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Financial Strain, Major Family Life Events, and Parental Academic Involvement during Adolescence

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Abstract

Author Contributions
DECT participated in the design, performed the statistical analysis and interpretation of the data, as well as helped draft the manuscript. CGI participated in the design and coordination of the study and helped revise the manuscript. NAG conceived of the study, participated in its design and coordination, and helped revise the manuscript. AJF conceived of the study, and participated in its design and coordination, interpretation of the data and helped draft the manuscript. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Conflicts of Interest
Author Daisy E. Camacho-Thompson declares that she has no conflict of interest. Author Cari Gillen-O'Neel declares that she has no conflict of interest. Author Nancy A. Gonzales declares that she has no conflict of interest. Author Andrew J. Fuligni declares that he has no conflict of interest.

Compliance with Ethical Standards
All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and/or national research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards.

Ethical Approval
The study complied with APA ethical standards in the treatment of our human sample.

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Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

Parental academic involvement—whether through school participation and communication, or supervision and assistance at home—often has been cited as a way to enhance academic achievement. Yet, little is known about how the financial and life pressures faced by families can compromise parents' ability to become involved in their adolescents' education. In the current study, these dynamics were examined among Mexican-origin families, who often may face challenging financial and familial circumstances, and whose students may have more difficulty in secondary school. Parents of Mexican-origin ninth and tenth grade students from two high schools in Los Angeles (N = 428; 49% female) completed quantitative interviews. The results revealed that financial strain predicted less involvement at school, and major family life events predicted less involvement at home, even after controlling for potentially confounding factors. Moreover, both of the associations between parental stress and parental academic involvement were mediated by lower levels of relationship quality between parents and adolescents, but not by conflict within the parent-adolescent dyad or parental depressive and somatic symptoms. The findings suggest that stress may limit parents' ability to become involved their adolescents' education, and highlight the importance of understanding family dynamics when examining parental academic involvement among Mexican-origin families.

Introduction

Examining parental involvement among Latino populations is an imperative, as this group is a quickly growing subsection of the American population that unfortunately lags behind other ethnic groups in high school completion (Grieco et al., 2012). Parental involvement in education—at home and at school—has been shown to be an important component of academic success (Hill & Tyson, 2009), even among middle and high school aged adolescents (Jeynes, 2007; Kuperminc, Darnell, & Alvarez-Jimenez, 2008). Students whose parents are involved academically show higher academic values, grade point averages, standardized test scores, and enrollment in college-preparatory tracks and programs (Altschul, 2012). Few studies, however, have examined the role of contextually embedded family processes in the academic development of Latino adolescents (Hill & Torres, 2010). Studies have focused mostly on demographic predictors of parental involvement (e.g., parental education, income, generational status), to the neglect of how additional factors, such as financial and familial stress, may interfere with involvement (Altschul, 2012; Hill & Torres, 2010).

Family Stress and Parental Involvement

A salient contextual marker of Latino parents is the stress that they face (Gonzales et al., 2011), such as poverty and low-levels of education (Morales, Lara, Kington, Valdez, & Escarce, 2002; Grieco et al., 2012). Although little is known about the role of parental stress as it relates to their academic involvement, the family stress model offers a perspective that could be useful (Gutman & Eccles, 1999; McLoyd, 1990). This model postulates that the association between stress and adolescent outcomes is mediated by family functioning (Conger, Ge, Elder, Lorenz, & Simons, 1994). That is, low socioeconomic status has been associated with developmental risks, and the family stress model posits that the reason for this association is that financial strain disrupts parenting (Conger et al., 1994). In this case,

parental stress might limit the academic involvement that parents are able to provide, and this might be explained by family functioning.

Socioeconomic status has been found to be associated with parental involvement (Cooper, Lindsay, & Nye, 2000; Kelly, 2004; Melby & Conger, 1996), so it is likely that the stress linked with financial difficulties may be associated with lower levels of parental involvement. In addition to the chronic stress of financial strain, acute stressors such as major life events may play a role in family functioning by impacting daily life activities (Compas, 1987), such as the ability of a parent to be academically involved in the life of their adolescent. Given the importance of family in the lives of these parents (Stein et al., 2014), Latino populations may provide an ideal context to study the role of family stress as a predictor to academic involvement (Parke, et al., 2004). Therefore, our study will first examine whether financial strain and major family life events are associated with lower levels of parental academic involvement at home and at school.

Parental Involvement Practices

It is important to examine parental involvement, both at school and at home, since both are associated with achievement (Hill & Tyson, 2009). Research shows that Latino parents are perceived as under-involved by teachers (DePlanty, Coulter-Kern, & Duchane 2007; Ramírez, 2003), but some studies find that parental involvement is comparable across ethnic groups (Fan, 2001). Despite this, researchers consistently find that Latino parents value the academic success of their adolescents (Durand & Perez, 2013; Valencia, 2002), with some studies finding that this is even more pronounced in Latino families than in European American families (Ryan, Casas, Kelly-Vance, Ryalls, & Nero, 2010). Differences in these findings might be attributable to individual or contextual differences. Unfortunately, studies have focused mostly on demographic predictors of parental involvement (e.g., parental education, income, generational status) (Altschul, 2012; Ceballo, Maurizi, Suárez, & Aretakis, 2013; Hill & Torres, 2010) without taking into account the context of the family.

School involvement—School-based involvement has been defined as attending school programs, such as PTA meetings, open houses, volunteering at school, attending extracurricular activities, and communicating with parents and school personnel (Hill & Tyson, 2009; Keith & Lichtman, 1994). This type of parental behavior has been linked with academic achievement (Kuperminc et al., 2008; LeFevre & Shaw, 2012; Shumow & Miller, 2001) as well as motivation, self-efficacy, and engagement (Gonzalez-DeHass, Willems, & Holbein, 2005). However, parents with multiple child-care or extended family responsibilities may be less involved in school-based activities (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005). That is, parents under financial or familial stressors may have more of a limited ability to be involved at school.

Home involvement—Home-based academic involvement is typically measured as talking with children about school, helping them with schoolwork, and taking children to educational places such as museums and libraries (Hill & Tyson, 2009). This type of involvement also has been defined as creating an environment in the home that fosters learning such as providing books, newspapers, educational toys, and educational materials

(Eamon, 2004; Hill & Tyson, 2009). For young Mexican-origin adolescent girls, increased communication about their grades with their mothers was linked with higher math grades and intrinsic motivation for math and reading (Mireles-Rios & Romo, 2010). With the exception of academic pressure from fathers and help with homework, most involvement at home has been linked with academic achievement (Cooper et al., 2000; Hill & Tyson, 2009; Rogers, Theule, Ryan, Adams, & Keating, 2009).

Research has found that Latinos participate less at school and more at home than European American parents (Mau, 1997). Still, predictors of parental participation are unclear. Therefore, this study will examine how financial or familial stressors may limit parents' ability to be involved in the academics of their adolescents, both at school and at home.

Parental Depressive and Somatic Symptoms, and Family Relationships as Potential Mediators

Latinos, generally, have higher levels of family stress (e.g., poverty and mental health) (Gonzales et al., 2011), and extending the family stress model to parental involvement could be an important way to understand barriers to parental involvement in this population. Studies employing the family stress model typically find that parental depressive or somatic symptoms, and parent-adolescent relationships are significant mediators between stress and an adverse outcome. For example, a study with African American families found that parental financial strain was associated with parenting behavior (i.e., low-nurturing involvement), and this was mediated by parental depressed moods (Conger et al., 2002). In this case, parental depressive and somatic symptoms and family relationships could help explain the link between parental stressors and their academic involvement.

Parental depressive and somatic symptoms—Depressive symptoms have been linked with lower levels of academic involvement for parents of first grade students (Kohl, Lengua, & McMahon, 2000; LaForett & Mendez, 2010; Valdez, Shewakramani, Goldberg, & Padilla, 2013) and middle school students (Gutman & Eccles, 1999). The role of parental depressive and somatic symptoms and their association with parental academic involvement with high school adolescents, however, is unclear. Parental depressive and somatic symptoms could help explain the association between parental stress and their academic involvement. Previous research has found that parental depressive symptoms are associated with their parenting behaviors (Conger et al., 2002). In this case, the stress that parents face could limit the positive behaviors they are able to engage in with adolescents—such as school and home involvement—and this may be explained by their depressive and somatic symptoms. Therefore, in this study we tested the mediating role of depressive and somatic symptoms.

Family relationships—Although, to our knowledge, previous research has not applied the family stress model to the study of parental involvement, this model provides a useful perspective. The family stress model suggests that family relationships are an important mediator of the effects of financial strain (Conger et al., 1994), suggesting that family relationships could help explain the link between stress and parental academic involvement. It could be that the stress that parents encounter, as the family stress model would posit, may

disrupt family relationships—which could explain lower levels of parental involvement. That is, if parents face high levels of stress, this may decrease the parent-adolescent relationship quality and increase conflict between the dyad (Benner & Kim, 2010; Conger & Conger, 2002; Gonzales, et al., 2011). This strain in family relationships, in turn, may limit parental academic involvement.

Current Study

Research has extensively documented the benefits of parental academic involvement for Latino youth (Hill & Tyson, 2009; Jeynes, 2007; Kuperminc, et al., 2008). However, subjective predictors of parental involvement beyond demographics (Altschul, 2012; Ceballo, et al., 2013; Morales, et al., 2002) are less clear. Given the systemic realities that Latino families face (Gonzales et al., 2011), we first sought to understand how financial and familial factors might impinge on parenting practices. Specifically we asked whether financial strain and acute family stressors, or major family life events, predict parental academic involvement at home and at school. Given previous research with other ethnic groups, we hypothesized that financial strain would be associated with lower levels of academic involvement at school and at home (Gutman & Eccles, 1999). Furthermore, given the salient role of families in this population (Stein et al., 2004), we hypothesized that stress in the family would also be associated with lower levels of parental academic involvement in the school and the home.

Finally, in an in an effort to expand upon current research to understand parental involvement within contextual factors (Hill & Torres, 2010), a secondary goal of this study was to examine the role of family dynamics in this association. To frame this question, we drew from the family stress model (Conger et al., 2002), and hypothesized that family functioning would mediate the link between parental stress and lower levels of parental academic involvement. We operationalized family functioning as parental depressive and somatic symptoms and family relationships (i.e., parent-adolescent relationship quality and parent-adolescent conflict). Given previous research with parents of younger Latino students showing that parental depressive and somatic symptoms were associated with lower levels of parental involvement (Kohl, Lengua & McMahon, 2000; LaForett & Mendez, 2010; Valdez, Shewakramani, Goldberg, & Padilla, 2013), we hypothesized that parental depressive and somatic symptoms would help explain the association between parental stress and their academic involvement. Additionally, financial strain has been found to be associated with both positive and negative family relationship factors, such as parental warmth and hostile parenting (Benner & Kim, 2010; Conger & Conger, 2002; Gonzales, et al., 2011). Therefore, we hypothesized that both positive (i.e., parent-adolescent relationship quality) and negative (i.e., parent-adolescent conflict) aspects of family relationships would be significant mediators in the link between parental stress and their academic involvement.

Method

Sample and Procedure

A total of 428 parents of ninth (49%) and tenth grade students (49% female; M_{age} = 15.02, SD = .83, age range: 13-18 years) from two high schools in Los Angeles participated in our

study. The schools were predominantly Latino (93.9% and 62.4%) with high levels of students receiving free or reduced lunch (70.8% and 73.2%). The parents (M_{age} = 41.93, SD = 6.75) consisted primarily of mothers (83.3%), with the remainder being fathers (13.5%) and grandparents, aunts, or uncles (2.9%). Most parents were born in Mexico (77.1%), with smaller proportions born in the U.S. (17.5%) and other countries (5.4%). The average age of migration for parents was 20.20 years (SD = 8.80, age range 0 – 55 years). The majority of parents (82.5%) were first generation (i.e. both they and their parents were born in Mexico), 11.2% were second generation (i.e. they were born in the US, and at least one of their parents was born in Mexico), and the remaining 6.3% were third generation or more (i.e. them and both of their parents were born in the US).

Parents reported, on a scale where 1 = “Some Elementary School,” 2 = “Completed Elementary School,” 3 = “Some Junior High School,” 4 = “Completed Junior High School,” 5 = “Some High School,” 6 = “Graduated from High School,” 7 = “Trade or Vocational School,” 8 = “Some College,” 9 = “Graduated from College,” 10 = “Some Medical, Law or Graduate school,” and 11 = “Graduated from Medical, Law or Graduate school,” their current level of education ($M_{first\ generation}$ = 4.07, SD = 2.46; $M_{second\ generation}$ = 6.45, SD = 1.90; $M_{third\ generation}$ = 6.05, SD = 2.17). Parents also reported their income ($M_{first\ generation}$ = $ 35,440.68, SD = 28,345.61; $M_{second\ generation}$ = $51,544.44, SD = 30,033.28; $M_{third\ generation}$ = $ 50,081.92, SD = 32,154.95; range = $0-$270,000).

The families were recruited throughout the academic year using class presentations, home mailings, and phone calls to parents. Approximately 60% of the families were reached by phone. Of those reached, 63% (N=428) were determined to be eligible by having a Mexican background, regardless of current immigrant status, and were willing to participate in the study. Interviewers collected data at families’ homes using a computer-aided personal interview. Interviews and questionnaires were completed in Spanish (87%) and English, and took approximately 45-60 minutes to complete.

Measures

School involvement—Parents reported involvement at school by responding to four items (i.e., “You talk to your child’s teachers at school,” “You go to school functions (e.g., Back-to-School Night, parent-teacher conferences),” “You go to activities in which your child is involved in school,” and “You do volunteer work at your child’s school,” 1 = almost never, 5 = almost always; α= .70; adapted from Jeynes, 2007). All items were averaged, and validity of the scale was demonstrated by its correlation with adolescents’ grade point average acquired from school records (r = .14, p = .009).

Home involvement—Parents reported their level of academic involvement at home by responding to eight items (e.g., “You know your child’s grades” or “You talk to your child about their plans for after high school,” “You talk to your child about planning his/her high school classes,” or “You make sure that your child has done his/her homework,” 1 = almost never, 5 = almost always; α= .87; adapted from Jeynes, 2007). The items were averaged, and the composite score was significantly associated with adolescents’ grade point average (r = .18, p < .001).

Financial strain—Parents rated their family's level of financial hardship using a nine-item measure (e.g., "Think again over the past three months. Generally, at the end of each month did you end up…" 1 = with more than enough money left over, 4 = very short of money, α=. 90; Conger et al., 2002).

Major family life events—Parents indicated acute stressors in their family by responding to six items (e,g,. "A family member died" or "You moved far away from family or friends," 1 = Yes, 0 = No; Holmes & Rahe, 1967). Items were summed for a score of major family life events.

Depressive symptoms—Using the Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale, parents reported on 20 depressive symptoms in the past week (e.g., "You felt lonely," or "You felt sad," 1 = rarely or none of the time, 4 = most or all of the time; α=.87; Radloff, 1977).

Somatic symptoms—Parents reported on 12 physical complaints in the past two weeks (e.g., "Headaches," "Dizziness," or "Poor appetite," 1 = not at all to 4 = almost every day; α=.83; adapted from Resnick et al.,1997; Udry & Bearman 1998).

Parent-adolescent relationship quality—Parents reported how much they understood and supported their adolescent with nine items (e.g., "You helped your child talk about his/her difficulties" or "Your child trusted you," 1 = almost never to 5 = almost always; α=. 82; Armsden & Greenberg, 1987).

Parent-adolescent conflict—Parents also reported how much conflict they had with their adolescent by responding to 10 items (e.g., "You and your child got into a serious argument or fight" or "You and your child ignored each other," 1 = almost never to 5 = almost always; α=.87; Ruiz, Gonzales, & Formoso, 1998).

Results

The maximum likelihood with missing values (MLMV) function in STATA was employed to estimate the values for the regression and mediation models. Given the number of variables in the models, listwise deletion would have only used about 86% of the total sample. Therefore, in order to utilize all available observations and acquire unbiased estimates in the presence of missing data, models were estimated using MLMV.

Every model controlled for parental generational status and education, total household income, and adolescent school, grade, and gender. First, we tested the association between parental stress and parental involvement. Then, we assessed the mediating role of parental depressive and somatic symptoms in any observed association between stress and parental involvement. Finally, we also tested the mediating role of family relationships (i.e., parent-adolescent relationship quality and parent-adolescent conflict) in any association between stress and parental involvement.

Table 1 shows descriptive statistics for the key variables. Parents generally reported higher levels of home academic involvement relative to school involvement, $t(427) = 30.25$, $p <$.

001. They also reported generally higher levels of support and lower levels of conflict, $t(427) = 42.48$, $p < .001$. Measures of stress were correlated negatively both with school and home academic involvement. Parental support was positively correlated with academic involvement and negatively associated with stress measures.

Family Stress and Parental Involvement

First, we tested the association between parental stress and parental involvement. As shown in Model 1 of Table 2, parental stressors were linked with lower levels of academic involvement at home and at school. With both stressors in the model, financial strain was negatively associated with school involvement, but major family life events were linked with lower levels of academic involvement at home. Again, these associations controlled for parental generational status and education, total household income, adolescent school, grade, and gender.

Parental Depressive and Somatic Symptoms, and Family Relationships as Mediators

Next, we tested the mediating role of parental depressive and somatic symptoms in the link between parental stress and their academic involvement. Model 2 of Table 2 shows that parental reports of depressive symptoms and somatic symptoms were not significant predictors of school and home involvement, therefore they were not expected to be statistically significant mediators of the initial association of parental stress with academic involvement. Bootstrapping in STATA, using 10,000 iterations confirmed this, both in the link between financial strain and school academic involvement (indirect $\text{effect}_{\text{depressive symptoms}} = .000$, 95% $CI = [-.050, .050.]$; indirect $\text{effect}_{\text{somatic symptoms}} = -.003$, 95% $CI = [-.027, .017]$), and in the link between major family life events and home academic involvement (indirect $\text{effect}_{\text{depressive symptoms}} = -.008$, 95% $CI = [-.028, .438]$; indirect $\text{effect}_{\text{somatic symptoms}} = -.005$, 95% $CI = [-.025, .011.]$).

We also examined whether family relationships accounted for the association between parental stress and their academic involvement. Model 3 in Table 2 shows that parental reports of the relationship quality between them and their adolescents, but not conflict between the dyad, were a significant predictor of both school and home involvement. Bootstrapping in STATA, using 10,000 iterations, confirmed the mediating role of parent-adolescent relationship quality in the association between financial strain and school involvement (indirect effect = -.060, 95% $CI = [-.101, -.024.]$) and the association between major family life events and home involvement (indirect effect = -.081, 95% $CI = [-.134, -.034]$). Conflict between parents and adolescents was not a significant mediator for the link between financial strain and school involvement (indirect $\text{effect}_{\text{conflict}} = -.005$, 95% $CI = [-.009, .023]$) or the association between major family life events and home involvement (indirect $\text{effect}_{\text{conflict}} = .004$, 95% $CI = [-.008, .022.]$). That is, the link between financial strain and *school* involvement, as well as the link between major family life events and *home* involvement were explained by parental reports of the relationship quality between parents and their adolescent, over and above (a) the other stressor, (b) parental depressive and somatic symptoms and (c) parental generational status and education, total household income, and adolescent school, grade and gender.

Discussion

Latino students tend to fall behind academically (Grieco et al., 2012), and previous research has found that parental involvement predicts achievement (Altschul, 2012; Keith & Lichtman, 1994). Even though Latino parents tend to report high academic expectations (Goldenberg, Gallimore, Reese, & Garnier, 2001), stress could attenuate their involvement. This study examined whether stress was associated with lower levels of parental academic involvement, and whether this link was explained by family functioning—or parental depressive and somatic symptoms and family relationships.

We found that stressful events were, indeed, associated with lower levels of parental involvement. This was similar to studies showing that financial strain plays a role in the involvement that parents are able to provide (Altschul, 2012; Gutman & Eccles, 1999; McLoyd, 1990). Moreover, we found that different types of stress were differentially linked with parental involvement. Specifically, financial strain was negatively associated with school involvement, but major family life events were linked with lower levels of home academic involvement.

Understanding what limits involvement at school is important. A study with Latino middle and high school students found that the association between school involvement and adolescent achievement was mediated by teachers' perceptions of the student (Kuperminc et al., 2008). That is, parental involvement in school may be helpful to adolescents, because it shifts teachers' expectations of the student. Our study builds on extant research by showing that financial strain may prevent parents of high school students from participating in school functions (Gutman & Eccles, 1999; McLoyd, 1990), which seems to be especially beneficial for high school students (Kuperminc et al., 2008). Our findings may serve to inform perceptions of academic personnel regarding Latino parents by contextualizing their academic involvement within financial and familial stressors.

Major family life events seem to function differently, by predicting less academic involvement at home. Acute stressors may impact parents' daily lives (Compas, 1987), which may limit their time or energy for academic involvement in the home. Our study found that when Latino families faced acute stressors with regard to their family—such as moving away from family and friends, or experiencing a death in the family—parents were less able to provide academic involvement in the home. Participating in academic activities entails that parents invest time and patience (Gutman & Eccles, 1999; McLoyd, 1990), and acute family stressors may deplete these in the home—thus limiting parental involvement in that setting. This is important because some research has found that Latino parents participate at home more than they do at school (Mau, 1997), which may be even more important for academics (Hill & Tyson, 2009).

We then sought to examine whether parental depressive and somatic symptoms helped to explain the link between familial stress and parental academic involvement. Studies with parents of younger children found that parental depressive and somatic symptoms were linked with lower levels of academic involvement at school and at home (Denollet, Smolderen, Broeck, & Pedersen, 2007; Kohl, et al., 2000; LaForett & Mendez, 2010;

Valdez, et al., 2013). Our study, however, found that neither parental depressive nor somatic symptoms explained the negative link between parental stress and their academic involvement. It is unclear why our study did not find a similar pattern, but our findings suggest that relationship quality between parents and their adolescents may play a more significant role than parental depressive and somatic symptoms during the years of adolescence.

We also sought to examine the mediating role of family relationships in the association between stress and parental involvement. We found support for the family stress model, which posits that family functioning helps explain the link between stress and adverse outcomes (Conger et al., 1994). Specifically, parental reports of the relationship quality between them and their adolescents mediated the link between parental stress and their own academic involvement both at school and at home. These findings suggest that parental academic involvement may be a function of familial ties and meaningful social connections with their adolescents. Adams and Christenson (2000) found that trust between teachers and parents decreased across development—with more trust being reported in elementary school than high school. Perhaps by the time students are in high school, trust shifts to the adolescent. Thus, if stressors limit the relationship quality that parents are able to foster between them and their adolescents, this could, in turn, affect their academic involvement. Additionally, research with Mexican-origin families also finds that adolescents tend to respond to the daily needs of their parents (Tsai, Telzer, Gonzales, & Fuligni, 2013). It could also be that a supportive relationship between parents and adolescents ameliorates the effects of stress for parents, allowing them to continue being involved in the academics of their adolescents.

It is important to note, that it was support, and not conflict, that helped explain the link between parental stress and their academic involvement. Other studies have found similar patterns. For example, among Mexican-American adolescents, the link between financial strain and adolescent externalizing symptoms was explained by maternal and paternal warmth, but not harsh parenting (Gonzales, et al., 2011). In another study, resilience in the midst of financial strain was predicted by support from parents, siblings and other adults—but conflict in the family was linked with adolescent internalizing (Conger et al., 1994).

These results should be interpreted with caution, due to the cross-sectional nature of this study. Family stress may reduce positive parenting in a general fashion, rather than setting into motion the mediational model we proposed and tested. This generalized decrease in positive parenting, in turn, may be what is driving lower levels of the relationship quality between parents and adolescents, as well as parents to be less involved in the academic context of their adolescents. Future research employing qualitative and longitudinal data should examine the specific role that Latino adolescents play in the academic involvement of their parents. Obtaining these reports from adolescents would further strengthen those analyses. Furthermore, examining these factors longitudinally would allow us to differentiate between short-term and long-term stressors. For example, would family processes change after many years of stressors (e.g., a new disability in the family)—or even many years of resources (e.g., a former single-parent home gains a caring step-parent)? It is also important to examine immigrant parental awareness and comfort with navigating American school

systems across development. The discomfort that parents report feeling when becoming involved in school (Martinez, DeGarmo, & Eddy, 2004; Monzó, 2013; Ramírez, 2003) may exacerbate as the education system shifts to high school, when there is less contact with teachers (Adams & Christenson, 2000) and course content becomes more difficult (Nield, 2009).

To our knowledge, this is the first study to find that specific stressors are differentially associated with parental involvement at school and home. Additionally, our study may be the first to examine the parent-adolescent relationship quality as a mediator between this stress and academic involvement. Other studies should examine this model with other ethnic groups. It could be that the mediating role of the relationship quality between parents and adolescents is salient with Mexican-origin families, due to the important role of family and family cohesion in this population (Parke, et al., 2004; Stein et al., 2014). Conceivably, the relationship quality between parents and adolescents would still be a mediator in other groups, but may be more salient for families that value family cohesion (Telzer, Gonzales, Fuligni, 2013).

The findings from this study show that financial and familial stressors limit Latino parental involvement at school and at home. Supporting families under stress may prove useful for the achievement of their adolescents (Hill & Tyson, 2009; Jeynes, 2007; Kuperminc, et al., 2008), if it means that parents are more able to be involved in the academics of their adolescents. Additionally, although challenging, finding ways to help parents foster higher relationship quality between them and their adolescents may provide a familial context where parents can continue being involved despite contextual stressors.

Conclusion

Our study found that parental stress was associated with lower levels of involvement at home and at school. Interestingly, there was a distinction between the type of stressor and the type of involvement it seemed to limit. Financial strain was associated with lower levels of involvement at school, and acute family stressors, or major family life events, were associated with less academic involvement at home. Moreover, we found that the quality of the relationship between parents and adolescents— but not conflict with their teenager, or their own depressive and somatic symptoms — explained both of these associations. That is, our results suggest that the reason that stress is associated with lower levels of involvement is because stress may limit the positive relationship quality between parents and adolescents. Thus, understanding parental involvement within the context of family dynamics may better inform predictors to the efforts that parents employ—in the form of school and home academic involvement—to fulfill the high academic aspirations that they report for their adolescents.

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Table 1

Key Variable Correlations

	Mean	(SD)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. School Involvement	2.92	(.92)							
2. Home Involvement	4.10	(.75)	.55***						
3. Financial Strain	2.76	(.71)	-.21***	-.13**					
4. Major Family Life Events	.67	(.87)	-.10*	-.13**	.06				
5. Depressive Symptoms	1.69	(.53)	-.15**	-.11*	.32***	.29***			
6. Somatic Symptoms	1.57	(.52)	-.10*	-.09	.15***	.17***	.59***		
7. Parent-Adolescent Relationship Quality	4.18	(.71)	.35***	.51***	-.16***	-.14**	-.19***	-.14**	
8. Parent-Adolescent Conflict	1.95	(.74)	-.04	-.09†	-.11*	.12**	.22***	.18***	-.14**

Note.

† p < .10,

* $p < .05$.,

** $p < .01$.,

*** $p < .001$

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Table 2

Stress Predicting Parent Involvement at Home and at School, Mediated by Parental Depressive and Somatic Symptoms and Family Relationships

	School Involvement					
	Model 1		**Model 2**		**Model 3**	
	b	**(*SE*)**	***b***	**(*SE*)**	***b***	**(*SE*)**
Financial Strain	-.15*	.07	-.13†	.08	-.11	.07
Major Family Life Events	-.10*	.05	-.08	.05	-.05	.05
Parent Depressive Symptoms			-.06	.11	.00	.11
Parent Somatic Symptoms			-.06	.10	.03	.10
Parent-Adolescent Relationship Quality					.38***	.06
Parent-Adolescent Conflict					-.04	.06
	Home Involvement					
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	b	(*SE*)	*b*	(*SE*)	*b*	(*SE*)
Financial Strain	-.08	.06	-.06	.06	-.03	.05
Major Family Life Events	-.11**	.04	-.10*	.04	-.05	.04
Parent Depressive Symptoms			-.04	.09	-.04	.08
Parent Somatic Symptoms			-.09	.09	-.04	.07
Parent-Adolescent Relationship Quality					.52***	.05
Parent-Adolescent Conflict					-.04	.05

Note. Regressions controlled for parent education level, family income, parent generational status, adolescent gender, grade and school.

† p < .10

* *p* < .05.,

** *p* < .01.,

*** *p* < .001