neal-Barnett, AM., editors. *Latino children and families in the United States*. Praeger Press; Westport, CT: 2002. p. 5-25.
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Adolescent pregnancy and childbirth – United States, 1991-2008. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*. 2011; 60(1):105–108.
- Contreras, JM.; Narang, D.; Ikhlas, M.; Teichman, J. A conceptual model of the determinants of parenting among Latina adolescent mothers.. In: Contreras, JM.; Kerns, KA.; Neal-Barnett, AM., editors. *Latino children and families in the U.S.* Praeger; Westport, CT: 2002. p. 155-177.
- Cox MJ, Paley B. Families as systems. *Annual Review of Psychology*. 1997; 48:243–267. doi: 10.1146/annurev.psych.48.1.243.
- Crockett LJ, Brown J, Russell ST, Shen Y. The meaning of good parent-child relationships for Mexican American adolescents. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*. 2007; 17:639–668. doi: 10.1111/j.1532-7795.2007.00539.x.
- Dumka LE, Gonzales NG, Bonds DD, Millsap RE. Academic Success of Mexican Origin Boys and Girls: The Role of Mothers' and Fathers' Parenting and Cultural Orientation. *Sex Roles*. 2009; 60:588–599. doi: 10.1007/s11199-008-9518-z. [PubMed: 21731172]
- Elder JP, Broyles SL, Brennan JJ, de Nuncio MLZ, Nader PR. Acculturation, parent-child acculturation differential, and chronic disease risk factors in a Mexican-American population. *Journal of Immigrant Health*. 2005; 7:1–9. doi: 10.1007/s10903-005-1385-x. [PubMed: 15744472]
- Enders, CK. *Applied Missing Data Analysis*. Guilford Press; New York, NY: 2010.

- Feinberg ME. The internal structure and ecological context for coparenting: A framework for research and intervention. *Parenting: Science and Practice*. 2003; 3:95–131. doi: 10.1207/S15327922PAR0302_01.
- Gonzales, NA.; Fabrett, F.; Knight, GP. Acculturation, enculturation, and the psychosocial adaptation of Latino youth.. In: Villarruel, FA.; Carlo, G.; Grau, JM.; Azmitia, M.; Cabrera, NJ.; Chahin, TJ., editors. *Handbook of U.S. Latino Psychology: Developmental and community-based perspectives*. Sage Publications; Thousand Oaks, CA: 2009. p. 115-134.
- Killoren SE, Wheeler LA, Updegraff KA, Rodríguez SA, McHale SM. Longitudinal Associations among Parental Acceptance, Familism Values, and Sibling Intimacy in Mexican-Origin Families. *this issue*.
- Knight GP, Gonzales NA, Saenz DS, German M, Deardorff J, Roosa MW, Updegraff KA. The Mexican American cultural values scale for adolescents and adults. *Journal of Early Adolescence*. 2010; 30:444–481. doi: 10.1002/jcop.20257. [PubMed: 20644653]
- Knight, GP.; Roosa, MW.; Umaña-Taylor, AJ. *Methodological challenges in studying ethnic minority or economically disadvantaged populations*. American Psychological Association; Washington, DC: 2009.
- Lau AS, McCabe KM, Yeh M, Garland AF, Wood PA, Hough RL. The acculturation gap-distress hypothesis among high-risk Mexican American families. *Journal of Family Psychology*. 2005; 19:367–375. doi: 10.1037/0893-3200.19.3.367. [PubMed: 16221017]
- Lopez, MH.; Gonzalez-Barrera, A.; Cuddington, D. [April 2, 2014] Diverse origins: The nation's 14 largest Hispanic-origin groups.. Pew Hispanic Research Center. 2013. from <http://www.pewhispanic.org/2013/06/19/diverse-origins-the-nations-14-largest-hispanic-origin-groups/>
- Marín, G.; Marín, BV. *Research with Hispanic populations*. Sage Publications; Newbury Park: 1991.
- Manlove J, Mariner C, Papillo AR. Subsequent Fertility Among Teen Mothers: Longitudinal Analyses of Recent National Data. *Journal of Marriage and Family*. 2000; 62(2):430–448. doi: 10.1111/j.1741-3737.2000.00430.x.
- McHale J, Kuersten-Hogan R, Rao N. Growing points for coparenting theory and research. *Journal of Adult Development*. 2004; 11:221–234. [PubMed: 21127732]
- McHale S, Crouter A, Whiteman S. The family contexts of gender development in childhood and adolescence. *Social Development*. 2003; 12:125–148. doi: 10.1111/1467-9507.00225.
- McHale SM, Updegraff KA, Shanahan L, Crouter AC, Killoren SE. Culture, Gender, and Family Dynamics: Differential Treatment in Mexican American Families. *Journal of Marriage and Family*. 2005; 67:1259–1274. doi: 10.1111/j.1741-3737.2005.00215.x. [PubMed: 18414595]
- McHale SM, Updegraff KA, Whiteman SD. Sibling relationships and influences in childhood and adolescence. *Journal of Marriage and Family*. 2012; 74:913–930. doi: 10.1111/j.1741-3737.2012.01011.x. [PubMed: 24653527]
- McLoyd, VC. Changing demographics in the American population: Implications for research on minority children and adolescents.. In: McLoyd, VC.; Steinberg, L., editors. *Studying minority adolescents: Conceptual, methodological, and theoretical issues*. Lawrence Erlbaum; Mahway, NJ: 1998. p. 3-28.
- Parke, RD.; Buriel, R. Socialization in the family: Ethnic and ecological perspectives.. In: Eisenberg, N.; Damon, W.; Lerner, R., editors. *Handbook of child psychology: Vol. 3: Social, emotional, and personality development*. 6th edn. Wiley; New York, NY: 2006. p. 429-504.
- Passel, JS.; Cohn, D.; Lopez, MH. U.S. Census 2010: 50 million Latinos – Hispanics account for more than half of the nation's growth in the past decade. Pew Hispanic Research Center; 2011. from <http://www.pewhispanic.org/files/reports/140.pdf> [4/1/2014]
- Perez-Brena NJ, Updegraff KA, Umaña-Taylor AJ. Transmission of cultural values among Mexican American parents and their adolescent and emerging adult offspring. *this issue*.
- Perez-Brena NJ, Updegraff KA, Umaña-Taylor AJ, Jahromi LB, Guimond A. Co-Parenting Profiles in the Context of Mexican-Origin Teen Pregnancy: Links to Mother-Daughter Relationship Quality and Adjustment. *this issue*.
- Pittman, LD.; Coley, RL. Coparenting in families with adolescent mothers.. In: McHale, JP.; Lindahl, KM., editors. *Coparenting: A conceptual and clinical examination of family systems*. American Psychological Association; Washington, DC: 2011. p. 105-126. doi: 10.1037/12328-005

- Raffaelli M, Ontai LL. Gender socialization in Latino/a families: Results from two retrospective studies. *Sex Roles*. 2004; 50:287–299. doi: 10.1023/B:SERS.0000018886.58945.06.
- Roosa MW, Liu FF, Torres M, Gonzales NA, Knight GP, Saenz D. Sampling and recruitment in studies of cultural influence on adjustment: A case study with Mexican Americans. *Journal of Family Psychology*. 2008; 22:293–302. doi: 10.1037/0893-3200.22.2.293. [PubMed: 18410216]
- Sabogal F, Marín G, Otero-Sabogal R, Marín B, Perez-Stable EJ. Hispanic familism and acculturation: What changes and what doesn't? *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences*. 1987; 9:397–412. doi: 10.1177/07399863870094003.
- Schofield TJ, Parke RD, Kim Y, Coltrane S. Bridging the acculturation gap: parent-child relationship quality as a moderator in Mexican American families. *Developmental Psychology*. 2008; 44:1190–1194. [PubMed: 18605845]
- Schwartz SJ, Unger JB, Zamboanga BL, Szapocznik J. Rethinking the concept of acculturation: Implication for theory and research. *American Psychologist*. 2010; 56:237–251. doi:10.1037/a0019330. [PubMed: 20455618]
- Solmeyer A, Killoren SE, McHale SM, Updegraff KA. Coparenting around siblings' differential treatment in Mexican-Origin families. *Journal of Family Psychology*. 2011; 25:251–260. [PubMed: 21480704]
- Szapocznik J, Kurtines WM. Family psychology and cultural diversity: Opportunities for theory, research, and application. *American Psychologist*. 1993; 48:400.
- Telzer EH. Expanding the acculturation-gap distress model: An integrative review of research. *Human Development*. 2010; 53:313–340. doi: 10.1159/000322476.
- Toomey RB, Updegraff KA, Umaña-Taylor AJ, Jahromi LB. Gender role attitudes across the transition to adolescent motherhood: A dyadic investigation of teenage mothers and their mother figures. *this issue*.
- Umaña-Taylor AJ. Research with Latino early adolescents: Strengths, challenges, and directions for future research. *The Journal of Early Adolescence*. 2009; 29:5–15. doi: 10.1177/0272431608324481.
- Umaña-Taylor AJ, Quintana SM, Lee RM, Cross WE, Rivas-Drake D, Schwartz SJ, Syed M, Yip T, Seaton E, Study Group on Ethnic and Racial Identity in the 21st Century. Ethnic and Racial Identity Revisited: An Integrated Conceptualization. *Child Development*. 2014; 85:21–39. [PubMed: 24490890]
- Umaña-Taylor, AJ.; Updegraff, KA. Latino families in the United States.. In: Peterson, GW.; Bush, KR., editors. *Handbook of marriage and family*. 3rd ed.. Springer; New York, NY: 2012. p. 723-747.
- Umaña-Taylor AJ, Zeiders KH, Updegraff KA. Family ethnic socialization and ethnic identity: A family-driven, youth-driven, or reciprocal process? *Journal of Family Psychology*. 2013; 27:137–146. doi: 10.1037/a0031105. [PubMed: 23421841]
- Updegraff, KA.; McHale, SM.; Killoren, SE.; Rodríguez, SA. Cultural variations in sibling relationships.. In: Caspi, J., editor. *Siblings Development: Implications for Mental Health Practitioners*. Springer Publishing; New York, NY: 2010. p. 83-105.
- Updegraff KA, McHale SM, Whiteman SD, Thayer SM, Crouter AC. The Nature and Correlates of Mexican American Adolescents' Time with Parents and Peers. *Child Development (Special Issue on Race, Ethnicity, and Culture)*. 2006; 77:1470–1486.
- Updegraff KA, McHale SM, Whiteman SD, Thayer SM, Delgado MY. Adolescents' sibling relationships in Mexican American families: Exploring the role of familism. *Journal of Family Psychology*. 2005; 19:512–522. doi: 10.1037/0893-3200.19.4.512. [PubMed: 16402866]
- Updegraff, KA.; Umaña-Taylor, A. Structure and process in Mexican-origin families and their implications for youth development.. In: Lansdale, N.; McHale, SM.; Booth, A., editors. *Growing up Hispanic: Health and development of children of immigrants*. Urban Institute; Washington, DC: 2010. p. 97-144.
- U.S. Census Bureau. [September 30, 2014] Hispanic Heritage Month 2014. U. S. Census Bureau News. Sep. 2014 from <https://www.census.gov/newsroom/facts-for-features/2014/cb14-ff22.html#>
- U.S. Census. [4/26/14] The Hispanic Population: 2010. 2011. from www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefs/c2010br-04.pdf

- Valentine S, Mosley G. Acculturation and sex-role attitudes among Mexican Americans: A longitudinal analysis. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences*. 2000; 22:104–113. doi: 10.1177/0739986300221006.
- Valenzuela A Jr. Gender roles and settlement activities among children and their immigrant families. *American Behavioral Scientist*. 1999; 42:720–742. doi: 10.1177/0002764299042004009.
- Van Egeren LA, Hawkins DP. Coming to terms with coparenting: Implications of definition and measurement. *Journal of Adult Development*. 2004; 11:165–178.
- White RMB, Roosa MW, Weaver SR, McNair RL. Cultural and contextual influences on parenting in Mexican American families. *Journal of Marriage and Family*. 2009; 71:61–79. doi: 10.1111/j.1741-3737.2008.00580.x. [PubMed: 20126298]
- Zahn-Waxler C, Shirtcliff EA, Marceau K. Disorders of childhood and adolescence: Gender and psychopathology. *Annual Review of Clinical Psychology*. 2008; 4:275–303. doi:10.1146/annurev.clinpsy.3.022806.09135.