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Sibling Caretaking Among Mexican American Youth: Conditions That Promote and Hinder Personal and School Success

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Abstract

This study examined how Mexican American youths' extent of sibling caretaking is related to their personal and school adjustment, and whether mothers' gender-role attitudes and youths' familistic beliefs moderate these associations. One hundred and ninety-five Mexican American youth (*M* age 14.8 years; 64% girls) and their mothers participated in the study. Youth completed questionnaires about their extent of sibling caretaking, their educational aspirations, school involvement, school absences, grades, and their prosocial tendencies. Results indicated that, when examined singly, frequent sibling caretaking was related to youths' higher educational aspirations, greater prosocial tendencies, and more school engagement for older youth, but also to more school absences. When extensive sibling care was coupled with mothers' sex-stereotyped attitudes, youth experienced poorer outcomes. Youth who held strong familistic beliefs and were highly involved in sibling care reported lower educational aspirations, particularly girls. Findings underscore the importance of considering socialization influences when evaluating associations between sibling caretaking and youths' development.

Keywords

educational aspirations; prosocial behaviors; school engagement; school absences; sibling caretaking

Across cultures, older siblings often provide care to their younger siblings (Weisner, 1982). Sibling caretaking typically involves monitoring to keep from harm, feeding or helping to feed, getting siblings ready for school, and helping with bathing, dressing, and homework (Zukow-Goldring, 2002). A recent national survey estimated that 1.4 million U.S. children and adolescents were involved in family caregiving, with approximately 11% helping a sibling (National Alliance for Caregiving, 2005). Despite the significant numbers of children and adolescents providing sibling care, little is known about its consequences (East, 2010). Among the studies conducted, sibling care is rarely examined separately from other forms of family care, and sibling caretaking by Latino children is particularly overlooked given evidence that Latino youth provide more family care than youth of other race-ethnicity (Siskowski, 2006; Telzer & Fuligni, 2009) and appear to be more negatively affected by it (Diaz, Siskowski, & Connors, 2007). Within recently immigrated Latino families, youth often act as surrogate parents to their younger siblings, fully responsible for supervising,

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feeding, and tutoring them (Orellana, 2003; Valenzuela, 1999). This type of pseudo-parenting role has raised concerns, as it often leads to acquiring other adult-like behaviors, such as smoking, drinking alcohol, dropping out of school, and early entry into the workforce (Burton, 2007; Cooper, Denner, & Lopez, 1999).

However, it is important to point out that Latino youth can also learn important skills when caring for or being cared by siblings (Perez-Granados & Callanan, 1997). For example, sibling caretaking among Mayan children has been linked with increased social understanding, perspective taking, and teaching skills among child caregivers (Maynard, 2002; Rabain-Jamin, Maynard, & Greenfield, 2003). Anthropological studies also indicate that sibling caregiving provides youth with a sense of purpose and meaning, and teaches responsibility, selflessness, and self-reliance (Weisner, 1982; Zukow-Goldring, 2002). Seen cross-culturally, taking responsibility for caring for another is considered an important preparation for one's future and critical for promoting competence, growth, and maturity (Weisner, 2001).

In efforts to understand these apparent disparate findings, it is important to consider the culturally related mechanisms potentially underlying these trends (Hafford, 2010). The current study addresses this issue by examining how Mexican American youths' involvement in sibling care is related to their personal and school adjustment, and how the socialization of cultural values and beliefs affect such associations. We use a culturally informed framework based on theories of prosocial development among Mexican American youth that stress that cultural values and family socialization practices are integral in understanding Latino youths' developmental competencies (Knight & Carlo, 2012; Knight, Cota, & Bernal, 1993). For instance, sex-typed socialization is one cultural factor likely to play a role in Latino children's participation in sibling care and possibly in its effects. In Mexican American families, children's household work and family care is highly differentiated by gender, with girls performing a significantly larger share of such tasks than boys (East, Weisner, & Slonim, 2009; Orellana, 2003). Others have found large gender disparities in Mexican American parents' expectations for their sons' and daughters' involvement in family roles and activities and in their expectations for their sons' and daughters' academic achievement and success (McHale, Updegraff, Shanahan, Crouter, & Killoren, 2005; Qin-Hilliard, 2003). It is unclear what role mothers' gender-role attitudes might play in the association between youths' sibling care and their adjustment, with competing hypotheses plausible. Given a traditional sex-typed socialization, Latina girls might value and desire greater participation in the care of others and provide extensive sibling care ostensibly without costs (Cancian & Oliner, 2000; Kroska, 2003). However, extensive family care involvement can limit Latina girls' educational aspirations, wherein the caregiving role is seen as an end in and of itself, at the expense of absent or severely limited educational and professional aspirations (Dodson & Dickert, 2004; Saldaña, Dassori, & Miller, 1999). Thus, we might expect that girls who provide extensive sibling care and whose mothers conform to sex-role stereotypes experience stunted educational aspirations, less engagement and involvement in school, and lower grades; however, they also might possess greater prosocial qualities, such as being kind, helpful, and concerned about others.

Another Latino cultural value relevant to sibling caretaking is youths' familistic attitudes or beliefs about the importance of family. Indeed, an important aspect of familism is an emphasis on the subjugation of self for the sake of family, with strong familistic beliefs proscribing that the individual sacrifice his or her own needs and desires in deference of those of the family (Luna et al., 1996; Steidel & Contreras, 2003). When considered in the context of family caretaking, strong familistic attitudes are often, but not always, considered a protective factor against caregiver stress (Pinquart & Sorensen, 2005). Studies show, for example, that a strong sense of family obligation among Latino adult caregivers guards

against depression and burnout in long-term caregiving situations (Luna et al., 1996; Phillips, de Ardon, Kommenich, Killeen, & Rusinak, 2000). Other research, however, suggests that young Latino caregivers perceive their family obligations as a significant burden, and this contributes to their poor mental health (East & Weisner, 2009). The current study explores youths' familistic attitudes, as defined as the subjugation of self for family, as a moderator in the relationship between youths' sibling caretaking and their adjustment. Specifically, we examine whether strongly held familistic attitudes protect or expose older or younger Mexican American youth, as well boys or girls, to poor outcomes in the presence of extensive sibling care. Based on trends in the literature and given younger children's lesser maturity and coping abilities, it may be that strong familistic attitudes enhance the negative effects associated with extensive sibling care among younger children. In this case, subjugating self for family might be developmentally inappropriate and have more negative consequences for younger children than older children given younger children's need for nurturance and care themselves. Similarly, given girls' greater tendency to sacrifice self needs for family and to feel responsible for caring for others (Gilligan, 1982; Kroska, 2003), particularly among Mexican Americans (Phillips et al., 2000; Saldaña et al., 1999), girls might be more vulnerable to low educational aspirations, less involvement in school, and more school absences than boys when felt deference to family is strong.

The Present Study

Using a culturally informed perspective that incorporates the socialization of cultural values and beliefs (Knight et al., 2011), we report results of a study investigating the associations between the extent of Mexican-origin youths' involvement in sibling care and indices of their school and personal adjustment. Specifically, we examined (1) the relationships between Mexican-origin children's provision of sibling care and their educational aspirations, school engagement and involvement in school activities, school grades, and frequency of school absences, and (2) the links between youths' sibling caretaking and their prosocial tendencies. We also considered the roles of gender and age in these relationships to determine whether (3) frequent sibling care is more detrimental (or beneficial) for girls or boys or for older or younger youth. Cultural-socialization factors were incorporated by (4) examining how mothers' gender-role norms and youths' familistic attitudes might moderate the association between youths' sibling care and their adjustment. Finally, we examined (5) how these moderating variables might interact with youths' gender and age, such that certain conditions of mothers' sex-role norms and youths' familistic attitudes might be more or less advantageous for boys or girls, or for older or younger youth.

Method

Participants

Participants were part of a short-term longitudinal study investigating Mexican Americans' sibling and family relationships. The data presented in this report were gathered at a fourth study time point conducted approximately 15 months after study enrollment. The primary variable of interest (i.e., sibling caretaking) was assessed at Time 4 only. At Time 4, 195 youths and 154 of their mothers participated, or 81% of the original sample of youth and 82% of the original sample of mothers. The individuals who participated at Time 4 did not differ from those who did not on background factors (e.g., age, U.S.-born vs. Mexican-born, family income) or on any of this study's variables (e.g., educational aspirations, described below).

Participants were recruited from public high schools, community centers, and pediatric health clinics located throughout southern California. Eligibility requirements were that youth were between 12 and 18 years of age, Latino, and currently living with their mother

and a biologically related older adolescent sister. (The focus of the overall study was on the family dynamics of adolescent girls and their younger siblings; the younger siblings and mothers are the primary participants for the current analyses.) At the time of the study, younger siblings were an average age of 14.8 years (range 13-18 years), and 64% were girls. Most youth were born in the United States (82%); the others were born in Mexico. Of those born in the United States, at least one of their parents was born in Mexico. Most mothers were born in Mexico (78%); the others were born in the United States (18%) or Central America (4%). Youth had an average of 2.5 siblings, approximately half of whom were younger than the target youth. Youths' involvement in sibling care was not significantly related to the number of siblings nor to the number of younger siblings. All study families were primarily low income, with a mean total annual family income of US\$21,000 for an average household of six persons. Approximately half of youths had an older sister who was a teen parent; however, the extent of youths' sibling care was not related to whether their older sister was parenting.

Procedure

Youth and their mothers completed a short in-person interview about basic descriptive and background information and a self-administered questionnaire in their homes. Two Latina female research assistants who were fluent in Spanish administered the interview and provided instructions for completing the questionnaire. The study questionnaire had an approximate third-grade reading level (as ascertained by the Flesch-Kincaid readability method). All youth were highly fluent in English and completed the study interview and questionnaire in English. The mothers responded in either English (30%) or Spanish (70%), whichever was most comfortable for them. Completion of the interview and questionnaire took about 1 hour. All participants were paid US\$20 and assured of the confidentiality of their responses. This study's procedures were approved by the first author's university Human Subjects Protections Program.

The cultural sensitivity of the measures for the target population of predominantly low-income Latino families was considered in the early phases of this study by involving a large group of Mexican American colleagues (of various educational backgrounds and areas of expertise) who reviewed all measures prior to administration to determine their adequacy and understanding for the population studied. This group concluded that all measures were culturally appropriate and sensitive to the cultural context of study participants. Linguistic consistency between the English and Spanish versions of the mother-rated questionnaire was achieved by having a native Mexican-Spanish speaker translate the English version of all items into Spanish. A second native Mexican-Spanish speaker reviewed and verified all translations; discrepancies were resolved through discussion. A third Mexican-Spanish speaker then back-translated the Spanish version into English. The study investigators then compared the original English version with the back-translated English version and verified that the two versions were equivalent.

Measures

Means, standard deviations, and score ranges of all study variables are provided in Table 1.

Youths' sibling caretaking—Youth responded to a questionnaire item that asked, "In general, how often do you take care of your brothers or sisters?" with response options of 1 = *hardly ever*, 2 = *a little*, 3 = *sometimes*, 4 = *often*, and 5 = *all the time*.

Mothers' gender-role norms—Mothers' gender-role norms were assessed by the Attitudes Toward Family Roles Scale (Hoffman & Kloska, 1995), which asks respondents to rate their agreement with 13 statements about gender-based family roles (e.g., "Education is

more important for a son than for a daughter” and “For a woman, taking care of the children is the main thing, but for a man, his job is”) on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*). The Cronbach’s alpha of mothers’ responses was .90; thus, scores were averaged to form one score (range 1-5), with high scores indicating highly traditional gender-role norms and low scores indicating less traditional (more progressive) gender-role norms. Construct validity of this instrument is supported by findings that demonstrate low socioeconomic status, less education, and ethnic minority status predict higher scores on this scale (Hoffman & Kloska, 1995).

Youths’ familistic attitudes—Youths’ familistic attitudes were assessed by six items developed specifically for this study and designed to index self-subjugation to family. We used one item from Bardis’s (1959) Familism Scale, “A person should always consider the needs of his or her family as more important than his or her own,” and we included five newly devised items: “I put my family’s needs ahead of my own,” “My family comes first,” “My family is extremely important to me,” “I take my family obligations very seriously,” and “My family’s needs come before my own.” Response options ranged from 1 (*very much not true for me*) to 5 (*very true for me*). The six items were factor analyzed using a principal components factor analysis with varimax rotation. One factor emerged, with factor loadings ranging between .866 and .778, accounting for 68.9% of the total variance. The Cronbach’s alpha of the six items was .92; thus, the items were averaged to form one score (range 1-5), with high scores indicating strong familistic attitudes, or strong beliefs that the needs of one’s family supersede one’s own needs.

Youths’ educational aspirations—Youths’ educational aspirations were assessed in terms of their perceived likelihood and desire to pursue higher education. Three questionnaire items pertained to youths’ beliefs about the likelihood of graduating high school, continuing their education after high school, and getting a good job (1 = *not likely at all* to 5 = *very likely*); one item assessed youths’ beliefs about how far they would probably go in school (1 = *probably not finish high school* to 5 = *probably go to graduate school or a professional school after college*), and one item asked how far they wanted to go in school (1 = *want to quit high school before graduate* to 5 = *want to go to graduate school or a professional school after college*). The five items were factor analyzed using a principal components factor analysis with varimax rotation. One factor emerged, with factor loadings ranging between .915 and .789, accounting for 72.1% of the total variance. The Cronbach’s alpha of the five items was .90; thus, the items were averaged to form one score (range 1-5), with high scores indicating high educational aspirations, or a strong desire and perceived likelihood of pursuing their education.

Youths’ school engagement—Youths’ school engagement was assessed by three questionnaire items drawn from the Search Institute’s Profiles of Student Life: Attitudes and Behaviors Questionnaire (Search Institute, 2004), which asked about how involved the youth was in his or her school’s clubs, organizations, or activities (1 = *not involved at all* to 5 = *very involved*), how connected he or she felt to his or her school (1 = *not connected at all* to 5 = *very connected*), and how much he or she cared about his or her school (1 = *not care at all* to 5 = *care very much*). The Cronbach’s alpha of the three items was .73; thus, the items were averaged to form one score (range 1-5), with high scores indicating high connection and involvement in school.

School absences—Youths’ school absences were assessed by the questionnaire item that asked how often during the last month the youth had been absent a full day of school “to help out a family member,” with response options of 0 = *never*, 1 = *one time*, 2 = *2 to 3*

times, 3 = 4 to 10 times, and 4 = more than 10 times. Scores were recoded as 0 (*never*), 1 (*once*), and 2 (*two or more times*) to reduce a skewed and kurtotic distribution.

School grades—Youth reported the grades they usually received in school within the last month on a scale from 1 (“*mostly As*”) to 8 (“*mostly below D*”). Responses were reversed coded so that higher values indicate higher grades (range = 1-8). The mean value of 5.13 (Table 1) indicates that, on average, most youth reported receiving about half Bs and half Cs.

Prosocial-caring tendencies—Youths’ prosocial-caring tendencies were assessed by five items drawn from the Search Institute’s Profiles of Student Life: Attitudes and Behaviors Questionnaire (Search Institute, 2004), which asked youth how much the following items described them: “I care about other people’s feelings,” “I am concerned about others,” “I am kind to others,” “I help other people out,” and “I do my best to be helpful to others” (1 = *not at all like me* to 5 = *very much like me*). The Cronbach’s alpha of the five items was .91; thus, the items were averaged to form one score (range = 1-5), with high scores indicating high prosocial-caring tendencies.

Analytic Strategy

To assess how sibling caretaking is associated with youths’ adjustment, we computed a series of hierarchical regressions, entering a series of blocks in accord with the procedures outlined by Tabachnick and Fidell (2006). In Step 1, youths’ age and gender, the extent of sibling caretaking, and the moderator of interest (either mothers’ gender-role norms or youths’ familistic attitudes) were entered as predictors. In Step 2, we tested the possibility that sibling caretaking interacts with youths’ gender, their age, and their mothers’ gender-role norms, and in separate analyses, youths’ familistic attitudes. Results will reveal whether sibling caretaking is more detrimental (or advantageous) for older or younger youth, for girls or boys, and for various conditions of the moderator. To form the interaction terms, all scores were centered (computed as deviations from their respective means). Finally, in Step 3, we computed two three-way interactions of sibling caretaking $\times$ youths’ age $\times$ the moderator of interest (either mothers’ gender-role norms or youths’ familistic attitudes), and sibling caretaking $\times$ youths’ gender $\times$ the moderator of interest. Results of these interactions will reveal whether for boys or girls, or for older or younger youth, sibling caretaking is more or less advantageous when their mothers hold highly traditional gender-role norms and, separately, when youth hold strong familistic attitudes. Significant interactions were then explored using simple slope tests as specified by Aiken and West (1991).

Results

Table 1 presents the intercorrelations among all study variables. Results of the correlations indicated that more frequent sibling caretaking was significantly correlated with youths’ stronger familistic attitudes, higher educational aspirations, higher engagement in school, more frequent school absences, and higher prosocial-caring tendencies. Correlations were also computed between the extent of sibling caretaking and family and personal background characteristics (i.e., whether the youth was U.S. born, whether their mother was U.S. born, mothers’ age, language of mother-completed questionnaire, mothers’ educational level, family income; not shown). None of these correlations were statistically significant and these variables are not considered further. It is noteworthy that extent of sibling care was not related to youths’ gender or age. In fact, mean levels of boys’ and girls’ sibling care were virtually identical, and older ($M = 16$ years) and younger youths ($M = 13$ years; as determined by a median split), also provided identical levels of sibling care. For descriptive

purposes, it is useful to note that 12% of youths reported providing sibling care “*hardly ever*,” 7% “*a little*,” 25% “*sometimes*,” 26% “*often*,” and 30% “*all the time*.”

Associations Between Youths’ Sibling Caretaking and Their Adjustment When Considering Mothers’ Gender-Role Norms

Table 2 shows the regression results testing whether mothers’ gender-role norms moderate the association between youths’ sibling caretaking and their adjustment. Results of the first regression models indicated that, controlling for youths’ age and gender, extensive sibling caretaking was related to higher educational aspirations and greater prosocial-caring tendencies.

Results of Model 2 indicated a significant interaction between youths’ age and extent of sibling care for youths’ school engagement, and a significant interaction between youths’ sibling care and their mothers’ gender norms for youths’ school absences and prosocial-caring. To dissect the first interaction (for school engagement), regressions were computed for older- and younger-age youth (formed using a median split and including youths’ gender as a control), with results indicating that extensive sibling care was associated with greater school engagement for older youth ($\beta = .29, p < .01$) but not for younger youth ($\beta = .02, ns$). To dissect the latter two interactions, mothers’ traditional and progressive gender-role norm groups were formed using the median score (and youths’ age and gender were entered as controls), with results showing that for youth whose mothers held highly traditional gender norms, extensive sibling care was significantly related to more frequent school absences ($\beta = .23, p < .05$) and lower prosocial-caring tendencies ($\beta = -.30, p < .01$), but was unrelated to these outcomes for youth whose mothers held less traditional gender norms.

Model 3 tested whether mothers’ gender-role norms moderate the association between sibling care and youths’ adjustment when considering youths’ age and gender. Three significant three-way interactions were found: sibling care $\times$ mothers’ gender norms $\times$ youths’ gender was found for school engagement ($\beta = -.28, p < .05$), and sibling care $\times$ mothers’ gender norms $\times$ youths’ age was found for school absences ($\beta = -.21, p < .05$) and school grades ($\beta = -.30, p < .01$). To examine the first interaction (for school engagement), regressions were computed separately by gender and including youths’ age as a control. Results revealed that mothers’ gender norms interacted significantly with extent of sibling care for girls’ school engagement ($\beta = -.41, p < .05$), but this interaction was nonsignificant for boys ($\beta = .14, ns$). When analyzing girls only and using the median of mothers’ gender norms to yield high and low gender norm groups, results of simple slope tests showed that girls’ school engagement was lower when mothers held highly traditional gender norms and girls’ sibling care was high (Figure 1).

To address the significant three-way interactions for school absences and school grades, regressions were computed separately for older and younger youth (formed using a median split, and including youths’ gender as a control). Results for school absences showed that the interaction between youths’ sibling care and mothers’ gender norms was significant for younger youth ($\beta = .33, p < .01$), but was not significant for older youth ($\beta = .13$), with younger youth who cared for siblings often having more frequent school absences when mothers held highly traditional gender norms (Figure 2). Results for school grades showed that the interaction between mothers’ gender norms and youths’ sibling care was significant for older youth ($\beta = -.22, p < .05$) but was not significant for younger youth ($\beta = .16, ns$). Results of simple slope tests showed that older youths’ school grades were lower when mothers held highly traditional gender norms and sibling care was high (Figure 3).

Associations Between Youths' Sibling Caretaking and Their Adjustment When Considering Youths' Familistic Attitudes

Table 3 shows the regression results testing whether youths' familistic attitudes moderate the association between youths' sibling caretaking and their adjustment. Results of the first regression models (which control for youths' age, gender, and familistic attitudes) showed that extensive sibling caregiving was related to more frequent school absences as well as to greater prosocial-caring tendencies.

Results of Model 2 showed a significant interaction between sibling care and familistic attitudes for youths' educational aspirations and prosocial tendencies. To dissect these interactions, regressions were computed for youth with high and low familistic attitudes (based on a median split and including youths' age and gender as controls). Results indicated that higher sibling care was associated with lower educational aspirations for those who held strong familistic beliefs ($\beta = -.26, p < .01$), but was unrelated for those who held weak familistic beliefs. Analysis of the interaction for prosocial behavior indicated that infrequent sibling care for those with weak familistic beliefs was associated with youths' lower prosocial tendencies ($\beta = .26, p < .05$).

Model 3 tested whether youths' familistic attitudes moderate the association between sibling care and youths' adjustment when considering youths' age and gender. A significant three-way interaction was found for educational aspirations and prosocial tendencies, both involving youths' gender. To examine the interaction for youths' educational aspirations, regressions were computed separately by gender and including youths' age as a control. Results showed a significant interaction between familistic attitudes and sibling care for girls' educational aspirations ($\beta = -.29, p < .01$) and for girls' prosocial tendencies ($\beta = -.20, p < .05$), while these associations were nonsignificant for boys. Further examination of these interactions showed that, similar to the above two-way interactions found for the total sample, frequent sibling care and strong familistic attitudes were associated with girls' lower educational aspirations (Figure 4), and weak familistic attitudes coupled with infrequent sibling care were related to girls' lower prosocial tendencies (Figure 5).

Discussion

Despite the significant numbers of youth involved in the caretaking of siblings, little is known about its impact on children's educational and personal adjustment, particularly for Mexican American youth who are known to provide large amounts of family care (Orellana, 2003). The current study addressed this issue within a culturally informed framework to better understand how cultural attitudes and values might enhance or mitigate risks associated with excessive sibling care. Results indicated that, when considered singly, more frequent sibling caretaking was associated with youths' higher educational aspirations, greater prosocial tendencies, more school engagement and involvement for older youth, but also to more frequent school absences. These findings are important because these aspects of functioning—school engagement, educational aspirations, prosocial behaviors—are meaningful markers of positive development (Bundick, 2011) and academic success (Lucio, Hunt, & Bornovalova, 2012), particularly for immigrant Latino youth (Knight & Carlo, 2012). To quantify the association with school absences, only 7% of youth who provided sibling care “hardly ever” or only “a little” missed school during the last month, whereas 28% of those who provided sibling care “all the time” missed school to help a family member, with half of these missing two or more days within the past month. Thus, consistent with past findings of children's family caretaking being associated with costs and benefits (East, 2010), results of the present study suggest that while extensive sibling care might reinforce a commitment to educational goals and helping others, it might also compromise children's school attendance.

Consideration of cultural factors, however, reveals that the relationship between sibling caregiving and youths' adjustment is slightly more complex than the examination of main effects reveals. For example, results of the moderation analyses indicated that when mothers held sex-stereotyped attitudes and youth provided extensive sibling care, youth had lower prosocial tendencies, more frequent school absences (particularly younger youth), girls were less involved in school activities, and older youth had lower school grades. Thus, given children's high involvement in sibling care, mothers' strong sex-role stereotypes appear to deter youths' personal and school success. Mothers who adhere to traditional gender roles may be socializing their children to attend to family and home needs to the exclusion of academic pursuits. It may be, for example, that such mothers are encouraging their daughters to attain traditional sex-typed roles (i.e., homemaker) and encouraging their older children to work at paid jobs so as to financially support the family. The current pattern of findings is consistent with other studies that have found that strong family demands when experienced within a highly traditional Latino cultural orientation can compromise Mexican-origin youths' educational success, with extensive family caretaking and early entry into the labor force the underlying factors (Roche, Ghazarian, & Fernandez-Esquer, 2012; Sy, 2006).

Youths' familistic orientation also surfaced as an important cultural variable in understanding the possible effects of sibling caretaking for youths' adjustment. Strong familistic beliefs were associated with lower educational aspirations for youth who provided extensive sibling care, with this trend particularly strong for girls. It is interesting that strong familistic attitudes by themselves were positively related to youths' high educational aspirations; it is only when coupled with extensive sibling care that they had a negative association with youths' adjustment. It appears then, that strong beliefs about deference to family in the context of high family involvement might limit youths' and particularly girls' expectations for their future. In this case, children who subscribe to putting family needs ahead of one's own might be doing just that: providing extensive family care at the expense of their future educational attainment.

Strong familistic beliefs also interacted with level of sibling care to predict children's prosocial tendencies, with girls once again more strongly affected. Specifically, results indicated that youth who held weak familistic beliefs and provided infrequent sibling care showed deficits in their prosocial tendencies. This pattern, though, might also reflect that youth who have weak familistic beliefs and modest prosocial tendencies are less likely to initiate caring for siblings. The work by Knight and colleagues (2011; Knight & Carlo, 2012) is useful here, suggesting that the socialization of strong familistic values within Mexican American families goes hand in hand with providing children responsibility for helping and caring for family, and that it is the enactment of such caregiving behaviors toward family that allow youth to develop skills that facilitate prosocial behaviors toward others. Although we cannot deduce this process of influence from the current cross-sectional data, the present results begin to shed light on how family care involvement and familistic attitudes might work together to promote Latino children's prosocial development.

It should be noted that all families studied included an older adolescent sister, which possibly reduced the amount of caregiving among these mostly middle adolescent youth. Given that the level of children's sibling care is known to vary by the number, age, and gender of one's siblings, as well as the presence of grandparents and other family kin (Zukow-Goldring, 2002); family structure and sibling constellation effects should be considered more directly in future studies of this kind. In addition, given research that shows that youths' relationship with the care receiver influences their feelings about providing care and its effects (Hamill, 2012), the quality of the sibling relationship (i.e., between the caregiver and care receiver) would also be important to consider in future research.

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Biographies

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Figure 1.
Girls' school engagement as a function of sibling care and mothers' gender-role norms.

Figure 2. School absences for younger youth as a function of sibling care and mothers' gender-role norms.

Figure 3. School grades for older youth as a function of sibling care and mothers' gender-role norms.

Figure 4.

Educational aspirations for girls as a function of sibling care and familistic attitudes.

Figure 5. Prosocial-caring for girls as a function of sibling care and familistic attitudes.

Table 1

Mean Scores, Standard Deviations, and Intercorrelations Among Study Variables ($N = 195$ Youth and 154 Mothers).

Study variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Sibling caretaking	—									
2. Youth age	.00	—								
3. Youth gender ^a	.01	-.09	—							
4. Mothers' gender-role norms ^b	.09	-.07	-.19*	—						
5. Youths' familistic attitudes ^c	.26**	-.13	-.07	.15	—					
6. Youths' educational aspirations	.21**	-.25***	.20**	-.02	.37***	—				
7. Youths' school engagement	.14*	-.19**	-.08	.17*	.24**	.18*	—			
8. Youths' school absences	.15*	-.10	-.01	.16*	.03	-.03	-.05	—		
9. Youths' school grades ^d	-.05	-.16*	-.14*	-.18**	.15*	.32***	.11	.11	—	
10. Youths' prosocial-caring	.24**	-.13	.17*	-.09	.26***	.23**	.22**	-.07	.21**	—
<i>M</i>	3.50	14.8	0.64	2.24	4.12	4.56	2.57	0.30	5.13	3.73
<i>SD</i>	1.33	1.79	0.48	1.04	0.82	0.70	1.35	0.53	1.91	0.89
Range	1-5	12-18	0, 1	1-5	1-5	1-5	1-5	0-2	1-8	1-5

^a 0 = male, 1 = female.

^b Higher scores reflect more traditional gender-role norms.

^c Higher scores reflect stronger beliefs that the needs of one's family supersede one's own.

^d Higher scores reflect better grades.

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

*** $p < .001$.

Table 2
Hierarchical Regressions Using Youths' Sibling Caretaking and Mothers' Gender-Role Norms as Predictors of Youths' School and Personal Adjustment.

Predictor	Educational aspirations			School engagement			School absences			School grades			Prosocial-caring		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Step 1															
Youth age	-.19*	-.20*	-.21*	-.14	-.17*	-.18*	-.07	-.07	-.06	-.15*	-.16*	-.15*	-.11	-.11	-.11
Youth gender ^a	.18*	.19*	.19*	-.12	-.10	-.04	.09	.08	.08	.08	.06	.09	.14	.14	-.13
Sibling caretaking	.28**	.33*	.33*	.11	.20	.20	.07	.05	.02	-.04	.04	.03	.27*	.31*	.33*
Mothers' gender-role norms ^b	-.04	-.05	-.05	.04	.05	.05	.10	.08	.06	-.16*	-.17*	-.14	.02	-.08	-.07
Step 2															
Sibling care × Youth age		.06	.05		.24**	.23*		.06	.04		-.08	-.06		-.05	-.05
Sibling care × Youth gender		-.07	-.06		-.12	-.11		-.05	-.04		-.13	-.14		-.07	-.07
Sibling care × Mother's gender-role norms		-.06	.07		-.02	-.06		.21*	.37**		-.12	-.11		-.17*	-.23*
Step 3															
Sibling care × Mother's gender norms × Youth's age			.06			.06			-.21*			-.30**			-.01
Sibling care × Mother's gender norms × Youth's gender		-.03				-.28*			-.16			.04			.09
	R ²	ΔR ²	ΔR ²	R ²	ΔR ²	ΔR ²	R ²	ΔR ²	ΔR ²	R ²	ΔR ²	ΔR ²	R ²	ΔR ²	ΔR ²
Step 1	.15			.04			.04			.07			.11		
Step 2	.16	.01		.10	.06		.08	.04		.08	.01		.14	.03	
Step 3	.16		.00	.12		.02	.12		.04	.11		.03	.14		.00

Note. Standardized coefficients are shown.

^aCoded as 0 = *male*, 1 = *female*.

^bHigher scores reflect more traditional gender-role norms.

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

*** $p < .001$.

Table 3
Hierarchical Regressions Using Youths' Sibling Caretaking and Familistic Attitudes as Predictors of Their School and Personal Adjustment.

Predictor	Educational aspirations			School engagement			School absences			Grades			Prosocial-caring		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Step 1															
Youth age	-.17*	-.13	-.14*	-.15*	-.18*	-.16*	-.09	-.08	-.07	-.13	-.10	-.08	-.07	-.03	-.03
Youth gender ^a	.21**	.20**	.24**	-.08	-.07	-.06	-.02	-.03	-.03	.14*	.14*	.15*	.18**	.18**	.22**
Sibling caretaking	.12	.10	.07	.10	.10	.09	.15*	.27*	.28*	-.09	-.07	-.08	.18**	.11	.07
Youths' familistic attitudes ^b	.33***	.35***	.38***	.19**	.16*	.14	-.09	-.07	-.09	.16*	.19*	.17*	.22**	.24**	.27**
Step 2															
Sibling care × Youth age		-.05	-.05		.14	.11		-.17	-.19		-.12	-.14		-.07	-.08
Sibling care × Youth gender		-.02	.02		.13	.02		-.08	-.09		-.05	-.08		.05	.08
Sibling care × Familistic attitudes		-.16*	.08		.08	.16		-.05	-.11		-.08	-.01		-.15*	-.13
Step 3															
Sibling care × Familistic attitudes × Youth's age		.07			-.10				.06			-.09			.04
Sibling care × Familistic attitudes × Youth's gender		-.37***			-.10				-.04			-.09			-.32*
Step 4															
	R ²	ΔR ²	ΔR ²	R ²	ΔR ²	ΔR ²	R ²	ΔR ²	ΔR ²	R ²	ΔR ²	ΔR ²	R ²	ΔR ²	ΔR ²
Step 1	.23			.09			.04			.07			.14		
Step 2	.25	.02		.10	.01		.06	.02		.08	.01		.16	.02	
Step 3	.26		.01	.11		.01	.07		.01	.09		.01	.17		.01

Note. Standardized coefficients are shown.

^a Coded as 0 = male, 1 = female.

^b Higher scores reflect strong attitudes of self-subjugation to family.

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

*** $p < .001$.