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Great Plains Studies, Center for

Fall 2004

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Great Plains Research 14 (Fall 2004):185-202
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FAMILY, PEER, AND ACCULTURATIVE CORRELATES OF PROSOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AMONG LATINOS

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ABSTRACT—The present study was designed to examine the roles of family cohesion and adaptability, parent and peer attachment, and acculturation in predicting prosocial behavior tendencies in Latino adolescents from Nebraska. A total of 63 Latinos (*M* age = 14.52 years) from Lincoln, NE, completed measures of acculturation, parent and peer attachment, family adaptability and cohesion, and tendencies to perform prosocial behaviors. Results of a series of multiple regression analyses suggest that acculturation negatively predicted prosocial behavior tendencies (i.e., the higher the level of acculturation, the lower the tendency to perform prosocial acts). Peer but not parent attachment, and family adaptability but not cohesion, positively predicted prosocial tendencies. Discussion focuses on the integral roles that parents and peers play in healthy social development of Latino youth, and in the importance of incorporating culture into current models of prosocial development.

Key Words: acculturation, family adaptability, family cohesion, prosocial behaviors

Introduction

Latinos are the fastest growing ethnic minority group in the United States, particularly in the Great Plains. Currently, they represent 12.5% of

the US population and are now one of the largest ethnic minority groups in the country (US Census Bureau 2001a). In Nebraska alone, there are about 94,500 Latinos, comprising 5.5% of the state population (US Census Bureau 2001c). The data reflect a 155% increase in the last decade. Unfortunately, those changes in US demographics have not been matched with endeavors to better understand, and consequently meet the needs, of the Latino population in the Great Plains (Carranza et al. 2000). Various scholars have expressed concern regarding the need to understand parenting, family, and peer-influence processes among Latinos in light of the lack of research in this area and the importance that these processes hold for Latinos (e.g., Zayas and Solari 1994; Levine and Trickett 2000). The present study examines family, peer, and acculturative status as they pertain to positive social development of Latino adolescents in Nebraska.

Family Processes and Prosocial Development

Socialization theorists have long emphasized family processes as central to the development of adolescents' prosocial behaviors (i.e., behaviors primarily intended to benefit others), though little empirical research has been devoted to this issue, particularly among ethnic minorities (Eisenberg and Fabes 1998). Related studies show that various dimensions of parenting and a collection of parenting practices predict children's positive outcomes (Lapsley 1996; for reviews, see Carlo et al. 1999; Eisenberg and Valiente 2002). Among these parenting dimensions, the authoritative style, or the communication of high demands paired with warmth and affection (Dekovic and Janssens 1992), and the use of nonpunitive and non-power-assertive modes of discipline, have been found to promote prosocial development (Hoffman 1963). Researchers suggest that those links can be at least partly attributed to the positive relationship they promote between the parent and child, which in turn encourages the internalization of parental expectations, rather than merely producing positive acts when the punitive parent is around (Eisenberg and Fabes 1998).

Parent attachment in particular, or the secure, positive, and warm relationship between parent and child, has been linked to positive and prosocial behaviors in children and adolescents (Eberly and Montemayor 1998), though findings are somewhat mixed in this area (Eisenberg and Fabes 1998). Researchers suggest that a healthy attachment between parent and child contributes to the development of competence and social skills, as well as the development of empathy (i.e., vicarious emotional responding)

and perspective-taking capacities (i.e., understanding another's situation), which in turn have also been found to promote prosocial behaviors. Additionally, children and adolescents are encouraged to reciprocate positive acts with people that they have these positive relationships with, making prosocial behaviors more likely (Eberly and Montemayor 1998; Eisenberg and Fabes 1998). Alternatively, attachment can serve as a positive background, against which authoritative parenting practices (including demands and inductive discipline) can be better received, and where values are better socialized and accepted (Eisenberg and Valiente 2002), thus promoting prosocial behaviors and positive outcomes.

Peer Processes and Prosocial Development

In addition to parent and family variables, peer relationships also appear to play a significant role in the prosocial development of youth, especially among adolescents (Carlo et al. 1999). Various dimensions of peer relationships have been found to influence the development of prosocial intentions and behaviors (Wentzel and McNamara 1999), and in learning principles of reciprocity and open communication (Youniss 1994). In addition, peer relationships play an integral role in the overall social development of youth. Peers and friends are potential sources of emotional support (Belle et al. 1987), companionship (Furman and Buhrmester 1985; Berndt 1989), a sense of belonging, support for one's sense of self-esteem, and practical support such as information and instrumental help (Furman and Buhrmester 1985; Berndt 1989). Like healthy parent-child relationships, friendships and peer attachment not only directly provide a context in which children and adolescents can be prosocial, but also help in developing skills and social competence that make performing prosocial behaviors more likely.

The significant role that peers play in prosocial and other aspects of development become even more salient as they enter into adolescence. Adolescence is a period in which peer relationships and friendships become more intense, increase in complexity and perceived significance, and become more salient (Furman and Buhrmester 1992). And while the parent-child relationship, particularly parent attachment, continues to play a very significant role in adolescent development (Greenberg et al. 1983), peer relationships begin to play a significant role in development during these years (Laible et al. 2000). Adolescent friendships become very important contributors to healthy social adjustment and other aspects of well-being (Savin-Williams and Berndt 1990).

To summarize, research indicates that parenting styles related to authoritativeness, and parent-child relationships characterized by attachment and warmth and closeness, promote prosocial development in children and adolescents. In addition, peer relationships have important implications for the prosocial development of youth. Less is known, however, as to whether such parenting and peer dimensions are equally important for positive development among ethnic groups within the US, such as Latinos.

Prosocial Development and Family and Peer Processes among Latinos

Potentially, the links between parent and peer relationship dimensions and the prosocial tendencies of children and adolescents might also be found among Latino youth. However, immigrants and ethnic minority groups tend to have unique socialization experiences and characteristics that might impact the relations of such variables. Numerous researchers have acknowledged the need to extend current prosocial development research to include populations outside the majority US population (e.g., Whiting 1983; Tietjen 1986; Carlo et al. 1999; Miller et al. 2001).

Latinos in the US are quite heterogeneous in multiple ways, but many Latino families value and emphasize familial interdependence (Zayas and Solari 1994; McDade 1995; Knight et al. 1995; Garcia Coll et al. 2002) and have been found to be less conflictual compared to non-Latino US families (Barber 1994). It is likely that a close and warm relationship between parent and child also positively influences prosocial tendencies among Latino youth. However, it has been suggested that Latino families tend to exhibit unique characteristics, such as the reliance of family members on each other in ways distinct from mainstream American culture. Specifically, this includes the flexible assignment of roles among family members and reliance on extended family for support (Harrison et al. 1990; Julian et al. 1994; Garcia Coll et al. 2002; Padilla 2002). Research has shown that immigrant Latino children participate responsibly in household tasks even at very young ages (Delgado-Gaitan 1994), and that children serve integral roles in responsible work and in tending to younger siblings (Zayas and Solari 1994). Role flexibility might be a family process dimension that contributes positively to the adjustment and prosocial development of Latino youth. In addition, some Latino and other ethnic minority families face additional challenges brought about by the immigrant experience, including adjustment to a foreign place (McDermott 2001). In such circumstances, it becomes additionally advantageous to take on roles outside one's own—such as when children tend to younger siblings, or when extended family pitch in to help in various ways.

In addition to the unique family processes that might influence prosocial tendencies of Latino adolescents, aspects of the Latino culture might also represent significant factors. For example, Latinos exhibit particular strengths stemming from values espoused by Latino culture, such as cooperativeness with others and family orientedness (Julian et al. 1994). Research suggests that the valuation of interdependence in Latino culture is reflected in higher levels of cooperativeness among Latino youth—with more acculturated youth showing lower levels of cooperativeness and higher levels of competitiveness (Knight and Kagan 1977; Knight et al. 1995). Latino youth have also been found to value group orientedness, sharing, and other related behaviors more than other US children (Rotheram-Borus and Phinney 1990).

Latinos who migrate to the Great Plains of the US might experience acculturation in ways that are different from Latinos in the Southwest, East Coast, or West Coast of the US. The overall lack of bilingual services and the relatively small numbers of Latinos in the Great Plains might accentuate the challenges of acculturating to the US majority society. Prior researchers have shown more positive social and mental health outcomes for less acculturated Latinos (Knight and Kagan 1977). Based on studies suggesting that Latino culture values cooperation and interdependence, and that Latino youth show higher levels of prosociality and related behaviors than their US Caucasian counterparts (e.g., Knight et al. 1993), researchers expected that acculturation would be negatively associated with prosocial behavior tendencies. It is thought that a lower identification with Latino culture among Latino youth translates to a lower identification with interdependence, valuation of cooperation, and other similar values central to Latino culture.

In summary, researchers hypothesize, based on studies suggesting that parent-child closeness and warmth predict positive developmental outcomes, at least among majority US samples, and based on studies suggesting the importance of flexibility in family roles to adapt to demands of immigrant life, that family adaptability and cohesiveness, and parent attachment, would positively predict prosocial behavior tendencies. Moreover, peer attachment is hypothesized to be positively related to prosocial behavior tendencies. Lastly, acculturation is hypothesized to be negatively related to prosocial tendencies.

Methods

Data from this study come from the Quality of Life (QOL) Study of the Latino Research Initiative, University of Nebraska-Lincoln. The QOL study

is a broad-based assessment of factors affecting the quality of life of Latino families, with particular attention paid to factors previously identified as relevant to minority and immigrant populations.

Participants

Participants of this study were 63 adolescents (32 females, 31 males) from Lincoln, NE. Lincoln is the capital city of Nebraska, located in the southeast region of the state. This mid-sized city spans about 75 square miles and has a population of 225,581 as of the year 2000 (US Census Bureau 2001b). While the city, like the rest of the Midwest, has an increasing ethnic minority population, the percentage of minorities is still lower than nationwide estimates. The population of Lincoln is predominantly white (89%), followed almost equally by Latinos (3.61%), Asians (3.12%), and African Americans (3.09%), then Americans Indians (.6%) and other races (US Census Bureau 2001b).

Participants were recruited through a variety of methods including direct mailings to parents of Latino children enrolled in public schools, letters and telephone calls to individuals on mailing lists maintained by service and governmental agencies serving Latino families, solicitation at events sponsored by Latino community organizations (e.g., churches), and participant referrals ("snowball sampling"). All participants were compensated $10 for their participation.

Approximately 65% (n = 39) of the participants were born in the US, 27% (n = 16) in Mexico, and 7% (n = 4) in other Latin American countries. One participant reported having been born in Germany. Most (69%) described themselves as Mexican or Mexican American, 24% as some other Latin American racial group (e.g., South American, Cuban American), and the rest as "other." Mean age of the participants was 14.52 years (SD = 2.01).

Procedures and Measures

Data collection occurred in the participants' homes. Respondents filled out a questionnaire in either English or Spanish (all measures were translated and back translated by a team of bilingual psychologists).

Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (Armsden and Greenberg 1987). A shortened version of the two subscales of the Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (IPPA) was utilized for this study. The first subscale measures

attachment to a parental figure, or the degree to which the respondent feels he has a close and positive relationship with his closest parental figure. The second subscale measures attachment to one's peers, or the degree to which the respondent feels he has a close and positive relationship with his peers. Each subscale consists of 12 items to which participants respond using a five-point Likert scale in which 1 = Never, 2 = Seldom, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Often, and 5 = Always. Sample items for the parent attachment measure included "I tell my parent about my problems and troubles" and "My parent accepts me as I am." Sample items for the peer attachment scale include "When I am angry about something, my friend tries to be understanding" and "My friends respect my feelings." Both subscales displayed acceptable reliability—with a Cronbach's—alpha coefficient of .68 for parent attachment, and .79 for peer attachment.

Prosocial Tendencies Measure (Carlo and Randall 2001). The Prosocial Tendencies Measure (PTM) is a self-report measure intended to assess the individual's tendency to perform prosocial behaviors. A range of prosocial behavior tendencies are tapped by this measure. These are (1) altruistic, or the tendency to perform acts for the benefit of others; (2) emotional, or the tendency to perform acts when the situation is emotionally evocative; (3) dire, or the tendency to perform prosocial acts in emergency situations; (4) public, or the tendency to perform prosocial acts to be recognized by others; (5) compliant, or the tendency to perform prosocial acts when they are requested or demanded; and (6) anonymous, or the tendency to perform prosocial acts without anyone knowing. To obtain a general measure of prosocial behaviors, a composite score was computed by taking the mean of all the items, except those intended to measure public prosocial behaviors (as expected, public prosocial behaviors were negatively or unrelated to the other types of prosocial behaviors; see Carlo and Randall 2001). A total of 21 items comprised this composite measure. The scale utilizes a five-point Likert scale in which 1 = Does not describe me at all, 2 = Describes me a little, 3 = Somewhat describes me, 4 = Describes me well, and 5 = Describes me greatly. Prior researchers have shown adequate evidence for reliability and validity (including convergent validity) of this measure (Carlo et al. 2003). Cronbach's alpha coefficient for overall prosocial behavior tendencies was .71.

Family Adaptability and Cohesion Scale (Olson et al. 1985). The Family Adaptability and Cohesion (FACE) Scale has two subscales that measure the

extent to which the family system is flexible and able to change its roles in response to stress (adaptability scale), and the degree to which there is emotional bonding between and among family members (cohesion scale). The adaptability scale consists of items dealing with child control, discipline, leadership, roles, and rules. The cohesion scale consists of items dealing with emotional bonding, family boundaries, interests and recreation, and supportiveness.

The FACE Scale was originally developed to measure the Circumplex Model of family functioning (Olson et al. 1985), which proposes a curvilinear relation between cohesion and/or adaptability and healthy family functioning. That is, healthy family functioning would not be expected with either low or high extremes in FACE scores. Instead, a moderate score is optimal. However, in this study the subscales are used separately as continuous measures of the family's ability to be flexible in response to stress (adaptability) and their sense of closeness (cohesion). The intent was not to measure ideal family functioning, but rather how these specific variables were related to prosocial behavior tendencies. Indeed, continuous scores of the family adaptability and family cohesion subscales have been used in prior research (e.g., Robinson 2000; White et al. 2000). The Cronbach's alpha coefficients for this measure were .80 overall, .78 for cohesion scale, and .65 for adaptability.

Short Acculturation Scale for Hispanic Youth (Barona and Miller 1994). The Short Acculturation Scale for Hispanic Youth (SASH-Y) is a self-report measure of the degree to which the individual has changed his behavior and/or attitudes toward those of the host society. Although the SASH-Y measures acculturation primarily through language use, adequate psychometric properties of this scale, including its reliability and validity when used with Latino youth, have been demonstrated (Barona and Miller 1994; Serrano and Anderson 2003). And while other scholars acknowledge that multidimensional measures of acculturation should be employed (e.g., Knight et al. 1993), measures of language use, including the original Short Acculturation Scale for Hispanics (SASH; Marin et al. 1987), have been found to converge strongly with other measures of acculturation.

For this measure, nine questions pertaining to language use (e.g., "Which language do you speak with friends?") and preference (e.g., "In general which language in the movies, TV, and radio programs do you prefer to listen to?") are asked, and participants responded using a five-point Likert scale ranging from "1 = Native language only" to "5 = English only." A Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .94 was obtained for this measure.

TABLE 1
MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS

	Male $n = 31$	Female $n = 32$	Total $n = 63$
Age	15.06 (2.06)	13.97 (1.82)	14.52 (2.01)*
Prosocial behaviors	3.20 (.55)	3.39 (.47)	3.30 (.51)
Acculturation	3.85 (1.30)	3.82 (.90)	3.83 (1.11)
Peer attachment	3.44 (.61)	3.94 (.59)	3.69 (.65)**
Parent attachment	3.42 (.55)	3.68 (.56)	3.55 (.57)
FACES+ - Overall	59.00(11.26)	60.21(12.24)	59.60(11.67)
Family cohesion	32.28 (6.42)	32.11 (8.30)	32.20 (7.35)
Family adaptability	25.22 (6.60)	26.65 (5.97)	25.92 (6.29)

* Indicates gender differences significant at $p < .05$.
** Indicates gender differences significant at $p < .01$.
+Family Adaptability and Cohesion Scale.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics are summarized in Table 1. An Analysis of Variance was conducted to examine gender differences in overall prosocial behaviors, parent and peer attachment, acculturation, and family adaptability and cohesion. Gender differences were found for age ($F(1,62) = 4.99$, $MSe = 3.78$, $p < .05$), with boys being older than girls, and for peer attachment ($F(1,62) = 10.82$, $MSe = .36$, $p < .01$), with girls reporting higher levels of attachment than boys. In the following we present the sets of analyses that were conducted.

Bivariate Correlations among the Main Variables

Bivariate correlations were conducted to examine the intercorrelations among the variables of interest. Significant positive relations were found between family cohesion and family adaptability ($r(61) = .43$, $p < .001$). Significant positive relations were also found between the family adaptability and cohesion variables and attachment: overall family cohesion and

TABLE 2
BETA AND STANDARDIZED BETA WEIGHTS PREDICTING FOR PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOR TENDENCIES

		B (b)	Beta ß
Model 1	Acculturation	-0.11	-0.27
	Parent attachment	0.20	0.21
Model 2	Acculturation	-0.12*	-0.27
	Peer attachment	0.29*	0.35
Model 3	Acculturation	-0.08	-0.18
	FACES+ - Cohesion	0.01	0.20
Model 4	Acculturation	-0.25*	-0.12
	FACES+ - Adaptability	0.35*	0.30

* Indicates significant beta weights at $p < .05$.
+Family Adaptability and Cohesion Scale.

adaptability and peer attachment ($r(61) = .26$, $p = .044$), overall family cohesion and adaptability and parent attachment ($r(61) = .53$, $p < .001$), and family cohesion and parent attachment ($r(61) = .52$, $p < .001$). Prosocial behaviors were positively correlated with overall family cohesion and adaptability ($r(61) = .33$, $p < .001$) and with peer attachment ($r(61) = .30$, $p < .05$).

Regression Analyses and Predictions

We conducted a series of multiple regression analyses to examine whether individual differences in acculturation, parent and peer attachment, and family adaptability and cohesion account for individual differences in prosocial behaviors. Table 2 summarizes the analyses. In each of these analyses, acculturation was entered simultaneously with family adaptability, family cohesion, parent attachment, and peer attachment. Thus, there were a total of four regression analyses.

Model 1: Parent Attachment and Acculturation. The first multiple regression model with parent attachment and acculturation as predictors did not account for a significant amount of the variance in prosocial behaviors ($R^2 = .09$, $F(2,59) = 2.78$, $p = .07$). As can be seen in Table 2, neither acculturation nor parent attachment significantly contributed to this model.

Model 2: Peer Attachment and Acculturation. The multiple regression model with peer attachment and acculturation accounted for a significant amount of the variance in prosocial behaviors ($R^2 = .13$, $F(2,59) = 5.55$, $p = .006$). As can be seen in Table 2, peer attachment was positively and significantly related to prosocial behaviors, while acculturation was negatively and significantly related to prosocial behaviors.

Model 3: Family Cohesiveness. The multiple regression model with family cohesiveness and acculturation did not account for a significant amount of variance in prosocial behaviors ($R^2 = .08$, $F(2,59) = 2.55$, $p = .09$).

Model 4: Family Adaptability. The multiple regression model with family adaptability and acculturation accounted for a significant amount of the variance in prosocial behaviors ($R^2 = .16$, $F(2,59) = 5.76$, $p = .005$). As can be seen in Table 2, family adaptability was positively and significantly related to prosocial behaviors, while acculturation was negatively and significantly related to prosocial behaviors.

Discussion

The present study was designed to examine the roles that family cohesion and adaptability, parent and peer attachment, and acculturation play in predicting prosocial behavior tendencies in Latino adolescents. The aim was to extend current research that generally indicates that family and parental variables were associated with tendencies of children to be prosocial. Whether those relations held true for Latino youth, and whether acculturation, in addition to familial and peer variables, predicted differences in prosocial tendencies, was investigated.

A number of interesting results emerged from our analyses. First, consistent with earlier research (see Eisenberg and Fabes 1998), peer attachment positively predicted prosocial behavior tendencies. As was mentioned earlier, the quality of adolescents' peer relationships, especially during adolescence, has important implications for successful social development and adjustment. Additionally, one is more likely to act prosocially toward people with whom one has a positive relationship (Eberly and Montemayor 1998). Peers increasingly become important in the lives of children and become salient sources of support and companionship during the adolescent years.

Second, family adaptability, but neither cohesion nor parent attachment, was related positively to prosocial tendencies. Research has shown

that positive development is promoted by dimensions of parenting that include both warm affect and reasonable levels of structure or demands placed on the child (e.g., Lamborn et al. 1991), at least among majority US samples. In the current study, however, the degree of flexibility in roles and duties seemed even more important. In fact, adaptability, rather than a sense of family closeness and a warm, positive relationship with parents, was a better predictor of prosocial tendencies. One likely explanation for this is that Latino families have been found to value interdependence and orientation toward the family (McDade 1995; Knight et al. 1995; Garcia Coll et al. 2002). Many families tend to rely on each other for support, and even children participate responsibly in household tasks and in tending to other siblings (Zayas and Solari 1994; Garcia Coll et al. 2002). Additionally, immigrant families who experience additional challenges (Julian et al. 1994) stemming from socioeconomic difficulties, adjustment challenges, and added difficulties because of having to deal with a new society, might rely on adaptive strategies that include role flexibility and adaptability within the family (Harrison et al. 1990). In order to cope with extrafamilial challenges, children might be called on to tend to younger siblings, for example, or take on some additional chores to help out within the household. As previously mentioned, the social demographic characteristics of the Great Plains might exacerbate the acculturative challenges to Latino youth. Flexibility might be an effective means to deal with those additional challenges, and might be one explanation as to why a positive relation was found between family adaptability and prosocial behavior tendencies. Families that are unable to adapt and be flexible in light of challenges might not be as effectively able to cope with the situations they are faced with.

Alternatively, earlier research has also indicated that participation in responsible tasks promotes prosocial behaviors (Whiting and Edwards 1988), in a process that has been called "foot in the door effect" (Eisenberg and Fabes 1998). Children who are called on to participate in the family's economic tasks, in tending to younger siblings, or otherwise participating responsibly, also tend to show prosocial and cooperative behaviors, likely due to training effects (Whiting and Edwards 1988). Possibly, family adaptability places children in situations where they participate in such activities and contexts, which in turn promote prosociality.

The fact that neither parent attachment nor family cohesiveness predicted prosocial behaviors is consistent with the recent suggestion that these variables reflect the affective climate of the home (Darling and Steinberg 1993). Some scholars have noted that affective climate variables might predict individual differences in emotionality (e.g., sympathy) rather than

specific behaviors (Carlo et al. 1998). Therefore, high levels of parent attachment and family cohesiveness might facilitate youths' sympathy tendencies, which in turn might foster prosocial behaviors. However, specific parenting and family practices are more likely to be direct predictors of prosocial behaviors. Further research on the roles of parent attachment and family cohesiveness in youths' prosocial behaviors is needed.

And third, another interesting finding was the negative association between levels of acculturation and prosocial tendencies. Higher levels of adopting majority culture were associated with lower levels of prosocial tendencies. This is consistent with earlier research that has shown that Latino youth exhibit higher levels of cooperativeness and prosocial behaviors, and that identification with one's ethnic culture can serve as a positive factor in development (Knight et al. 1993). This is an interesting finding given that some studies show that Latino youth are at risk for some negative developmental outcomes, likely due to the additional difficult circumstances immigrant or ethnic minorities face. Possibly, the negative relation between acculturation and prosocial tendencies is due to the fact that Latino culture values group orientedness and cooperativeness (Garcia Coll et al. 2002). As Latino youths' traditional values come into contact with the values of the majority society in the Great Plains of the US, group orientedness and cooperativeness might give way to individualism and competitiveness in order to achieve success. Specific values such as individualism and competitiveness are considered highly important in US society, and as such, espousing those values can result in a lower tendency to exhibit prosocial behaviors (Knight et al. 1995). Consistent with this notion, Knight and Kagan (1977) found that higher-generation Mexican American children exhibited lower levels of cooperative behaviors and higher levels of competitive behaviors than lower-generation Mexican American and Mexican national children.

One should note that the present study design was correlational and by no means suggests specific direction of causality between the variables. Moreover, while the present results were consistent with theoretical expectations and were statistically significant, the actual amount of variance that the predictors accounted for was modest. Nonetheless, taken together, the prosocial behavior tendencies of the Latino youth in our current study were predicted by acculturation and relational variables comprised of peer attachment and family adaptability. The findings underscore the importance of family and peer processes in the development of prosocial outcomes among Latino youth. Family and peers can serve as invaluable resources for adolescents. Furthermore, a healthy sense of flexibility and adaptability in

roles within the family, even during adolescence, plays an integral role in prosocial development. At the same time, healthy peer relationships are also important. Such findings are consistent with earlier studies that indicate the importance of these two social units in promoting positive outcomes in youth (Laible et al. 2000).

The present findings also underscore the importance of considering culture in the study of various outcomes, and in extending research to various populations. In the present study, the degree to which one adopts the dominant culture had significant implications for prosocial development. Additionally, patterns of relations were somewhat unique from those found in studies with non-Latino youth. Research in prosocial development has traditionally focused on the Caucasian American populations and has not always considered culture-specific predictors of prosocial behaviors, or culture-relevant models of prosocial development. The findings of the current study support earlier researchers' suggestions regarding the need to address this gap in research in order to have a more informed and more relevant body of work in prosocial literature. Such suggestions are particularly relevant today, as we become more aware of the various pathways by which development can take place across individuals of different societies. As well, with changing US demographics and the increase in ethnic minority populations, it becomes increasingly important to identify factors in positive outcomes that might be similar or unique among ethnic groups for this body of work to be more relevant.

In summary, the present study contributes to our understanding of the Latino population in the Great Plains. Latinos are now the largest ethnic minority group in the United States, and research is only slowly responding to this change in US demographics. In addition, much research on ethnic minority populations, including Latinos, has focused on the potential negative outcomes associated with the ethnic minority experience. Yet, in the current study, we find that aspects of the Latino culture in fact may serve as a factor in promoting positive social outcomes. While Latinos might experience additional challenges as a minority group in the US, the current study suggests that they also have particular strengths that might serve as protective factors that contribute to their developmental success.

Acknowledgments

Data for this study were drawn from the Quality of Life Study, which was supported by grants to members of the Latino Research Initiative from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln College of Arts and Sciences and the College

of Education and Human Sciences, the University of Nebraska Layman Fund, the University of Nebraska Research Council, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's Center for Great Plains Studies, and a LINC Kellogg grant.

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