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Parent-Peer Relationship Patterns among Mexican-Origin Adolescents

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Abstract

This study examined patterns of mothers' and fathers' acceptance and youths' friendship intimacy among 246 Mexican-origin 7th graders. Three patterns were identified using mixture modeling: (a) low mother and father acceptance, and average friendship intimacy (Low Parent Profile); (b) average mother acceptance, high father acceptance and friendship intimacy (Positive Profile); and (c) high mother acceptance, average father acceptance, and low friendship intimacy (Low Friend Profile). Profiles differed with respect to cultural characteristics and youth adjustment. Findings demonstrated the benefit of a person-oriented approach to illuminate how parental and peer experiences are connected in different ways for different youth and are linked with youth adjustment. Results highlighted the need for research to attend to the unique cultural experiences of minority youth.

Keywords

Mexican-origin youth; parent-peer relationships; culture; youth adjustment

The importance of youths' relationships with parents and peers during early adolescence has been established (Nickerson & Nagle, 2005; Youniss & Smollar, 1985). Young adolescents re-negotiate their family relationships and roles, but they continue to rely on their families for support. Simultaneously, youth spend increasing amounts of time with peers, and peers become more influential (Buhrmester, 1990). Although parent and peer relationships are changing, most often these relationships are studied separately. Few studies have examined the ways in which relationships with parents are linked to relationships with peers during early adolescence (Kan & McHale, 2007; Isley, O'Neil, Clatfelter, & Parke, 1999; Lieberman, Doyle, & Markiewicz, 1999).

Our first goal was to use a person-oriented approach (Bergman & Magnusson, 1997) to identify different patterns of Mexican-origin adolescents' relationships with mothers, fathers, and friends. Mexican-origin youth are a growing, but understudied, segment of the U.S. population (Umana-Taylor, 2009), and little information is available about the associations between their parent and peer relationships. Our second goal was to test the cultural correlates of different relationship patterns, drawing on cultural ecological models

of development (García Coll et al., 1996). Specifically, we examined the connections between parent-peer relationship patterns and youths' and their mothers' and fathers' cultural orientations and familism values. Our third goal was to explore the associations between parent-peer relationship patterns and youths' adjustment. In short, our study aimed to examine the within-ethnic group variability in parent and peer experiences among Mexican-origin youth, and the differences in cultural orientations, familism values, and youth adjustment that characterized parent-peer relationship patterns.

Patterns of Parent-Peer Relationships in Early Adolescence

Links between youths' experiences with parents and with peers involve reciprocal influence processes from each relational domain, as well as youths' own active role in these processes (Parke & Buriel, 2006). The assumption underlying a person-oriented approach to the study of youths' parent and peer relationships is that these relationships may be connected in *different* ways for *different* youth (Bergman & Magnusson, 1997). Research reveals different patterns of parent-peer relationships among European American youth (e.g., Kan & McHale, 2007; Parke & Buriel, 1998; Parke & O'Neil, 1999), but little is known about parent-peer relationship patterns among ethnic minority youth. We draw on several different conceptual frameworks to propose potentially different patterns of parent-peer relationships that may emerge among Mexican-origin young adolescents. First, social learning models direct our attention to the possibility of congruent patterns or similarities between youths' experiences with parents and with peers. Congruent parent and peer relationships could indicate youths' positive, *consensual* relationships with both parents and peers, or youths' problematic relationships with these social partners. Specifically, consensual, congruent parent-peer relationship patterns have been identified, such that high parental acceptance and emotional closeness are linked to more positive peer relationships (Updegraff, Madden-Derdich, Estrada, Sales, & Leonard, 2002; Kan & McHale, 2007). From a social learning perspective, youth who learn positive, effective ways of socially interacting in the context of their parental relationships may generalize these skills to relationships with peers (Isley et al., 1999). In contrast, youth who learn negative, ineffective social interaction strategies with parents may generalize these poor skills to peer relationships, which would indicate congruent associations such that problematic interactions are apparent in relationships with parents and peers. That is, due to the failure to develop relational skills, youth have distant relationships (i.e., low acceptance and closeness) with parents and with peers.

Second, an incongruent or compensatory pattern may emerge for some youth who actively turn to peers to avoid negative relationships with adults. According to the context-choice explanation (Kerr, Stattin, Biesecker, & Ferrer-Wreder, 2003), which builds on Hirschi's (1969) social bond theory, youth derive a clear sense of how much they are valued and respected, and the extent to which they are in control of what happens to them through family interactions. Through this lens, parents may unintentionally affect youths' leisure choices by influencing the way youth feel about adult-led, structured contexts and, thereby, influencing their decision about whether or not to spend time in such contexts. Negative experiences with parents could define children's perceptions of having adults present and in control, and these negative emotions might generalize to adult-controlled contexts outside of the home (e.g., after-school programs, organized sports). As children enter adolescence and have more control over their leisure environments, they may lean heavily toward peer-oriented, unstructured contexts as opposed to adult-led, structured contexts. For some youth who choose to spend more time in unstructured, peer contexts, rather than in adult-led, structured contexts, it may not be the case that they have poor quality peer relationships as social learning models would lead us to expect. Instead, in associating with peers who have similarly negative feelings about authority and adult contact, youth may develop close, intimate bonds with peers in those unstructured contexts. Kerr et al.'s (2003) context-choice

theory underscores youths' agency, and gives reason to expect that a compensatory pattern, such that youth actively turn to peers in order to avoid adults with whom they have poor relationships, may emerge.

Some support is found for another incongruent, compensatory pattern, with youth describing closer relationships with their parents than with their peers (see Cooper & Cooper, 1992; Nada Raja, McGee, & Stanton, 1992). Underlying this compensatory pattern is the idea that youth who lack certain social experiences in one relationship (e.g., emotional closeness) will pursue those experiences in another relationship (e.g., East & Rook, 1992). Kan and McHale (2007)'s typology of maternal and paternal acceptance and peer competence among European American youth, for example, revealed evidence in support of a compensatory pattern, such that, one group of youth described a pattern of high mother acceptance and moderate father acceptance in combination with low peer competence. The authors suggested that these youth may have compensated for poorer relationships with peers by turning to their mothers. Among Mexican-origin youth, an incongruent pattern reflected by stronger ties to parents than to peers may be consistent with the cultural emphasis on family support and interdependence (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). Parents of these young adolescents may limit opportunities for the development of close, non-familial friendships because family relationships are high priority and non-kin peer experiences are not (Chen & French, 2008; Parke & Buriel, 2006). Thus, given that immigrant parents have expressed concerns about negative peer influences and the values held by their children's friends (Portes, Fernández-Kelly, & Haller, 2005), a pattern of high mother and father acceptance and low friendship intimacy may characterize some Mexican-origin youth.

In short, theory and research suggests that links between youths' relationships with parents and peers are not characterized by a single pattern, but that parent-peer relationship patterns operate differently for different youth. Most prior work, however, has focused on European American youth (e.g., Kan & McHale, 2007), and we do not know what patterns characterize the parent-peer relationships of ethnic minority youth or how such patterns are linked to cultural orientations and values or to youth adjustment. We anticipated that both congruent (i.e., similar experiences with parents and peers) and incongruent patterns (i.e., closer relationships with parents as compared to friends or closer relationships with friends as compared to parents) may emerge in Mexican-origin adolescents' relationships with mothers, fathers, and friends.

The Role of Culture in Parent-Peer Relationship Patterns

The second goal of this study was to examine cultural correlates of parent-peer relationship patterns. Cultural ecological models of development (García Coll et al., 1996; Phillips Swanson et al., 2003; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001) describe culture as at the core of youth development: culture is complex and multi-faceted, and includes both values and practices. These models emphasize the within-ethnic group variability of youth development (McLoyd, 1998). For example, many Mexican-origin youth are developing in Anglo-oriented school and peer contexts, as well as in family contexts where parents embrace Mexican cultural values and practices to varying degrees. Understanding positive functioning in minority children requires consideration of how youth adapt and function in both the host culture and their culture of origin (Coatsworth, Maldonado-Molina, Pantin, & Szapocznik, 2005; Sullivan et al., 2007). Selective acculturation (or biculturalism), such that individuals acquire new cultural knowledge, but retain important norms and values from their culture of origin within a supportive family and community context may benefit ethnic minority youth and their families (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). Research also suggests that youth who maintain cultural values, such as *familism*, that is, an emphasis on family loyalty, support, and interdependence, may be at an advantage (Cauce & Domenech-Rodríguez,

2002; Fuligni, 2004; Rumbaut, 2005). Strong familism values may protect youth from engaging in risky behavior with peers (Germán, Gonzales, & Dumka, 2009). Bámaca and Umaña-Taylor (2006) found, for example, that Mexican-origin youth with lower levels of emotional autonomy from parents reported being better able to resist peer pressure. Consistent with the central role of family in Mexican culture, youth with tighter family ties exhibited more positive peer behavior.

Differences in youths' and parents' cultural orientations (e.g., Mexican and Anglo cultural orientations, familism values) also may contribute to differences in patterns of youths' relationships with their parents and friends. While the empirical evidence for acculturation gaps, such that parents are low and children high on acculturation, remains inconclusive (Birman, 2006), actively turning toward peers for advice and support may be particularly risky for youth who do not share cultural orientations with their parents. With a large discrepancy in parents' and children's cultural orientations, youth may turn to peers to avoid adults when they feel that their cultural values are not respected or when they do not respect the cultural values of their parents. In contrast, when youth and parents share cultural values and practices, parents may be more accepting and inclined to guide and participate in their children's peer activities (Mounts, 2000), and youth may be more willing to choose peer contexts that reflect similar values to those held by their parents (Kerr et al., 2003). In both cases, peer involvement is not likely to constitute a risk factor. In short, parents' and youths' cultural orientations, and the differences between them, may be factors in parent-peer relationship patterns.

Parent-Peer Relationship Patterns and Adjustment among Mexican-Origin Youth

The final goal of this study was to explore whether parent-peer relationship patterns were associated with youth adjustment. Many studies have revealed links between parent and peer experiences (studied separately) and youth adjustment. Research indicates that a warm and supportive relationship with a parent serves as a protective factor and as a positive influence on youths' social and emotional development (Patterson, Cohn, & Kao, 1989). For example, Van Voorhees and colleagues (2008) found that parental warmth was a protective factor against depressive episodes in an ethnically diverse sample of adolescents. Positive experiences with peers can also promote youths' social and academic adjustment (Rubin, Bukowski, & Parker, 1998), whereas susceptibility to negative peer pressure contributes to risky behavior for European American (Bogensneider et al., 1999) and Mexican-origin youth (Cavanagh, 2007).

We expected different adjustment correlates of different parent-peer relationship patterns. Although scarce, previous research has shown that patterns of parental warmth/acceptance and friendship quality are associated with adolescent functioning, including self-worth, depressive symptoms, and risky behavior in European American youth (Kan & McHale, 2007). Some studies indicate that positive experiences in one relational context (e.g., with peers) may buffer harmful effects of negative experiences in the other context (e.g., with parents) in regard to adjustment, such as GPA, risky behavior or depressive symptoms (Laible, Carlo, & Raffaelli, 2000; Nada Raja et al., 1992), suggesting that incongruent patterns may also be associated with indicators of positive behavioral adjustment. Yet, other research shows that youth who detach from their parents and turn primarily to peers (also an incongruent pattern) demonstrate greater problem behavior and poorer academic achievement (Ary, Duncan, Duncan, & Hops, 1999; Fuligni, Eccles, Barber, & Clements, 2001; Hirschi, 1969; Persson et al., 2007). What remains unknown is how a pattern of weaker ties to peers in combination with positive experiences with parents is linked with adjustment for ethnic minority youth. Such a parent-peer pattern may be linked with positive

adjustment for some immigrant youth whose parents are concerned about negative peer influences and thus limit children's opportunities to develop close ties with peers (Chen & French, 2008; Portes et al., 2005; Updegraff et al., 2007).

Study Goals and Hypotheses

In sum, the goals of the present study were to: (a) identify patterns of Mexican-origin youth's relationships with mothers, fathers, and friends; (b) examine whether parent-peer relationship patterns were associated with youth's and parents' cultural orientations and familism values; and (c) investigate the associations between parent-peer relationship patterns and youth adjustment. Based on existing theory and literature, we expected that youth would exhibit congruent as well as incongruent patterns of mother and father acceptance and friendship intimacy. We expected that a positive, consensual, congruent pattern of high mother and father acceptance and high friendship intimacy would be associated with more bi-cultural orientations for youth. We expected youth with this pattern to report higher Anglo orientations and lower Mexican orientations than their parents, but similar familism values as their parents. We also expected this pattern to be associated with positive youth adjustment. We expected that an incongruent pattern of low mother and father acceptance and high friendship intimacy would be associated with relatively stronger Anglo orientations and weaker Mexican orientations for youth, and we expected youth with such a pattern to report higher Anglo orientation and lower Mexican orientation and familism values than their parents. We expected this pattern to be associated with poorer youth adjustment, as well. Finally, we expected to identify an incongruent pattern of high mother and father acceptance and low friendship intimacy. Given inconsistent findings in previous studies on European American and Mexican-origin youth, our investigation of the cultural orientations and adjustment associated with such a pattern was exploratory.

Method

Participants

Data were drawn from a larger study of family socialization and adolescent development in 246 Mexican-origin two parent families (Updegraff, Killoren, & Thayer, 2007). Criteria for participation included: (a) mothers were of Mexican origin; (b) youth were in seventh grade and not learning disabled; (c) at least one older sibling lived in the home; (d) biological mothers and biological or long-term (≥ 10 years) adoptive fathers lived in the home; and (e) fathers worked at least 20 hours/week. Most (93%) fathers were also of Mexican origin.

Families were recruited from schools in a southwestern city in the United States of America. Letters and brochures were sent to families of 7th graders; these letters described the study in English and Spanish and follow-up calls were made by bilingual staff to determine eligibility and interest in study participation. Families represented a range of education and income levels; 18.3% of families met the federal poverty guidelines, though annual median family income was \$40,000, and incomes ranged from \$5,000 to \$400,000. Parents had completed an average of 10 years of education: Means were 10.33 ($SD = 3.73$) and 9.88 ($SD = 4.37$) for mothers and fathers, respectively. Most parents were born outside of the U.S. (71 % of mothers and 69 % of fathers), but as a group, they had resided in the U.S. for an average of 12.4 ($SD = 8.9$) and 15.2 ($SD = 8.9$) years for mothers and fathers, respectively. About two-thirds of the interviews with mothers and fathers were conducted in Spanish. The target youth were in 7th grade and included 125 girls and 121 boys, who averaged 12.8 ($SD = .58$) years of age. Most of these youth were born in the U.S. (62%) and interviewed in English (82%). We used only the data for 7th graders and their parents given our focus on early adolescence.

Procedure

Data were collected during in-home interviews in English or Spanish and lasted an average of 3 hours for parents and 2 hours for youth. First, informed consent/assent was obtained, and then interviews were conducted individually with bilingual staff. Family members reported on their family relationships, cultural values, and psychosocial adjustment. Questions were read aloud, and interviewers entered family members' responses into laptop computers. Youth entered answers directly into the computers for sensitive questions (e.g., risky behavior).

Measures

All measures were translated into Spanish by one individual and then translated back into English by a second individual. A third native Mexican-origin translator reviewed all three documents (original English version, Spanish translation, translation back to English) and discrepancies were resolved by the research team.

Friendship quality—Youths' perceptions of friendship quality were assessed with 8 items from Blyth and Foster-Clark's (1987) Intimacy Scale. Youth were asked to report on their closest same-sex friend, who was not a member of their immediate family (i.e., sibling). A small percentage of youth (10%; $n = 25$) reported that their closest friend was a member of their extended family (i.e., cousin). Youth rated items on a 5-point scale, ranging from 1 = *not at all* to 5 = *very much* (e.g., "How much do you go to your best friend for advice?"). Items were averaged, with higher scores reflecting greater intimacy, and means were slightly above the scale midpoint, $M = 3.76$, $SD = .71$; $\alpha = .84$.

Parental acceptance—Mothers and fathers completed the short form of the parental acceptance scale of the Child's Report of Parental Behavior Inventory-Parent Version (CRPBI; Schwarz, Barton-Henry & Pruzinsky, 1985). This subscale consists of 8 items that were rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = *almost never* to 5 = *almost always*. An example item is, "I am a parent who makes my child feel better when he/she talks over his/her worries with me." Higher scores on this summed scale reflected greater parental acceptance, and means were above the scale midpoint, $M = 4.32$, $SD = .57$ for mothers; $M = 4.11$, $SD = .59$ for fathers; $\alpha = .81$ to $.82$. This scale has been shown to be reliable and valid with Latino populations in its English and Spanish version (Knight, Virdin, & Roosa, 1992).

Socio-cultural characteristics—Mothers and fathers reported their annual household incomes and education levels. A log transformation was applied to household income to correct for skewness. We created a composite SES score by standardizing and summing mothers' and fathers' education levels and household income ($\alpha = .76$). Mothers and fathers also reported years living in the US (if they were born in Mexico) and generation status for youth. Generation status was assessed on a 4-point scale: 1 = *first generation (youth born in Mexico)*; 2 = *second generation (youth born in US, parents, grandparents born in Mexico)*; 3 = *third generation (youth and parents born in US, all grandparents born in Mexico)*; and 4 = *fourth generation (youth, parent, grandparents born in US)*; $M = 2.11$; $SD = 1.09$.

Parents and youth completed the Acculturation Rating Scale for Mexican-origins – II (ARSMA-II) (Cuellar, Arnold, & Maldonado, 1995). The ARSMA– II includes Mexican and Anglo orientation subscales (e.g., "I think in English," "I think in Spanish"). Respondents used a 5-point rating scale to show how often (1 = *not at all* to 5 = *extremely often or always*) each of 30 experiences applied to them during the past year. (For Anglo orientation, $M = 3.98$, $SD = .59$ for youth; $M = 2.92$, $SD = .96$ for mothers; and $M = 2.97$, $SD = .92$ for fathers. For Mexican orientation, $M = 3.66$, $SD = .78$ for youth; $M = 4.02$, $SD = .78$ for mothers; and $M = 4.02$, $SD = .78$ for fathers).

= .70 for mothers; and $M = 3.90$, $SD = .79$ for fathers; $\alpha = .82$ to .91 for family members' reports in English and Spanish.)

Familism was reported by parents and youth using the Mexican-origin Cultural Values Scale (Knight et al., 2009). The 16-item scale tapped youths' feelings of closeness in the family, obligations to the family, and adolescents' perceptions of their family as referent. Items such as "Children should always do things to make their parents happy," were rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *almost never*, 5 = *almost always*, $M = 4.26$, $SD = .52$ for youth; $M = 4.43$, $SD = .39$ for mothers; and $M = 4.46$, $SD = .42$ for fathers; $\alpha = .76$ to .86).

Adjustment outcomes—Three domains of youth adjustment were assessed. Youths' *grade point averages (GPAs)* were computed from their self-reported grades in four subjects: English, Social Studies, Math, and Science. Grades were converted to a 5-point scale (A = 4.0; B = 3.0; C = 2.0; D = 1.0; F = 0; $M = 2.74$, $SD = .92$). Youth rated the frequency with which they engaged in each of 24 *risky behaviors* during the past year on a 4-point rating scale (1 = *never* to 4 = *more than 10 times*; Eccles & Barber, 1990). An example item included, "skipped a day of school," with higher scores indicating more risky behaviors ($M = 1.37$, $SD = .39$; $\alpha = .91$). The relatively low mean for risky behavior in this normative sample of young adolescents is in line with previous research on youth adjustment (Fredricks & Eccles, 2008). Youth reported their *depressive symptoms* on the Center for Epidemiological Study's Inventory (CES-D; Radloff, 1977). This scale consists of 20 items (e.g., "I was bothered by things that don't usually bother me), and each item was rated on a 4-point scale to describe the frequency with which the symptom was experienced in the past week (1 = *rarely or none of the time*; 4 = *most or all of the time*; $M = 1.82$, $SD = .50$; $\alpha = .85$).

Results

Results are organized around our three research goals: (a) To identify patterns of parent-peer relationships among Mexican-origin youth; (b) To examine whether cultural characteristics of youth and parents (i.e., Mexican and Anglo orientations, familism values) were associated with parent-peer patterns; (c) To examine associations between parent-peer patterns and youth adjustment (i.e., GPA, risky behaviors, depressive symptoms).

Profiles of Parent-Peer Relationships among Mexican-origin Youth

Preliminary descriptive analyses showed that, for the whole sample, mothers' acceptance and fathers' acceptance were correlated, $r = .23$, $p < .001$, but that youths' friendship intimacy was uncorrelated with mothers' acceptance, $r = -.07$, *ns*, and fathers' acceptance, $r = .02$, *ns*.

Parent-peer patterns were typologized based on mothers' and fathers' reports of acceptance and youths' reports of friendship intimacy using mixture modeling. Mixture modeling (also referred to as latent profile analysis) assumes that the data are generated by a heterogeneous mixture of underlying probability distributions for K sub-samples (or clusters), such that each cluster distribution is characterized by its own unique set of parameters. We chose a normal mixture modeling approach for several reasons. First, as opposed to other person-oriented statistical techniques, such as a priori classification or cluster analysis, mixture modeling uses a model-based procedure to determine the optimal profile structure in the data. Mixtures differ from cluster analysis in positing a specific model for the data, and then estimating data parameters using maximum likelihood or Bayesian procedures (Whiteman & Loken, 2006). Second, unlike other person-oriented analytic techniques, mixture modeling provides indices of statistical fit (e.g., AIC [Akaike Information Criterion]), which aid the researcher in determining the optimal number of profiles in the data. Finally, mixture

modeling is a probabilistic clustering approach, such that individuals are assigned probabilities of group membership, instead of being assigned to one group with certainty. The sensitive nature of these probabilities is one of the main benefits of using mixture models.

Before analyzing the data, all three indicator variables were standardized so results could be more readily interpreted. To determine the best solution, we examined multiple mixture models in Mplus (Muthén & Muthén, 2008). Because indicators roughly approximate a normal distribution, estimating more profiles than the number of indicators (in our case, a four- or five-profile solution) was not appropriate (Loken & Molenaar, 2008). We retained three profiles based on the following criteria: (1) the three-profile solution had the lowest AIC (2014.12) and sample-adjusted BIC (2020.66) fit criteria compared to the AIC (2043.82; 2097.67) and sample-adjusted BIC (2048.18; 2099.68) for the two-profile and one-profile solution, respectively; (2) each profile had an adequate sample size; (3) the solution was determined to be sufficiently stable; and (4) the solution made intuitive sense. Average probabilities of membership within each of the profiles were high (.89, .75, and .84, respectively). To create profiles for the remaining analyses, we used membership probabilities to assign each individual to one profile, thus allowing covariate analyses to be computed within an ANOVA framework. We chose this strategy because the average latent profile probabilities for profile membership were acceptable. See Amato et al. (2008) and Ventura, Loken, and Birch (2006) for examples of this approach.

As noted, mean scores on the parent and peer measures are above the scale midpoint for all profiles consistent with our focus on a community-based sample of young adolescents. Nevertheless, a series of one-way ANOVAs revealed that there were significant differences between the profiles on the mean scores for friendship intimacy, $F(2,244) = 64.33, p < .001, \eta^2 = .35$, mother acceptance, $F(2, 244) = 159.14, p < .001, \eta^2 = .57$, and father acceptance, $F(2, 244) = 32.70, p < .001, \eta^2 = .21$ (see Table 1). Effect sizes for profile differences in the three grouping variables were large according to Cohen's (1988) rules for interpreting eta-squared (.02 = small; .13 = medium; and .26 = large). Using criteria adopted in previous research on parent-peer patterns (Kan & McHale, 2007), relatively low scores were $> 1/3$ a standard deviation below the mean; average scores were plus or minus $1/3$ a standard deviation from the mean; and relatively high scores were $> 1/3$ a standard deviation above the mean. Profile 1 ($n = 56$; 23% of the sample) was characterized by average friendship intimacy, and relatively low mother and father acceptance ("Low Parent"). Profile 2 ($n = 45$; 18% of the sample) was characterized by high friendship intimacy, average mother acceptance, and high father acceptance ("Positive"). Profile 3 ($n = 145$; 59% of the sample) was characterized by low friendship intimacy, high mother acceptance, and average father acceptance ("Low Friend").

Descriptive information for the three profiles is presented in Table 2. A χ^2 test indicated that profile was significantly associated with gender, $\chi^2(2, n = 246) = 25.94, p < .001$. The Low Parent profile was equally divided between boys ($n = 28$) and girls ($n = 28$), but the Positive profile included more girls ($n = 38$) than boys ($n = 7$), and the Low Friend profile included more boys ($n = 86$) than girls ($n = 59$). A univariate ANOVA revealed that parent-peer profiles also differed by household income, $F(2, 244) = 4.65, p < .05, \eta^2 = .04$. Follow-up tests indicated that youth in the Positive profile had significantly greater household incomes than did those in both the Low Parent ($p < .05$) and Low Friend ($p < .01$) profiles. There were no profile differences in either mothers' or fathers' education levels, years living in the U.S. (for those born outside of the U.S.), or generation status. In all subsequent analyses, however, the socioeconomic status composite score was included as a covariate to control for the potential effects of SES on social-cultural characteristics and adjustment outcomes. In preliminary analyses, we also examined the effect of gender on associations between

cultural characteristics and parent-peer profiles. Girls and boys did not differ on cultural characteristics and no significant gender effects were found for associations between cultural characteristics and profiles. We, therefore, report findings for the sample as a whole, and gender was not included as a covariate. Although there was no evidence of differences in patterns of associations between parent-peer profile and adjustment outcomes by gender, we did include gender as a covariate in these analyses to control for its main effect on adjustment. Girls, $M = 2.92$; $SD = .88$, had significantly higher GPAs than boys, $M = 2.54$; $SD = .93$; $F(1, 233) = 10.41$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .04$; and boys, $M = 1.43$; $SD = .41$, reported significantly more risky behavior than girls, $M = 1.31$; $SD = .37$, $F(1, 245) = 5.43$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .02$. There were no statistically significant gender differences in depression symptoms, $M(\text{girls}) = 1.86$; $SD = .56$; $M(\text{boys}) = 1.78$; $SD = .41$, $F(1, 245) = 1.82$, ns .

Associations between Parent-Peer Patterns and Cultural Characteristics of Youth and Parents

To test whether there were profile differences in youths' cultural orientations, a 3 (Profile) $\times$ 3 (Cultural Orientation Dimension) mixed model ANCOVA with youth Anglo and Mexican orientations, and familism as the dependent variables was conducted with SES included as a covariate in the model. This multivariate analysis allowed us to look at cultural differences across the three parent-peer profiles. Parent-peer profile was treated as a between-groups factor, and dimension of cultural orientation was treated as a within-group factor. Pairwise comparison tests of a significant profile effect, $F(2, 242) = 6.61$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .04$, indicated that youth in the Positive profile had an overall pattern of significantly higher cultural orientations than did youth in the Low Parent profile ($p < .001$) and in the Low Friend profile ($p < .05$). Follow-up tests on each cultural dimension indicated that youth in the Positive profile ($p < .01$) and the Low Friend profile ($p < .01$) had significantly higher Anglo orientations than did youth in the Low Parent profile (Table 3). Further, youth in the Positive Profile had significantly higher familism values compared to youth in both the Low Parent ($p < .01$) and the Low Friend ($p < .05$) profiles. These findings indicated that youth with relatively high friendship intimacy and father acceptance and average mother acceptance had higher bi-cultural orientations relative to other youth, such that they embraced a relatively high Anglo cultural orientation as well as family values consistent with their Mexican culture of origin.

We also examined family patterns of cultural orientations as a function of parent-peer profiles. To do so, we ran 3 (Profile) $\times$ 3 (Informant: Mother, Father, Youth) mixed model ANCOVAs for each of the cultural variables, with SES as a covariate (Table 3).

Anglo orientations—A main effect was found for informant, $F(2, 484) = 222.63$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .49$, on Anglo orientations. Follow-up paired samples t -tests revealed that youth reported significantly higher Anglo orientations than their mothers, $t(245) = 18.34$, $p < .001$, and their fathers, $t(246) = 18.08$, $p < .001$. Follow-up tests on a significant profile effect, $F(2, 242) = 3.10$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .02$, revealed that overall, family members in the Positive and Low Friend profiles had higher Anglo orientations than did those in the Low Parent profile (both, $p < .05$).

Mexican orientations—A main effect for informant, $F(2, 484) = 21.70$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .01$, indicated reliable within-family differences in Mexican orientations. Follow-up paired samples t -tests revealed that youth had lower Mexican orientations than their mothers, $t(245) = -8.03$, $p < .001$, and their fathers, $t(246) = -5.71$, $p < .001$, and that mothers had higher Mexican orientations than fathers, $t(245) = 2.89$, $p < .01$. There was no main effect for profile, $F(2, 242) = .13$, ns , $\eta^2 = .00$.

Familism—Mauchly's test indicated that the assumption of sphericity was violated, $X^2(2) = 11.93$, $p < .01$, because the variance of familism scores was greater for youth than for parents; therefore, degrees of freedom were corrected using Huynh-Feldt estimates of sphericity, $\epsilon = .97$. A statistically significant informant effect, $F(1.95, 465.05) = 9.42$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .07$, indicated reliable differences in familism values, and paired sampled t -tests revealed that youth reported significantly lower familism values than did mothers, $t(244) = -4.24$, $p < .001$, and fathers, $t(245) = -4.74$, $p < .001$. This informant effect was qualified by a significant informant $\times$ profile interaction, $F(3.15, 465.05) = 3.42$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .03$. A follow-up univariate test on the mother-youth difference score revealed a statistically significant profile effect, $F(2, 235) = 7.13$, $p < .01$: there were larger differences between youths' and mothers' familism values (favoring mothers) in the Low Parent ($M_{dif} = .31$, $SD = .08$) and Low Friend ($M_{dif} = .23$, $SD = .05$) profiles than in the Positive profile ($M_{dif} = -.12$, $SD = .09$), both $p < .01$. The profile effect was not statistically significant for mother-father differences. Father-youth differences were similar to those found for mother-youth differences, but only approached significance ($p < .10$).

Differences in Youth Adjustment as a Function of Parent-Peer Profile

Finally, we tested for differences in youth adjustment across the parent-peer profiles (Table 4) with 3 (Profile) ANCOVAs with SES and gender included as covariates. Follow-up tests of a significant profile effect on *GPA*, $F(2, 230) = 3.23$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .03$, indicated that youth in the Low Friend profile had higher GPAs than did youth in the Low Parent profile, $p < .05$. Follow-up tests of a significant profile effect on *risky behavior*, $F(2, 241) = 6.31$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .02$, indicated that youth in both the Positive and Low Friend profiles reported less risky behavior than youth in the Low Parent profile (both, $p < .01$). Finally, follow-up tests of a statistically significant profile effect on depression symptoms, $F(2, 241) = 6.30$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .06$, indicated that youth in the Positive and Low Friend profiles had fewer *depression symptoms* than did youth in the Low Parent profile, $p < .01$ and $p < .05$, respectively. Collectively, results suggested that youth in both the Positive and Low Friend profiles had better, albeit modest, overall behavioral adjustment in 7th grade compared to their Low Parent profile peers, and Low Friend youth also had better academic adjustment than Low Parent youth.

Discussion

The present study extends previous research on parent-peer relationships that has focused on European American samples, neglected the role of culture in parent-peer experiences, and primarily used variable-oriented approaches. We tested: (a) whether different patterns of parent-peer relationships emerged in a sample of Mexican-origin youth; (b) whether parent-peer patterns were associated with differences in cultural orientations and familism values; and (c) whether there were associations between parent-peer patterns and youth's behavioral and academic adjustment. We identified three patterns of parent-peer relationships using mixture modeling, which suggests that different mechanisms are at work for different youth.

One pattern consisted of high mother and average father acceptance and high friendship intimacy (Positive) and represented slightly less than 1/5 of youth in our sample (i.e., 18%). This pattern was similar to the expected pattern of consensual, congruent parent and peer experiences characterized by high mother and father acceptance and high friendship intimacy. The Positive profile included more girls than boys, and was associated with more positive youth adjustment compared to youth who exhibited low mother and father acceptance, and average friendship intimacy (Low Parent). The Low Parent profile, equally divided between boys and girls, was characterized by low mother and father acceptance and average friendship intimacy and included almost one quarter of the sample (i.e., 23%). This

pattern was related to our expectations for an incongruent pattern of low parental acceptance and high friendship intimacy, and was associated with poorer adjustment (i.e., risky behaviors, depressive symptoms) compared to youth in the other profiles. Finally, we identified a profile similar to our expectations for an incongruent pattern of high parental acceptance and low friendship intimacy: some youth exhibited high mother acceptance, average father acceptance, and low friendship intimacy (Low Friend). The Low Friend profile was the largest subgroup in the sample (i.e., 59%) and included more boys than girls. The cultural emphasis on family interdependence and obligations in Mexican culture (Cauce & Domenech-Rodríguez, 2002) may explain, in part, why this was the most common pattern in this sample.

Our findings of within-ethnic group variability in parent-peer relationship patterns among Mexican-origin youth provide modest support for attending to the role of culture in youth development (García Coll et al., 1996). As expected, youth in the Positive profile had higher bi-cultural orientations relative to other youth, including significantly higher Anglo orientations and familism values. Consistent with our hypotheses, youth in all profiles reported higher Anglo orientations and lower Mexican orientations than their parents. Further, in line with expectations, the familism values of youth in the Positive profile were in alignment with those of their mothers, whereas youth in the Low Parent profile and the Low Friend profile reported lower familism values than their mothers and fathers. Finally, contrary to our expectations, youth in the Positive and Low Friend profiles reported fewer depressive symptoms and risky behaviors than youth in the Low Parent profile. Youth in the Low Parent profile also had significantly lower GPAs than their peers in the Low Friend profile. Effect sizes for profile differences in cultural correlates and adjustment outcomes were small, but suggest that future studies seek to elucidate these interesting associations.

A Person-Oriented Approach to Uncovering Within-Group Variability

This study supports the use of a person-oriented approach to examining how parent and peer relationships are connected. Although friendship intimacy was uncorrelated with mother and father acceptance at the group level (a variable-oriented approach), our person-oriented approach revealed that the connections between parental acceptance and friendship intimacy were *different* for *different* youth. The adoption of person-oriented approaches to study youth development demands that researchers attend to within-group variability. Our findings support previous research indicating that links between relationships with parents and peers are not universal, and push us to think beyond the typical expectation that there will be positive correlations between (good) experiences in one context and (good) experiences in another (Cooper & Cooper, 1992; McHale, Crouter, McGuire, & Updegraff, 1995).

Implications of Parent-Peer Relationship Patterns among Mexican-Origin Youth

We drew on multiple theoretical perspectives to interpret the different parent-peer relationship patterns. Findings for youth in the Low Parent profile may reflect an incongruent, compensatory pattern of parent-peer relationships (East & Rook, 1992): youth who do not have positive relationships with their parents may compensate for the lack of warmth and acceptance in these relationships, and turn to their peers for emotional support. Yet, because they report only moderately intimate relationships with friends, their needs for relational closeness may not be fulfilled. This pattern is also consistent with the context-choice explanation (Kerr et al., 2003; Persson et al., 2007): If youth experience a host of negative emotions within the family context, they may generalize those negative feelings to adult-led contexts outside of the home and, thus, actively turn to peers to avoid adults. Mean scores for depressive symptoms and risky behavior in each of the profiles were low for this normative sample of young adolescents, but we were able to distinguish youth in the Low Parent profile from youth in the other two profiles on these measures. Given that youth in

the Low Parent profile were relatively low on resources from parents (emotionally and financially) and reported only moderately close friendships, as well as exhibited relatively lower behavioral adjustment, they may be at risk for adjustment problems as they move through adolescence.

Findings for youth in the Positive profile are in line with social learning models (Parke et al., 2006). These youth may have transferred aspects of their positive parental relationships, particularly with their fathers, to their peer relationships, and vice-versa. This parent-peer relationship pattern is also consistent with research on the role of fathers in youths' success with peers: fathers' positive affect and play predicts children's social acceptance and successful peer relationships (MacDonald & Park, 1984), and fathers also promote autonomy and instrumental behavior, which may help youth as they develop relationships with peers (Collins & Russell, 1991; Youniss & Smollar, 1985). Further, the Positive profile may reflect a group of youth who, in the process of expressing individuality and seeking increased autonomy that is characteristic of adolescence, are succeeding, along with their parents, in mutually re-negotiating their social experiences and roles (Cooper & Cooper, 1992). In addition, youth in the Positive profile had an overall pattern of higher bi-cultural orientations than did youth in the Low Parent and Low Friend profiles, although these statistically significant profile differences were modest. For Positive youth, a bicultural orientation may be adaptive as they negotiate the host and ethnic cultures (Coatsworth et al., 2005; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Sullivan et al., 2007). While enjoying listening to music and thinking and writing in English, these youth also may embrace Mexican cultural values, such as an orientation to the family, thereby preserving their connection with their culture of origin (Bámaca & Umaña-Taylor, 2006; Fuligni, 2004).

A particularly interesting finding was that youth and mothers in the Positive profile did not differ in their familism values, but youth in the Low Parent and Low Friend profiles had lower familism values than did their mothers, even controlling for the fact that they also had a lower socio-economic status than did youth and parents in the Positive profile. The fact that youth and mothers in the Positive profile were similar in their endorsement of this key Mexican value may reflect relatively more family cohesiveness (Cauce & Domenech-Rodríguez, 2002; Rumbaut, 2005). Given these results, we would expect to find that youth in the Positive profile also would have demonstrated more positive adjustment than their peers in the Low Parent and Low Friend profiles; however, this was not the case with respect to youth in the Low friend profile.

Experiencing close friendships has been linked to positive adjustment in early adolescence in European American samples (Kan & McHale, 2007; Rubin et al., 1998). For the Mexican-origin youth in the Low Friend profile, however, a lack of friendship closeness did not appear to be detrimental when they experienced warmth and acceptance from their parents. Thus, we found that when acceptance was high for at least one parent, having high or low friendship intimacy was similarly associated with a range of adjustment outcomes. Why did youth in the Low Friend profile demonstrate comparable adjustment to youth in the Positive profile? Youth in the Low Friend profile differed from their parents across a range of cultural values and practices. It is possible that parents' ability to maintain warmth toward their children in the face of parents' and children's differing cultural values and practices may have protected these youth. For example, although youth in the Low Friend profile did not share cultural orientations with their parents, their parents accepted them and had a strong emotional bond with them. Consequently, youth may have considered the reaction of their parents when confronted with tempting peer situations, and, therefore, refrained from engaging in delinquent behaviors (Hirschi, 1969). Alternatively, because these youth and parents held discrepant views of the extent to which family support and obligation were important, parents may have attempted to protect youth from risky non-familial influences

by placing more restrictions on their peer relationships (Chen & French, 2008; Updegraff et al., 2007). This is possible given that these youth reported low friendship intimacy, and without sufficient opportunities to interact with other peers, youth will have difficulty cultivating intimate peer relationships. Of course, youth may very well view their cousins as friends and report the friendship quality of those kin, as opposed to non-kin, relationships.

Another possibility for youth in the Low Friend profile, who constituted the largest parent-peer profile, is that they simply were unable to find peers in their school or neighborhood contexts that they could rely on or with whom they were able to be intimate. Given that there were proportionally more boys than girls in the Low Friend profile compared to the other profiles, this finding is also consistent with prior evidence that boys engage in less intimate sharing with peers compared to girls (Maccoby, 1998). Thus, it is quite possible that these youth had warm, positive relationships with their parents and, due to the fact that they were not emotionally close to their peers, they actively chose not to engage in risky behavior with other youth (Kerr et al., 2003).

Future longitudinal studies on Mexican-origin youth will need to elucidate these associations, and would benefit from examining characteristics of youth and parents who fit a “High Parent/Low Friend” profile, including who youths’ friends are, as well as how youth and parents stay close during the acculturative process. Further, since youth in both the Positive and the Low Friend profiles demonstrated similar adjustment, another possibility is that greater significance should be allocated to youths’ relationships with their parents than to their peers.

Limitations

This study is limited to cross-sectional analyses of links between parent and peer experiences and associations with cultural correlates and adjustment. To illuminate the direction of effect among these variables, future studies will need to adopt a longitudinal design. Such a design would allow for examination of sociocultural factors that contribute to parent-peer relationship patterns and the effects of parent-peer relationship patterns at one point in time on later youth adjustment; it also would illuminate how patterns of parent-peer relationships may change over time. Given that intimacy with peers becomes increasingly important across adolescence (Buhrmester, 1990), it would be interesting to test for differences in adjustment among various patterns of parent-peer relationships in middle to late adolescence. Another limitation of the present study is our reliance on a self-reported measure of friendship quality. Future studies also would benefit by including other self- and peer-reported measures of youths’ experiences in dyads and groups, such as social preference, peer competence, shared activities, and contact with peers. In addition, this study reflects the parent-peer patterns of a particular sample of Mexican-origin youth from two – parent families living in a southwestern region surrounding a metropolitan area. Thus, these patterns cannot necessarily be generalized to the experiences of other immigrant groups living in alternative family structures or in other geographic locations. The focus on normative developmental processes within this Mexican-origin sample was a primary goal of this study, and future studies should attempt to replicate these findings with other samples of Mexican-origin youth.

Conclusion

Despite its limitations, this study is an important step in understanding associations between Mexican-origin youths’ relationships with parents and peers. The use of a person-oriented approach allowed for the identification of three distinct, theoretically and practically meaningful profiles of youth, who exhibited different patterns of parent-peer relationships that were associated with cultural characteristics and a range of adjustment outcomes.

Understanding how the growing population of Mexican-origin youth adapts and functions in two cultures remains an important task for researchers and policymakers. As our study suggests, this understanding will require acknowledgement of the within-group variability that exists among these youth.

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Table 1

Means (and Standard Deviations) for Mixture Model 3-Profile Solution

Variable	Parent-Peer Profiles			<i>F</i> (2, 244) =
	Low Parent (<i>n</i> = 56)	Positive (<i>n</i> = 45)	Low Friend (<i>n</i> = 145)	
Friendship intimacy	3.73 ^b (.72)	4.60 ^a (.20)	3.50 ^c (.59)	64.33 ***
Mother acceptance	3.53 ^c (.52)	4.42 ^b (.39)	4.59 ^a (.29)	159.14 ***
Father acceptance	3.68 ^c (.66)	4.52 ^a (.30)	4.14 ^b (.53)	32.70 ***

^aMeans with different subscripts differ significantly by profile.

^bMeans with different subscripts differ significantly by profile.

^cMeans with different subscripts differ significantly by profile.

p < .001

Table 2

Means (and Standard Deviations) for Household Income, Mother and Father Education, Years Living in the U.S., and Generation Status for Parent-Peer Profiles

Background characteristics	Parent-Peer Profiles			<i>F</i> (2, 244) =
	Low Parent (<i>n</i> = 56)	Positive (<i>n</i> = 45)	Low Friend (<i>n</i> = 145)	
Household income	\$50938 ^a (33,386)	\$72263 ^b (71,351)	\$49470 ^a (36,795)	4.65 *
Mother education	10.72 (3.43)	11.01 (4.06)	10.03 (3.70)	1.62
Father education	10.73 (4.14)	10.46 (4.59)	9.42 (4.33)	2.24
Mothers' years living in the U.S.	19.75 (15.27)	23.24 (16.11)	19.92 (14.33)	.95
Fathers' years living in the U.S.	21.80 (14.78)	24.62 (15.35)	23.05 (14.75)	.45
Generation status	2.06 (1.08)	2.28 (1.23)	2.08 (1.05)	.62

^aMeans with different subscripts differ significantly by profile.

^bMeans with different subscripts differ significantly by profile.

*
p < .05

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Table 3

Means (and Standard Errors) for Cultural Characteristics Associated with Parent-Peer Profiles

Cultural characteristics	Parent-Peer Profiles											
	Low Parent (<i>n</i> = 56)				Positive (<i>n</i> = 45)				Low Friend (<i>n</i> = 145)			
	Youth	Mothers	Fathers	Family Mean	Youth	Mothers	Fathers	Family Mean	Youth	Mothers	Fathers	Family Mean
Anglo orientations	3.79 ^b (.07)	2.77 (.10)	2.90 (.10)	3.15 ^b (.07)	4.11 ^a (.08)	2.99 (.11)	2.98 (.11)	3.36 ^a (.08)	4.02 ^a (.05)	2.97 (.06)	3.00 (.06)	3.33 ^a (.04)
Mexican orientations	3.65 (.09)	3.98 (.09)	3.96 (.10)	3.87 (.08)	3.74 (.10)	3.91 (.10)	3.82 (.11)	3.82 (.08)	3.64 (.06)	4.07 (.06)	3.90 (.06)	3.87 (.05)
Familism	4.16 ^b (.07)	4.44 (.05)	4.44 (.05)	4.34 (.04)	4.44 ^a (.08)	4.34 (.06)	4.46 (.06)	4.41 (.04)	4.25 ^b (.04)	4.46 (.03)	4.46 (.03)	4.39 (.02)

Note. Means are adjusted for socioeconomic status.

^aWithin informant, means with different subscripts differ significantly by profile.

^bWithin informant, means with different subscripts differ significantly by profile.

^xAcross profile, means with different subscripts differ significantly by informant.

^yAcross profile, means with different subscripts differ significantly by informant.

^zAcross profile, means with different subscripts differ significantly by informant.

Table 4

Means (and Standard Errors) for Adjustment Outcomes Associated with Parent-Peer Profiles

Adjustment outcomes	Parent-Peer Profiles		
	Low Parent (<i>n</i> = 56)	Positive (<i>n</i> = 45)	Low Friend (<i>n</i> = 145)
GPA	2.47 ^b (.12)	2.82 ^{ab} (.14)	2.82 ^a (.08)
Risky behavior	1.52 ^a (.05)	1.26 ^b (.06)	1.34 ^b (.03)
Depression symptoms	1.99 ^a (.06)	1.64 ^b (.07)	1.81 ^b (.04)

Note. Means are adjusted for socioeconomic status and gender.

^a Means with different subscripts differ significantly by profile.

^b Means with different subscripts differ significantly by profile.