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Incongruent Teen Pregnancy Attitudes, Coparenting Conflict, and Support Among Mexican-Origin Adolescent Mothers

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Abstract

The current longitudinal study examined whether differences between Mexican-origin adolescent mothers and their mother figures ($N = 204$ dyads) in attitudes on the status attained through teen pregnancy were associated with conflict in their coparenting relationship and whether coparenting conflict was associated with adolescent mothers' perceptions of social support. Findings revealed that when adolescents held more positive attitudes than their mother figures about the status gained through teen pregnancy, they tended to report greater coparenting conflict with their mother figures. Furthermore, greater coparenting conflict was significantly associated with decreases in adolescents' perceptions of social support (i.e., emotional, instrumental, companion support) 1 year later. Findings underscore the importance of incongruent attitudes and the quality of coparenting relationships between adolescent mothers and their mother figures in relation to support processes. Findings are discussed with respect to understanding Mexican-origin adolescent mothers' social support in the context of family subsystem attitudes and interactions.

Keywords

adolescent childbearing; coparenting; social support

In light of the challenges associated with adolescent motherhood (e.g., limited resources, risk of school dropout, low preparation for child rearing), researchers have emphasized the critical role of social support as a protective factor for this at-risk population (e.g., Letourneau, Stewart, & Barnfather, 2004). Despite positive associations between social support and adolescent mothers' mental health (Brown, Harris, Woods, Bauman, & Cox, 2012), their parenting competencies (Jahromi, Guimond, Umaña-Taylor, Updegraff, & Toomey, 2014), and their offspring's developmental outcomes (Huang, Costeines, Kaufman, & Ayala, 2014), limited work has examined processes that inform adolescent mothers' perceptions of social support during the early years of parenting. Social support may be particularly important to understand among Mexican-origin adolescent females because they have the highest birthrate of all U.S. ethnic groups (Martin, Hamilton, Osterman, Curtin, & Mathews, 2013). Prior work has noted the importance of congruent beliefs and

interdependence between Latina adolescent mothers and their own mothers (Cabrera, Shannon, & Jolley-Mitchell, 2013; Contreras, López, Rivera-Mosquera, Raymond-Smith, & Rothstein, 1999); in addition, research has suggested that attitudes toward the status benefits of parenthood (i.e., perceptions of a shift in power or admiration from the community as a result of becoming a parent as a teenager) may facilitate teen mothers' transition into parenthood (East & Chien, 2010) and organize family dynamics (Rao, McHale, & Pearson, 2003). As such, the current study sought to understand how discrepancies between adolescents' and mothers' attitudes toward teen pregnancy status before the birth of the baby may pose a risk for family dynamics and adolescent mothers' resources (i.e., social support) postpartum.

The coparenting relationship that Mexican-origin adolescent mothers establish with their own mothers (referred to hereafter as grandmothers) is an important family dynamic, given the strong emphasis on family within Latino cultures (Cauce & Domenech-Rodríguez, 2002), as well as research suggesting that Latina adolescent mothers' sense of familism promotes dependence on and receptivity to coparenting with grandmothers (Contreras, 2004). Coparenting refers to collaborative child-rearing efforts, or the ways that parental figures interact to fulfill the role of parents (McHale, Lauretti, Talbot, & Pouquette, 2002) and it has been identified as important for adolescent mothers' adaptation to parenthood (Pittman & Coley, 2011).

Coparenting conflict with grandmothers is one aspect of the coparenting relationship that has been linked to lower psychosocial functioning among White and African American adolescent mothers (e.g., depressive symptoms; Caldwell, Antonucci, & Jackson, 1998), and mothers' psychological functioning has been linked to poor developmental outcomes for their offspring (Leadbeater, Bishop, & Raver, 1996). Associations between coparenting conflict and adolescent mothers' resources, such as social support received from grandmothers, however, are not well understood among Mexican-origin adolescent mothers. Given that ethnic minority adolescent mothers are at high risk for maladjustment following pregnancy (e.g., depressive symptoms; Schmidt, Wiemann, Rickert, & Smith, 2006) and that social support from grandmothers has been identified as a direct resource and a potential buffer against adolescent mothers' maladjustment (Huang et al., 2014), it is important to understand how attitudes and coparenting conflict may inform the quality of social support received among this high-risk group. Guided by family systems theory (S. Minuchin, 1974), we examined how differences between Mexican-origin adolescent mothers' and grandmothers' attitudes on the status attained through teen pregnancy informed adolescent mother–grandmother coparental conflict and, in turn, adolescent mothers' social support from grandmothers.

Background

A Family Systems Approach to Understanding Adolescent Mothers' Transition to Parenthood

Family systems theory suggests that families are interdependent and organized according to subsystems, each composed of groups such as dyads (e.g., parent–child subsystem, coparent subsystem), triads, and larger groupings (Caldwell & Antonucci, 1997; Cox & Paley, 1997;

S. Minuchin, 1974). Scholars have suggested examining family subsystem relationships to better understand the availability and use of specific types of social support for adolescent mothers (Letourneau et al., 2004). Accordingly, to understand the link between attitudes toward teen pregnancy status and social support for Mexican-origin adolescent mothers, we considered how differences within the adolescent mother–grandmother subsystem regarding beliefs about the status gained through teen pregnancy are associated with one dimension of the coparenting relationship (i.e., coparenting conflict) and, in turn, with adolescent mothers' social support from grandmothers.

Family systems must continuously adapt to changing conditions in the environment through strategies or negotiations that organize and regulate behaviors on the basis of communal values (Cox & Paley, 1997). This negotiation paves the way for adaptive or maladaptive interactions between system members (P. Minuchin, 1985). When adolescent mothers undergo changes during and following pregnancy, family members must adapt. The adolescent's transition from the role of teen daughter to teen mother is accompanied by her own mother's transition to the dual role of mother and grandmother. This dual transition requires changes in the roles and patterns of behavior for teen mothers and grandmothers, which can upset the equilibrium, or routine state of existence, for families (i.e., homeostasis; S. Minuchin, 1974).

When a family subsystem's homeostasis is compromised, or the balance between subsystem members deviates as a result of incongruent beliefs (e.g., perceived status of adolescent childbearing), subsystem members must negotiate new relationships and patterns of behavior in an effort to preserve a state of equilibrium. The early transition to parenthood is typically accompanied by tension, as families negotiate how adolescent mothers should be parented and as adolescent mothers face their new child-rearing responsibilities (Leadbeater, Way, & Raden, 1996). Because adolescent mothers often lack necessary resources (e.g., finances, time, child-care experience) to balance child-rearing responsibilities with other demands (e.g., work, school), grandmothers typically share in parenting responsibilities (Pittman & Coley, 2011). For Latinas, researchers have suggested that these shared coparenting relationships can be traced to family systems' cultural traditions and values, which dictate the extent and quality of mother–grandmother coparenting interactions (Contreras et al., 1999). Such traditions and values, however, are subject to subsystem members' interpretations of events (e.g., perceptions of status achieved through teen parenthood) and the interactions that follow.

Family systems concepts can be applied to adaptation in adolescent mother–grandmother subsystems following pregnancy, when adolescent mothers' family members provide relative input on the basis of shared beliefs and developmental norms (e.g., socioemotional development or maturity), which then informs interactions between family system members (i.e., subsystems). For example, family systems may take input in the form of information (e.g., knowledge of the teen pregnancy) and produce output in the form of attitudes (e.g., beliefs about the status of adolescent childbearing), which are products of developmental experiences and feedback from family system members. This output would then inform future interactions (e.g., coparenting relationships) within relevant subsystems (e.g., adolescent mother–grandmother subsystem). Aspects of the subsystem members'

interactions (e.g., social support) can therefore be conceptualized as consequent to family systems' adjustment to change.

Although family systems theory has traditionally been applied to family-level processes, which do not typically include individual outcomes, capturing the complexity of family systems also is useful for discerning trajectories of adjustment or maladaptation for individual family members (Rothbaum, Rosen, Ujiie, & Uchida, 2002). In the current study, we examined how differences between Mexican-origin adolescent mothers' and grandmothers' attitudes toward the status attained through teen pregnancy relate to one dimension of the subsystem's coparenting relationship (i.e., conflict) and, in turn, to indicators of adolescent mothers' adjustment (i.e., social support from grandmothers).

Differences in Attitudes Toward Teen Pregnancy Status and the Coparenting Relationship

Attitudes stem from various influences, organize decision making, and shape behaviors (McKenna, 2000). Much of the existing empirical research related to attitudes toward teen pregnancy status has focused largely on examining nonpregnant and nonparenting teens' attitudes toward teen pregnancy status (Herrman, Waterhouse, & Chiquoine, 2011; Mollborn, 2010), in the hope of better understanding how to prevent teen pregnancy. Limited research has examined the link between pregnant and parenting teens' attitudes toward teen pregnancy status and family dynamics, but findings from a few studies have suggested that this is an important area for research (East, Chien, & Barber, 2012; East & Jacobson, 2001). For example, in a study of pregnant Latina adolescents, family members' reports of perceived status attained through childbearing (i.e., attitudes toward teen pregnancy status) during the first trimester of pregnancy predicted trajectories of family functioning across the transition to parenthood (East & Chien, 2010). Specifically, family members' (e.g., pregnant adolescents', siblings', mothers') reports of high status achieved through pregnancy was associated with greater reports of family cohesion, companionship, and closeness, but not with family conflict, one year postpartum. Researchers proposed that positive beliefs regarding the status attained from childbearing benefited family functioning because of family members' perceptions of community and/or neighborhood admiration. These perceptions of elevated social standing may have facilitated family members' adjustment to adolescents' transition to motherhood. Families that perceived adolescent childbearing favorably were thus more likely to experience positive family functioning than were families that viewed adolescent childbearing unfavorably. In line with perspectives from family systems theory on interdependence within the family system, it may be important to consider the influence of congruent or incongruent beliefs about the meaning and status associated with teen pregnancy to expand the current understanding of family dynamics.

Congruent or incongruent beliefs about the meaning and status associated with teen pregnancy are likely to organize how family system members interact and adapt to the event of pregnancy. Indeed, theorists suggest that attitudes inform family system and subsystem interactions (Caldwell & Antonucci, 1997; S. Minuchin, 1974), and empirical work has noted that system members' beliefs regarding early pregnancy inform coparenting practices (Rao et al., 2003) and organize family functioning (East & Chien, 2010), especially for teen mothers (Speraw, 1987). As such, we propose that the degree of incongruence between

pregnant Mexican-origin adolescents' and grandmothers' attitudes toward teen pregnancy status during the final trimester of pregnancy will be associated with the quality of the adolescent–grandmother coparenting relationship during adolescent mothers' first year of parenting.

Scholars have proposed that differences between coparenting agents likely inform relationship dynamics and patterns of behavior for both partners (Coley & Chase-Lansdale, 1998). When grandmothers become involved in coparenting relationships with their adolescent daughters, those relationships include adolescent mother–grandmother subsystems' implicit beliefs regarding adolescent child rearing (Rao et al., 2003). If members of the adolescent mother–grandmother subsystem hold similar attitudes about the perceived status attained through childbearing, such as believing that adolescent parenthood will give the adolescent greater status in the community, it is possible that adolescent mothers and grandmothers will have less conflict in coparenting interactions. We expect that when adolescent mothers and grandmothers hold different attitudes about the status attained from pregnancy, greater differences will be associated with greater conflict in coparenting relationships within dyads. Differences between adolescents' and grandmothers' attitudes may increase family disequilibrium, as attitudes may be accompanied by particular expectations of new roles and responsibilities among family members (McKenna, 2000; Rao et al., 2003). What is less clear, however, is whether the direction of the incongruence (e.g., adolescent more positive toward teen pregnancy than grandmother vs. grandmother more positive than adolescent) is important to consider.

The current study examines three different possibilities. First, it is possible that the direction of the incongruence will not matter. Family systems are thought to function cohesively when system members share attitudes and values (Caldwell & Antonucci, 1997; Cox & Paley, 1997). Although attitudes toward teen pregnancy status among adolescents and grandmothers may shift and become more similar over time, the initial discrepancy may complicate a family system's adaptation to the pregnancy, thus making the coparenting relationship a more challenging process as system members interact on the basis of their interpretation of the pregnancy.

A second possibility is that incongruence in which the adolescent is more positive about teen pregnancy than the grandmother would be more harmful for the dynamics of the coparenting relationship because adolescents' relatively more positive perceptions of the status gained by becoming a parent may be accompanied with a greater distance between adolescent mothers and grandmothers because of grandmothers' potential frustration with the adolescent's disregard for the stigma teen pregnancy brings to the family. Indeed, research suggests that there is little cultural support for teen pregnancy (Cherlin, Cross-Barnet, Burton, & Garrett-Peters, 2008). Findings with Mexican-origin adolescent mothers suggest that teen pregnancy may be regarded as a dishonor and a shameful family event (Gonzalez-Lopez, 2005). Other work has documented mothers' reported disappointment with their teen daughters' pregnancy (Edin & Kefalas, 2005). This mismatch in attitudes, with adolescents holding more positive beliefs, could weaken relationships between adolescents and grandmothers, potentially limiting adolescent mothers' exposure to grandmothers' advice regarding

parenting practices and thereby creating conflict or disagreement in future coparenting interactions.

Finally, guided by a life course perspective (Elder, Kirkpatrick Johnson, & Crosnoe, 2003), a third possibility is that when grandmothers hold more positive attitudes toward teen pregnancy status than their pregnant adolescent daughters do, this deviation from developmentally normative expectations may increase the risk of conflict in the adolescent–grandmother coparenting relationship. A life course perspective highlights the importance of expectations regarding the appropriate timing, or age norms, for experiencing specific life transitions (Elder et al., 2003). For Latino families, although research suggests a strong sense of family values and positive beliefs about extending the family (Contreras et al., 1999), qualitative findings suggest that pregnancy status attitudes are also based on age norms (Villarruel, 1998), which indicates that an early pregnancy would not be desirable. Thus, a nonnormative difference, where grandmothers hold more positive attitudes than their adolescent daughters, may reflect grandmothers' own optimism and low regard for consequences and challenges that accompany teen pregnancy, an outlook that has typically been ascribed to adolescent mothers due to lack of experience (Speraw, 1987). This role shift may increase conflict between adolescents and grandmothers, as grandmothers' beliefs about the prestige that accompanies motherhood may also include greater expectations for adolescents' caregiving responsibilities. Because adolescent mothers are often unprepared for parenting responsibilities (Leadbeater, Bishop, & Raver, 1996), adolescent mothers are typically dependent on grandmothers for parenting support (Pittman & Coley, 2011). This anticipated dependence may conflict with grandmothers' expectations when they hold a high regard for their adolescent daughters' status as a parent.

The Coparenting Relationship and Social Support for Adolescent Mothers

Scholars recommend understanding family functioning and adaptation through social and cultural contexts (Kurrien & Vo, 2004). *Social support* refers to interactions with individuals or networks (e.g., family members, health professionals, friends) that provide some form of guidance or assistance (Stewart, 1993). Social support can include various types of supportive interpersonal exchanges, such as informational (e.g., sharing parenting skills) and emotional support (e.g., personal reassurance). Because adolescent mothers' social support from grandmothers may buffer against the adversities associated with adolescent motherhood (Brown et al., 2012), it is important to understand how relationship dynamics between coparents may be associated with adolescent mothers' social support from grandmothers.

Although limited work has examined the link between coparenting and social support, in a recent study with Mexican American families, Sotomayor-Peterson, Figueredo, Christensen, and Taylor (2012) found that coparenting (i.e., parental agreement about child rearing) was positively linked to the frequency of family emotional expressiveness (e.g., praising someone for good work) in the home. Although based on work with adult mothers and fathers, findings suggest that parenting dynamics among family subsystems may indeed inform supportive family contexts (Sotomayor-Peterson et al., 2012). The current study

extends this prior work by examining these associations among Mexican-origin adolescent mother–grandmother dyads.

Current Study

Grounded in family systems theory (S. Minuchin, 1974), the current study examined how differences between Mexican-origin adolescent mothers' and grandmothers' attitudes toward teen pregnancy status were associated with adolescent mother–grandmother coparenting conflict and, in turn, adolescent mothers' reports of social support from grandmothers (Figure 1). Because pregnant adolescents' views about teen pregnancy vary by age (Rosengard, Pollock, Weitzen, Meers, & Phipps, 2006), all analyses controlled for adolescent age. In addition, because prior work has noted that stronger adherence to mainstream U.S. culture (i.e., acculturation) is associated with (a) lower family cohesion following an adolescent's transition to motherhood (East & Chien, 2010) and (b) relatively less positive feelings and lower support for pregnancy in a sample of Latina adolescent mothers (Nadeem & Romo, 2008), we controlled for adolescents' and grandmothers' acculturation. We also controlled for coresidence, given prior work noting variability in coparenting relationships based on adolescent mothers' coresidence with grandmothers (Kalil, Spencer, Spieker, & Gilchrist, 1998). We also included family income as a control, given that limited economic resources have been identified as a potential barrier to coparental involvement (Pittman & Coley, 2011). Finally, all analyses controlled for dyads' mean levels of attitudes toward teen pregnancy status to assess adolescent mother–grandmother discrepancies in attitudes after accounting for dyads' average levels of those attitudes.

Method

Participants

The current study utilized self-reported data from the first (W1), second (W2), and third (W3) waves of a longitudinal study of 204 Mexican-origin adolescent mothers, their infants, and grandmothers (Umaña-Taylor, Guimond, Updegraff, & Jahromi, 2013). At W1, adolescents were interviewed during their third trimester of pregnancy and were an average of 30.9 weeks pregnant ($SD = 4.52$, range = 23–40 weeks). W2 took place at 10 months postpartum, and W3 took place at 24 months postpartum. The current study was designed to assess the association between pregnant adolescents' and grandmothers' attitudes and adolescents' adjustment to parenting with grandmothers. The longitudinal examination of key study constructs was intended to capture specific developmental milestones for Mexican-origin adolescent mothers from the time of pregnancy to two years postpartum, a time period that has been identified as critical to understanding adjustment among parenting adolescents (Milan et al., 2004). In addition, because prior work with Latina adolescent mothers suggests that parenting becomes more difficult for young mothers during the latter half of their first year postpartum (East et al., 2012), it is important to understand the factors that inform parenting adjustment during the early postpartum period (e.g., 10 months after birth).

Of the adolescent mothers who initially participated at W1, 195 participated at W2 (96%), and 173 participated at W3 (85%). Adolescent mothers participated along with a mother figure (i.e., grandmothers), which included adolescents' biological mothers (88%) and other female kin. At W1, adolescent mothers ($M_{age} = 16.80$ years, $SD = 1.00$) ranged in age from 15 to 18 years (with the exception of one participant who turned 19 on the date of the interview), and grandmothers' average age was 40.75 ($SD = 6.93$) years. A majority of adolescent mothers (58.3%) were enrolled in school at W1, with fewer enrolled in school at W2 (37.7%) and W3 (24.5%). A majority of adolescent mothers (64.7%) were born in the United States, with the remaining adolescent mothers born in Mexico. Grandmothers reported an average education level of ninth grade ($SD = 3.7$ years), which ranged from one year of formal education to 18 years (i.e., a master's degree). A majority of grandmothers were born in Mexico (69.6%), and those born in Mexico reported living in the United States an average of 15.4 years ($SD = 8.34$; range = 1 month to 45 years). A majority of adolescent mothers and grandmothers coresided at W1 (86.8%), W2 (69.4%), and W3 (59.3%). At W1, the mean household income reported by grandmothers was approximately \$27,323 ($SD = \$19,893$; range = \$94–\$114,000).

Procedure

Adolescent mothers were recruited from high schools, health centers, and community agencies in a metropolitan area in the U.S. Southwest. To be eligible for participation in the current study, adolescents had to identify as Mexican-origin, be currently pregnant, be between the ages of 15 and 18 years, and not be legally married. Additionally, adolescent mothers had to have a mother figure who was also willing to participate in the study. For participants younger than 18 years, parental consent and youth assent were obtained; informed consent was obtained for participants who were 18 years and older.

Adolescent mothers participated in face-to-face interviews, which lasted approximately 2.5 hours. Trained research assistants read questions aloud to participants in their language of preference (i.e., English or Spanish), with 61.3% of adolescent mothers and 30.9% of grandmothers preferring to be interviewed in English at W1. Each participant received \$25 for participation at W1, \$30 at W2, and \$35 at W3.

Measures

Attitudes toward teen pregnancy status (W1)—At W1, adolescent mothers' and grandmothers' attitudes regarding teen pregnancy status were measured with a four-item modified version of East and Jacobson's (2001) six-item childbearing attitudes measure. The items (e.g., "In my neighborhood and community when a teenager has a child of her own it makes her an important person," "In my neighborhood and community people admire or look up to teenagers who have children") assessed adolescent mothers' and grandmothers' perceptions of the status and admiration from neighborhood and community members as a result of teenage pregnancy. Respondents were asked to think about the previous year and respond on a five-point Likert-type scale with responses ranging from 1 (*disagree*) to 5 (*agree*), with higher scores indicating more positive attitudes toward the status attained through teen pregnancy. Because a difference score was created using different reporters' accounts, measurement equivalence across reporters was examined on the basis of

established criteria (i.e., configural, loading, and intercept invariance models; Little, Slegers, & Card, 2007). These analyses indicated that a four-item version of the original scale was statistically equivalent across adolescent mothers and grandmothers (analyses available upon request); thus, all analyses were based on the four items. In the current study, Cronbach's alphas for adolescent mothers' reports in English and Spanish were .81 and .85, respectively; for grandmothers' reports, alphas were .82 (English) and .84 (Spanish).

To test the competing hypotheses regarding the direction of the incongruence in adolescent mothers' and grandmothers' attitudes toward teen pregnancy status, we created two different variables. First, we created a difference score using the absolute value of the difference after subtracting grandmothers' mean score on attitudes toward teen pregnancy status from adolescents' mean score. The range for the absolute difference score was 0 to 3.78 ($M = 1.18$, $SD = 0.85$). Higher scores indicated greater differences between adolescents' and grandmothers' attitudes, and lower scores indicated greater similarity in attitudes within dyads. Second, we created a difference score by subtracting the mean score of grandmothers' attitudes toward teen pregnancy status from adolescents' mean score. The range for this variable was -4 to 3.50 ($M = -0.09$, $SD = 1.43$), with positive values indicating that adolescents had more positive attitudes toward the status attained through teen pregnancy than grandmothers, negative values indicating that grandmothers had more positive attitudes than adolescents, and a score near 0 indicating that adolescents and grandmothers had similar attitudes toward teen pregnancy status. In addition, we averaged adolescent mothers' and grandmothers' scores to create the score for dyads' average attitudes toward teen pregnancy. The range for mean scores of the dyads' attitudes toward teen pregnancy status was 1 to 4.63 ($M = 2.79$, $SD = 0.85$).

Acculturation (W1, W2)—Adolescent mothers' and grandmothers' acculturation at W1 and W2 was assessed using the 13-item Anglo orientation subscale from the Acculturation Rating Scale for Mexican Americans-II (ARSMA-II; Cuéllar, Arnold, & Maldonado, 1995). Items (e.g., "I associate with Anglos," "My family cooks American foods") were scored on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*extremely often or almost always*). Higher scores indicated higher engagement in Anglo orientation. Cronbach's alphas for adolescent mothers were .76 and .86 at W1, and .69 and .87 at W2; and alphas for grandmothers were .76 and .84 for at W1, and .79 and .85 at W2, in English and Spanish, respectively.

Coparental conflict (W2)—The interparental conflict scale, a subscale from Ahrons's (1981) Co-parental Communication Scale, was used to measure the degree of hostility, conflict, tension, and disagreement between coparents when discussing parenting issues. A four-item modified version was adapted to examine coparental relationships between adolescent mothers and their own mothers, with higher scores indicating more frequent coparental conflict (Madden-Derdich, 2002). Items (e.g., "When you and your mother/daughter discuss parenting issues, how often is there hostility and anger between you?") were scored on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*always*). With Latina adolescent mothers, Herzog, Umaña-Taylor, Madden-Derdich, and Leonard (2007) reported

a Cronbach's alpha of .78. In the current study, Cronbach's alphas for adolescent mothers' reports in English and Spanish were .87 and .86, respectively.

Social support from mother (W3)—At W3, adolescent mothers' perceptions of social support were assessed with the 15-item Global Support from Mother Figure Postpartum Scale (GSMF-PP; Toomey, Umaña-Taylor, Jahromi, & Updegraff, 2013). Adolescent mothers were asked to think about social support related to parenting received from their mothers within the previous 12 months on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*very much*). The GSMF-PP includes three subscales that assess emotional support (seven items, e.g., "I feel that I can share my worries and fears with [my mom/mother figure name]"), instrumental support (four items, e.g., "[My mom or mother figure name] provides helpful information about parenting"), and companion support (four items, e.g., "[My mom or mother figure name] and I get together to have fun and relax"). Items were averaged within each subscale, with higher scores indicating higher levels of support for adolescents from mother figures. For adolescent mothers in the current study, Cronbach's alphas for English versions at W3 were .96 for emotional, .91 for instrumental, and .86 for companionship support; alphas for Spanish versions were .96 for emotional, .90 for instrumental, and .83 for companionship support.

Background characteristics (W1, W2)—Data on adolescent mothers' and grandmothers' background characteristics (i.e., age, coresidency, family income) were collected during the home interview. Adolescent mothers' self-reported date of birth was used to calculate their age at the time of the interview. Coresidency was determined by asking adolescent mothers if they lived with their mothers (0 = *no*, 1 = *yes*). Average household income was computed by creating a sum of the following: grandmothers' annual income, monetary resources provided by any other individual who contributed to the household, and financial assistance from public assistance and/or food stamps.

Results

Analytic Strategy

The current study used path analysis within a structural equation modeling framework in Mplus 6.1 (Muthén & Muthén, 2010). Recommended fit indices were used to determine the goodness of fit for the hypothesized models; adequate (good) fit was assessed by a nonsignificant chi-square statistic (McDonald & Ho, 2002), a comparative fit index (CFI) of greater than .90 (.95) (Hu & Bentler, 1999), a root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) less than .08 (.05) (Kline, 1998), and a standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) of less than .08 (.05) (Kline, 2005).

Two models were tested. The first model used the absolute value difference score and tested the degree of incongruence in attitudes, regardless of the direction. The second model tested associations using a directional difference score variable (i.e., subtracting grandmothers' mean score on attitudes toward teen pregnancy status from adolescents' mean score). This model took into account the direction of the difference between grandmothers' and adolescents' attitudes toward teen pregnancy status. Adolescents' age, coresidency with grandmothers, family income, and grandmothers' and adolescents' acculturation at W1 and

W2 were estimated as predictors of W2 coparenting conflict and W3 emotional, instrumental, and companionship support in the structural models.

Missing data were handled with full information maximum likelihood (FIML; Enders, 2010). All descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations among study variables were conducted using data estimated via FIML (Table 1). The proportion of data present for the directional difference and absolute difference score was 100% at W1. At W2, 95% of adolescents reported on the coparenting conflict measure. At W3, 84% of adolescents reported on perceived levels of emotional support, instrumental support, and companionship support from grandmothers.

Examination of descriptive statistics indicated that adolescents' and grandmothers' mean levels of teen pregnancy status attitudes were not significantly different from each other (i.e., adolescents' $M = 2.74$, $SD = 1.02$; grandmothers' $M = 2.83$, $SD = 1.19$; $t(203) = -0.92$, $p = .36$). On average, dyads' attitudes toward teen pregnancy status were moderately positive, and adolescent mothers' average levels of coparenting conflict with grandmothers at 10 months postpartum were moderately low (see Table 1). In addition, adolescent mothers reported moderate to high levels of emotional, instrumental, and companionship support from grandmothers (see Table 1). With respect to demographics, coresidency was positively associated with coparenting conflict, suggesting that adolescents reported more coparenting conflict with grandmothers when they lived together. Furthermore, social support variables were not significantly associated with demographic controls, but family income was positively correlated with instrumental support from grandmothers.

Hypothesized Models

The hypothesized models tested the associations between attitudes toward teen pregnancy status (i.e., absolute difference score, directional difference score), coparenting conflict, and adolescent mothers' emotional, instrumental, and companionship support (see Figure 1). In the analysis of the absolute difference score, fit indices suggested good model fit: $\chi^2(18) = 20.00$, $p = .33$, CFI = 1.00, RMSEA = .02, SRMR = .03. In this model (not shown in Figure 1 and presented only in text), however, there was no association between the W1 absolute difference score and W2 coparental conflict ($\beta = .01$, $SE = .07$, $p = .94$), but coparental conflict did predict W3 emotional ($\beta = -.22$, $SE = .07$, $p < .01$), instrumental ($\beta = -.20$, $SE = .07$, $p < .01$), and companionship support ($\beta = -.15$, $SE = .07$, $p < .05$). In the second model, which used the directional difference score, examination of fit indices indicated that the model was a good fit to the data, $\chi^2(18) = 24.42$, $p = .14$, CFI = 0.99, RMSEA = .04, SRMR = .04. The W1 directional difference score between adolescents' and grandmothers' attitudes toward teen pregnancy status was positively associated with W2 adolescent mothers' reports of coparental conflict, suggesting that when adolescents reported more positive pregnancy status attitudes relative to grandmothers, coparenting conflict was higher one year later. Furthermore, as adolescent mothers reported higher levels of W2 coparental conflict between themselves and grandmothers, they also reported lower levels of W3 emotional, instrumental, and companionship support.

Testing Mediation

To test whether differences in adolescents' and grandmothers' attitudes toward teen pregnancy status were related to adolescent mothers' social support via adolescent mothers' reports of coparental conflict in the directional difference score model, we used the RMediation package (Tofighi & MacKinnon, 2011), which is based on the distribution-of-the-product method (MacKinnon, Lockwood, & Williams, 2004). RMediation computes the 95% confidence interval (CI) for the mediated effect; a mediated effect is considered significant ($p < .05$) when the confidence interval does not contain 0. Including all study controls (i.e., family income, coresidency with grandmothers, adolescents' age, and adolescents' and grandmothers' acculturation), mediational tests revealed that the mediated effect from directional differences between adolescents' and grandmothers' attitudes toward teen pregnancy status to adolescent mothers' emotional support via coparental conflict was significant ($ab = -.035$, $SE = .02$, 95% $CI[-.08, -.003]$). The mediated effect from directional differences in attitudes toward teen pregnancy status to instrumental support via coparental conflict was also significant ($ab = -.032$, $SE = .018$, 95% $CI[-.074, -.003]$). The mediated effect from differences in attitudes toward teen pregnancy status to companionship support via coparental conflict was not significant ($ab = -.024$, $SE = .013$, 95% $CI[-.061, .000]$).

Discussion

Research with adolescent mothers has demonstrated the negative influence of poor coparenting relationship qualities (Pittman & Coley, 2011). For Latina adolescent mothers, a group that is largely underrepresented in the coparenting literature, researchers suggest that grandmothers play an imperative role as coparental figures (Contreras et al., 1999). Indeed, several studies with ethnic minority families have linked coparenting conflict with grandmothers to adolescent mothers' maladjustment (i.e., depressive symptoms; Brown et al., 2012; Caldwell et al., 1998; Huang et al., 2014). Limited work, however, has examined how family beliefs and values, specifically those regarding early pregnancy, inform the dynamics of coparenting relationships (Rao et al., 2003) and how coparenting relationships, in turn, may inform important resources for adolescent mothers, such as social support from grandmothers. Informed by family systems theory (Caldwell & Antonucci, 1997; S. Minuchin, 1974), the current study examined the link between differences (i.e., absolute difference, directional difference) in Mexican-origin adolescent mothers' and grandmothers' attitudes toward teen pregnancy status and one aspect of their coparental relationships and, in turn, adolescent mothers' social support from grandmothers.

Drawing on family systems theory (Caldwell & Antonucci, 1997; Cox & Paley, 1997; S. Minuchin, 1974), we hypothesized that adolescent mothers' and grandmothers' incongruent perceptions about the status attained through teen pregnancy may challenge the subsystems' adaptability or coparenting adjustment, following adolescents' transition into motherhood. Toward this end, this study examined three possibilities: (a) that any type of incongruence between grandmothers' and adolescents' attitudes would predict greater conflict in the coparenting relationship; (b) that incongruence in which the adolescent is more positive about teen pregnancy than the grandmother would be more harmful for the dynamics of the

coparenting relationship; and (c) that when grandmothers hold more positive attitudes toward teen pregnancy status than their pregnant adolescent daughters, this deviation from developmentally normative expectations may increase the risk of conflict in the adolescent–grandmother coparenting relationship. Consistent with the second possibility and in line with family system perspectives, differences in dyad members' attitudes, when adolescent mothers reported more positive attitudes regarding teen pregnancy status (or perceptions of higher status due to child bearing) relative to grandmothers, were related to adolescent mothers' perceptions of higher levels of coparenting conflict approximately one year later. These findings suggest that it was not simply incongruence between adolescent mothers' and grandmothers' attitudes toward teen pregnancy status that negatively predicted coparental relationships but, rather, adolescents' relatively more positive attitudes than grandmothers' that may create tension in these relationships.

According to notions from family systems theory, interdependence between subsystems, or receptivity in shared feedback, is critical for negotiating new relationships and adapting to change (S. Minuchin, 1974). By this note, if pregnant adolescents are content with teen pregnancy when their mothers are not, attributing higher regard and prestige to their own pregnancy despite their teen status, they may be less receptive to interactions related to child rearing with grandmothers or less inclined to seek advice from grandmothers, which may increase parenting disagreements. Indeed, Nadeem and Romo (2008) suggested that when Latina adolescent mothers experience greater individuation during their transition to parenthood, this lack of connectedness with other family members may disrupt cultural expectations of interdependence among family members.

In addition, adolescent mothers' more positive attitudes toward teen pregnancy status, relative to grandmothers', may result in elevated coparenting conflict given (a) the increased self-confidence in maternal abilities associated with positive attitudes toward teen pregnancy status (Williams, 1991) that perhaps provides more opportunities for disagreement between adolescents and grandmothers, given the context of traditional cultural expectations of interdependence (Nadeem & Romo, 2008), and (b) the fact that grandmothers, who may be more realistic about the risks associated with teen pregnancy, may perceive their daughters as naive and not ready for the role of parenting, which could lead to increased conflict in this domain. Adolescent mothers' perceived status as a parent may initially undermine the role of grandmothers as models of parenting. Further, given the limited cultural support (Cherlin et al., 2008) and perceptions of disappointment (Edin & Kefalas, 2005) and shame (Gonzalez-Lopez, 2005) surrounding teen pregnancy that have been documented in prior work, such negative sentiment may contribute to greater conflict in the family system, weakening coparenting relationships (Feinberg, 2003). This interpretation is speculative, and future work is needed to directly examine associations between the negative sentiment of grandmothers relative to adolescent mothers arising from teen pregnancy and family system conflict.

Findings did not support the first and third possibilities, which suggests that the directionality of incongruent attitudes is important to consider, given that the absolute discrepancy in attitudes alone was not related to elevated levels of coparenting conflict. It may be that when grandmothers hold more positive beliefs than do their parenting daughters

about the status acquired through teen pregnancy, the dynamics of the adolescent–grandmother coparenting relationship may shift in a positive way. It is possible that attributing a high status to adolescents' transition into motherhood may pave the way for a more egalitarian relationship between grandmothers and their parenting daughters, thus decreasing the potential for conflict in coparenting behaviors. Future work will be needed to test this possibility.

Mediation tests indicated that the directional difference between adolescents' and grandmothers' attitudes toward teen pregnancy status (i.e., adolescents more positive about teen pregnancy than grandmothers) informed adolescent mothers' social support via coparental conflict for instrumental and emotional support, but not companionship support. It may be that, compared to companion support, instrumental (e.g., assistance related to parenting) and emotional (e.g., receiving parenting advice from mother) support are more closely related to features of the coparenting relationship specific to the behaviors supportive of child rearing between adolescent mothers and grandmothers. The process through which discrepant attitudes inform companionship support (e.g., spending free time with mother) may be explained by other constructs associated with family systems' values and beliefs (e.g., coparental interaction). Discrepant attitudes may inform adolescents' and grandmothers' expectations about coparenting activities they should engage in during the years following adolescents' transition to motherhood, thus limiting the amount of leisure time spent together. Importantly, the current study provides insight into understanding processes that inform resources for Mexican-origin adolescent mothers and highlights the role of discrepant attitudes and coparenting conflict in instrumental and emotional social support received from the mother figures of parenting adolescents.

In addition, our findings are consistent with prior work with Mexican American families (e.g., Sotomayor-Peterson et al., 2012), indicating that subsystem cultural values may influence coparenting dynamics, which in turn inform family support (i.e., family climate). This work also contributes to the literature by highlighting these associations among Mexican-origin adolescent mothers, who are at greater risk for maladjustment compared to older mothers (Pittman & Coley, 2011). Additionally, coparenting conflict was negatively associated with all dimensions of social support (i.e., instrumental, emotional, companionship support), which suggests that the quality of adolescent mother–grandmother relationships may be associated with perceived social support (Borcherding, Smithbattle, & Schneider 2005) and that greater coparenting conflict with grandmothers, a unique dimension of the coparenting relationship, may pose a significant risk to Mexican-origin adolescent mothers.

Limitations and Future Directions

Findings from the current study must be viewed in light of certain limitations. First, findings were based on Mexican-origin families; thus, they should not be broadly generalized to other groups without additional research, as there may be features of the coparenting relationship (e.g., child-rearing disagreements, division of child-related labor, supporting coparenting roles) that are unique to Latino subgroups (Cabrera et al., 2013). Second, the present study focused on adolescent mothers' dimensions of social support (i.e., instrumental, emotional,

companionship). It will be informative for future research to examine whether similar patterns emerge with other indicators of adjustment (e.g., parenting self-efficacy, parenting stress), as such indicators have been linked to poorer parenting behaviors (Pittman & Coley, 2011). Finally, although the current study had methodological strengths such as the inclusion of multiple members of the family system as reporters, analyses were limited to the use of self-report data, introducing the potential problem of shared method variance for adolescent-reported predictor and outcome variables (i.e., rater effects; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). Future research will benefit from the use of observational methods to assess features of the coparenting relationship in a more multifaceted manner. Despite these limitations, findings provide important implications for future research.

Together, findings from the current study correspond to a growing body of literature indicating the need to investigate the context of family subsystems in evaluating protective factors for adolescent mothers (McHale, Kuersten-Hogan, & Rao, 2004; Pittman & Coley, 2011). Our results offer insights into the complexity of understanding how the direction of incongruence in attitudes toward teen pregnancy status between adolescents and grandmothers are associated with future coparenting relationship qualities between adolescent mothers and grandmothers. Professionals working with Mexican-origin adolescent mothers and grandmothers may benefit from learning that differing perceptions about the status attributed to teen pregnancy may be associated with more conflictual coparenting interactions between adolescent mothers and grandmothers. In particular, it may be important to understand the coparenting behaviors and expectations that are associated with adolescents' and grandmothers' perceptions of status and admiration from community members as a result of teenage pregnancy. In light of findings from the current study, considering both adolescents' and grandmothers' perceptions simultaneously may facilitate an understanding of parenting adjustment processes among Mexican-origin families with teen mothers.

Finally, because these different perceptions may ultimately inform adolescent mothers' perceptions of emotional and instrumental support received from grandmothers, which have been identified as important resources for adolescent mothers' adjustment and well-being (Huang et al., 2014), findings have important implications for family intervention programming. A potential avenue for interventions seeking to increase social support for Mexican-origin adolescent mothers is to target coparental relationships with grandmothers. By decreasing coparental conflict between adolescent mothers and grandmothers, researchers may promote more supportive environments for Mexican-origin adolescent mothers.

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Figure 1.

Final Model of the Difference Between Grandmothers' and Adolescents' Attitudes Predicting Support Through Coparental Conflict.

Note: The model uses the directional difference score, in which higher scores indicate adolescents having more positive attitudes than grandmothers. Control variables (i.e., coresidence, adolescents' age, family income, grandmothers' and adolescent mothers' Anglo orientation, dyads' average attitudes toward teen pregnancy) were included as predictors of W2 and W3 variables, and covariances among W1, W2, and W3 variables were estimated in the model but are excluded here for ease of presentation. Standardized coefficients are presented. W1 = Wave 1; W2 = Wave 2; W3 = Wave 3; ATTP = Attitudes toward teen pregnancy. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Table 1
Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations Among Study Variables ($N = 204$)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
1. W1 ATTP difference ^a	—														
2. W1 ATTP difference ^b	-.12	—													
3. W1 dyad average ATTP	-.16*	.10	—												
4. W1 gma acculturation	.19**	-.08	-.12	—											
5. W1 adol acculturation	.11	-.02	.10	.43***	—										
6. W1 adol age	-.06	-.08	.03	.08	-.02	—									
7. W1 coresidency	.14*	-.07	-.11	-.02	.03	.19**	—								
8. W1 family income	.11	-.13	-.15	.20**	.16*	.11	.00	—							
9. W2 coparental conflict	.15*	.01	.11	-.02	.01	-.09	.14*	-.02	—						
10. W2 gma acculturation	.18*	-.07	-.20**	.90***	.41***	.08	.05	.22**	-.01	—					
11. W2 adol acculturation	.06	-.08	.04	.48***	.76***	.01	.06	.13	.04	.45***	—				
12. W2 coresidency	-.01	.02	-.07	-.02	-.17*	-.10	.23**	.06	.00	.08	.10	—			
13. W3 emotional support	.08	.03	.12	-.14	.10	.07	-.11	.15	.24**	-.13	.02	.29***	—		
14. W3 instrumental support	.04	.01	.12	-.12	.12	.02	-.05	.18*	.21**	-.08	.05	.35***	.85***	—	
15. W3 companion support	.11	.11	.08	-.06	.10	.05	-.08	.13	-.17*	-.03	.07	.22**	.81***	.72***	—
Mean	-.09	1.14	2.79	2.68	3.61	16.80	.87	27.323	1.99	2.56	3.69	.69	3.78	4.18	3.27
Standard Deviation	1.433	.88	.85	1.07	.73	1.00	.34	19.893	.85	1.00	.71	.46	1.13	.98	1.08

Note: gma = grandmother; acculturation = Anglo orientation; adol = Adolescent; ATTP = Attitudes toward teen pregnancy status; W1 = Wave 1; W2 = Wave 2; W3 = Wave 3. Coresidency coded 0 = *live apart*, 1 = *live together*.

^aDirectional difference score.

^bAbsolute difference score.

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

*** $p < .001$.