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Work and Mexican American Parent-Adolescent Relationships: The Mediating Role of Parent Well-Being

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Abstract

This study of Mexican American two-parent families ($N = 246$) examined the role of parents' well-being (i.e., depressive symptoms, role overload) as a potential mechanism through which parent occupational conditions (i.e., self-direction, hazardous conditions, physical activity, work pressure) are linked to parent-adolescent relationship qualities (i.e., warmth, conflict, disclosure). Depressive symptoms mediated the links between maternal and paternal work pressure and parent-adolescent warmth, conflict, and disclosure. For mothers, depressive symptoms also mediated the links between self-direction and mother-adolescent warmth, conflict, and disclosure; for fathers, role overload mediated the links between work pressure and hazardous conditions with father-adolescent warmth.

Keywords

Mexican American Families; Parent-Adolescent Relationship; Parent Well-being; Parental Occupational Conditions

Parents' work experiences have important implications for individual well-being and parent-adolescent relationships. Researchers have identified a number of specific occupational conditions (e.g., self-direction, work pressure) that are associated with variations in parents' well-being and in family relationship qualities (MacDermid, Roy, & Zvonkovic, 2005). Conceptual models of family stress and spillover processes have proposed that parent well-being is a potential mediator of the associations between specific occupational conditions and qualities of the parent-adolescent relationship. Scholars have argued, for example, that parents' stressful work conditions are linked to parents' feelings of overload and psychological distress, and in turn, problematic parent-child relationships (Perry-Jenkins, Repetti, & Crouter, 2000). The present study advances the literature by exploring links between mother and father occupational conditions and parent-adolescent relationship qualities as mediated by parents' well-being in Mexican American families.

Empirical evidence linking parents' occupational conditions, parents' well-being and parent-adolescent relationship qualities is based almost entirely on European American samples of middle class and professional families (MacDermid et al., 2005), and little is known about

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how these associations operate within other work contexts or cultural groups (Perry-Jenkins et al., 2000). Much new job growth is in lower level jobs with harsh work conditions that often require little formal education (Bernstein, 2004). Mexican Americans are overrepresented in unskilled labor positions (Mosisa, 2002) with long hours and low wages (Crouter, Davis, Updegraff, Delgado, & Fortner, 2006a), and live under disadvantaged economic conditions, all of which are risk factors for poor mental health and diminished quality of family relationships (Conger, Rueter, & Conger, 2000). The majority of Latino families, with Mexican Americans making up 66% of the population, include two parents (69%) (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010), so understanding both mothers' and fathers' occupational conditions is important.

Conceptual models of work-family spillover (Repetti, 1987) and family stress (Conger et al., 2000) informed the first goal of this study. We investigated the mediational role of parents' well-being (i.e., depressive symptoms, role overload) as a link between parents' occupational conditions (i.e., self-direction, work pressure, hazardous conditions, and physical activity) and parent-adolescent relationship qualities (i.e., warmth, conflict, disclosure). Studies examining spillover processes suggest that occupational stress is a source of influence on parents' emotions and well-being that, in turn, shape the quality of parent-adolescent relationships (Repetti, 1987). The family stress model proposes that parent well-being mediates the links between stressful economic conditions and parent-child relationships (Conger et al., 2000). This study extends the family stress model beyond economic hardship to examine specific occupational conditions that relate to parents' well-being, and, consequently, to parent-adolescent relationships. A second goal of the study was to test adolescent gender as a moderator of links between parent work and well-being, and parent-adolescent relationship qualities, as there is evidence for sex-typed socialization practices in Mexican American families (e.g., Raffaelli & Ontai, 2004).

Parent Occupational Conditions and Parent Well-Being

The work-family spillover model proposes that adverse occupational conditions may relate to individuals' emotions that spill over to the family domain (Repetti, 1987). Process models have focused on how emotions arising in the work system set in motion processes in the individual, such as stress reactions, that result in decreased well-being that "spills over" to family dynamics. Researchers suggest it is important to understand the specific occupational conditions that set in motion this spillover process (Perry-Jenkins et al., 2000). Empirical research has identified several specific occupational conditions that are linked to psychological well-being, including self-direction (e.g., Katz & Piotrkowski, 1983), hazardous conditions (e.g., Sears & Galambos, 1992), physical activity (e.g., Hovey & Magaña, 2002), and work pressure (e.g., Crouter et al., 2006a).

Self-direction

Historically, research with European Americans on the nature of work and individual functioning (e.g., intellectual flexibility, well-being) has examined occupational self-direction (i.e., the complexity and amount of supervision of one's work) (Kohn & Schooler, 1978). With a representative sample of Canadian workers, Roxburgh (1996) found that workers in jobs with high levels of routine (i.e., low self-direction) had high levels of distress (i.e., depression and anxiety). In a study of African American women in relatively low status occupations, low levels of job autonomy (i.e., lack of independence and close supervision) were associated with role overload measured as the stress of balancing family and work roles (Katz & Piotrkowski, 1983). Building on previous findings, we expected a negative association between self-direction and depressive symptoms and role overload.

Hazardous conditions and physical activity

Mexican Americans are overrepresented in unskilled occupations, such as farm work (Mosisa, 2002), construction, and production jobs (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010), that often involve hazardous and physically demanding conditions, suggesting that these are important dimensions of work to consider for these families (Updegraff, Crouter, Umaña-Taylor, & Cansler, 2007). Researchers have found links between occupational conditions and decreased levels of psychological well-being in studies primarily with middle class and professional European American samples (Sears & Galambos, 1992). For low status occupations, such as migrant farm work, scholars have conjectured that the high frequency of hazardous work conditions associated with these occupations places workers at extraordinary psychological risk (Vega, Warheit, & Palacio, 1985). A study that explored mental health with a sample of Mexican migrant farm workers, whose jobs were characterized by hazardous conditions and physical activity, found that the sample had elevated levels of depression (Hovey & Magaña, 2002). Building on this research, we expected positive associations between hazardous conditions and physical activity with depressive symptoms and role overload.

Work pressure

Empirical evidence suggests that there is a link between work pressure (i.e., having to work hard and fast) and psychological well-being (i.e., increased role overload and depressive symptoms). Specifically, among European American working- and middle-class families, higher levels of work pressure were associated with role overload for both mothers and fathers (Crouter, Bumpus, Maguire, & McHale, 1999; Ransford, Crouter, & McHale, 2008). In addition, work pressure was associated with European American fathers', but not mothers', depressive symptoms (Ransford et al., 2008). For Mexican American fathers, in contrast, there were no associations between work pressure and depressive symptoms using data from the present sample (Crouter et al., 2006a). As there is limited research in this area on Mexican American parents, we explored the links between work pressure and well-being for both mothers and fathers.

Parent Occupational Conditions and Well-Being, and Parent-Adolescent Relationships

Parents' occupational conditions and well-being may be associated with the parent-child relationship at any developmental period. We focused on early adolescence as it is a time of change and renegotiation in the parent-adolescent relationship, in part because of physical, social, and cognitive changes that characterize this developmental period (Steinberg, 2001). This time of renegotiation in the parent-adolescent relationship often includes increased levels of conflict (Steinberg, 2001) and changes in acceptance and communication patterns between adolescents and parents (Collins, 1990). Successful adjustment to this time of transformation occurs in the context of parental warmth, firmness, and autonomy granting, which have been linked to decreased levels of problem behaviors (Steinberg, 2001). Below, we consider direct links between parents' occupational attributes and parent-adolescent relationship quality (i.e., warmth, disclosure, conflict) as well as the mediational role of parents' well being in the associations between parent occupational attributes and parent-adolescent relationship quality.

Direct linkages

Research on work and parent-adolescent relationship qualities in a European American sample found a positive association between occupational complexity and parents' positive, warm, and responsive behaviors with children (Goodman, Crouter, Lanza, & Cox, 2008). In

a sample of working- and middle-class dual-earner Canadian families, work conditions of overload were negatively associated with parent-adolescent relationships (i.e., low warmth for mothers, high conflict for fathers) (Galambos, Sears, Almeida, & Kolaric, 1995). Turning to parent well-being, depressive symptoms have been linked to disrupted parenting practices in a working-class European American sample (Conger, Patterson, & Ge, 1995) and to increased parent-adolescent conflict and decreased family warmth (Vandewater & Lansford, 2005) in a nationally representative sample of mother-child dyads. A review of the literature also found that parents' feelings of pressure and overload are associated with increased conflict and lower warmth with adolescents (Crouter & Bumpus, 2001). There is also evidence that adolescents are less likely to disclose to parents who engage in negative parenting behaviors (e.g., Tilton-Weaver, Kerr, Pakalniskeine, Tokic, Salihovic, & Stattin, 2010), which have been associated with parents' depressive symptoms (Conger et al., 1995).

Parent well-being as a mediator

Several conceptual models propose that the mechanism through which occupational conditions relate to parent-adolescent relationships is parent well-being. The family stress model suggests that parents' well-being mediates the links between stressful economic conditions and parent-child relationships (Conger et al., 2000), and the work-family spillover model purports that stressful work conditions elicit negative emotions that extend beyond the workplace to affect family functioning (Repetti, 1987). These models suggest that parent well-being is a more proximal predictor of family dynamics than parents' occupational conditions. In support of the family stress model, there is evidence for well-being mediating the links between European American and Mexican American parents' behaviors and economic stress, a proxy for harsh occupational conditions (Conger et al., 1995; Parke et al., 2004). However, to our knowledge only one study has tested a mediational model that included occupational conditions, well-being, and parent-adolescent relationship qualities (Crouter et al., 1999) and found for European American mothers and fathers that role overload mediated the links between work pressure and parent-adolescent conflict.

Informed by work-family spillover and family stress models and empirical research, we hypothesized that higher levels of hazardous conditions, physical activity, and work pressure, and lower levels of occupational self-direction would be associated with higher levels of depressive symptoms and role overload, which, in turn, would be linked to lower levels of warmth and disclosure and higher levels of conflict in the parent-adolescent relationship. We expected that parent well-being would mediate the links between occupational conditions and parent-adolescent relationship qualities. Given that family socioeconomic status (SES) is linked to parent-adolescent relationship quality (Perry-Jenkins et al., 2000), we included SES as a control. Sibling birth order also was included as a control because our design included two adolescents in each family. Adolescent gender was tested as a moderator of links between parent work, well-being, and parent-adolescent relationship qualities because there is empirical evidence of Mexican American parents' sex-typed socialization practices (e.g., Raffaelli & Ontai, 2004). Based on the literature, we expected work-family spillover to be more pronounced for same-sex parent-adolescent dyads, and in particular for mother-daughter dyads.

Method

Participants

The data came from a study of family socialization and adolescent development in 246 Mexican American families (Updegraff, McHale, Whiteman, Thayer, & Delgado, 2005) in a southwestern metropolitan area. Given the goal of the larger study, to examine gender,

culture, and family socialization processes in Mexican American families with adolescents, criteria for participation were as follows: (1) 7th graders and one older adolescent sibling lived at home; (2) biological mothers and biological or long-term adoptive fathers lived at home; (3) mothers were of Mexican heritage; and (4) fathers worked at least 20 hours/week. Although not a criterion, 93% of fathers also were of Mexican origin.

Families were recruited through junior high schools in five school districts and from five parochial schools. Letters and brochures describing the study (in both English and Spanish) were sent to families, and bilingual staff made follow-up telephone calls to determine eligibility and interest in participation. Eligible families included 421 families (23% of the initial rosters and 32% of those we were able to contact and screen for eligibility). Of those who were eligible, 284 families (or 67%) agreed to participate and 246 families completed interviews. See Updegraff et. al. (2005) for additional details about sampling.

The 243 families in the current study were a subsample (99%) of the 246 families that participated in the larger study. We omitted three families in which neither parent was employed for the previous two months at the time of interview. Families represented a range of socioeconomic levels from poverty to upper class. The percentage of families who met federal poverty guidelines was 19.8%, similar to the 18.6% of two-parent Mexican American families who were in poverty in the county from which the sample was drawn (U.S. Census Bureau, 2003). Most parents were born outside the U.S. (71%); this subset of parents had lived in the U.S. an average of 12.43 years ($SD = 8.9$) and 15.02 ($SD = 8.56$) years for mothers and fathers, respectively. Two thirds of parent interviews were conducted in Spanish. The majority of fathers (65%) and mothers (72%) worked the day shift. Mother occupations ranged in prestige from dishwasher to teacher, with the modal occupation of housekeeper, and for fathers, from car detailer to psychiatrist, with the modal occupations of maintenance and construction workers. With respect to target adolescents, older adolescents were 50% female and an average of 15.72 ($SD = 1.54$) years of age, and younger adolescents were 51% female and 12.77 ($SD = .58$) years of age. Most adolescents were born in the U.S. (58%) and interviewed in English (83%). Of the 243 families, 240 families had employed fathers and 163 families had employed mothers.

Procedures

Data were collected during in home structured interviews averaging 3 hours for parents and 2 hours for adolescents. Bilingual interviewers conducted interviews separately with each family member using laptops and reading questions aloud due to variations in literacy.

Measures

Two bilingual individuals translated measures to Spanish and back translated into English (Foster & Martinez, 1995). A third bilingual individual reviewed all translations, and the research team resolved discrepancies. For all scales, higher scores indicate higher levels of the construct.

Background information—Parents reported on their education in years and their annual household income. To correct for skewness, we applied a log transformation to household income. To represent family SES, we created a composite score by standardizing and averaging mothers' and fathers' education levels and household income ($\alpha = .76$).

Parent occupational conditions—Parents completed the *Work Pressure Scale* from the Work Environment Scale (Moos, 1986; Moos & Moos, 1983). This 9-item scale assesses the degree to which high job demands and long work hours characterize the participant's job (e.g., "There is constant pressure to keep working") on a 4-point scale, ranging from "very

true” to “*very untrue*” ($\alpha = .72$ for fathers and $.81$ for mothers). This scale has been validated with a Mexican American sample (Crouter et al., 2006a).

Objective measures of maternal and paternal occupational attributes were constructed using data from the Occupational Information Network (O*Net; Peterson et al., 2001). The O*Net electronic database contains information on characteristics of occupations standardized on 100-point scales to represent the degree of importance of a particular characteristic to an occupation, with high scores indicating high importance. We chose characteristics from the database that represented the dimensions of occupational attributes of interest (i.e., self-direction, hazardous conditions, and physical activity) based on a previous construct validation study of the measures (Crouter, Lanza, Pirretti, Goodman, & Neebe, 2006b)¹. Sixteen O*Net characteristics were combined to create a measure of *self-direction* that represented occupational complexity and management (e.g., making decisions, solving problems). The *hazardous conditions* measure was comprised of six characteristics (e.g., hazards, contaminants, or extremes of noise or temperature). The *physical activity* measure was comprised of five characteristics (e.g., running, bending, or standing). Internal consistency was acceptable: cronbach’s $\alpha = .96$, $.75$, and $.94$ for mothers’ and $.94$, $.87$, and $.92$ for fathers’ self-direction, hazardous conditions, and physical activity, respectively.

Parent well-being—Mothers and fathers reported on their depressive symptoms and feelings of role overload. *Depressive symptoms* were measured with the 20-item version of the Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale (CES-D; Radloff, 1977), which has been used previously with Mexican Americans (e.g., Mosicicki, Locke, Raue, & Boyd, 1989). Respondents rated the items using a likert-type scale from 0 (*rarely or none of the time*) to 3 (*most of the time*) to describe the frequency of their experiences (e.g., “I had crying spells”). Cronbach’s alphas were $.89$ for mothers and $.86$ for fathers.

Mothers’ and fathers’ *role overload* was assessed with an adapted version of The Role Overload Scale (House & Rizzo, 1972; Reilly, 1982). The 13-item scale measures parents’ sense that there is too much to do and not enough time to do it (e.g., “I need more hours in the day to do all the things which are expected of me”) on a 4-point scale ranging from 1 (*very untrue*) to 4 (*very true*). Items were averaged to create scale scores for mothers ($\alpha = .91$) and fathers ($\alpha = .92$).

Parent-adolescent relationship quality—Parent-adolescent relationship quality was measured by adolescents’ reports of warmth/acceptance, frequency of conflict, and adolescent disclosure in the mother- and father-adolescent relationship (at separate points in the interviews). Adolescents completed the 8-item version of the *warmth/acceptance* subscale of the Children’s Report of Parental Behavior Inventory (Schwarz, Barton-Henry, & Pruzinsky, 1985). Each item (e.g., “I am able to make ‘child’s name’ feel better when he/she is upset”) was rated on a 5-point scale ranging from “*almost never*” to “*almost always*.” Cronbach’s alphas were $.88$ and $.93$ and $.85$, and $.89$ for older and younger siblings’ reports on mothers and fathers, respectively.

Adolescents also rated the frequency of *conflict* with their mothers and fathers during the past year (ranging from 1 = *not at all* to 6 = *several times a day*) regarding 12 topics (e.g., bedtime/curfew, family obligations) using an adapted version of measures by Smetana (1988) and Harris (1992). A sample item is “How often in the past year have you had

¹Two trained coders independently coded mothers’ and fathers’ jobs with the appropriate O*Net occupation code, and discrepancies were resolved by the research team resulting in percent agreement that ranged from $.66$ - $.77$. The occupation codes for the sample were electronically merged with values for the chosen occupational characteristics in the O*Net database (see Crouter et al., 2006b for a detailed description).

disagreements or differences of opinion with your (mom/dad) about talking back or being disrespectful?" Cronbach's alphas were .82 and .81 for older and younger siblings' reports of conflict with mothers, respectively, and .86 for older and younger siblings' reports of conflicts with fathers.

Adolescents reported the frequency of their *disclosure* to their mothers and their fathers about their daily activities (ranging from 1 = *almost never* to 5 = *almost always*) using an average of a 6-item scale (Stattin & Kerr, 2000). A sample item is "Do you tell your (mother/father) about how your day went without being asked?" Cronbach's alphas were .73, .65, .70, and .66 for older and younger siblings' disclosure to mothers and fathers, respectively.

Results

We used a multilevel modeling (MLM) framework to examine the mediational role of parents' well-being on the link between parents' occupational conditions and parent-adolescent relationship qualities (MacKinnon, 2008). Using this framework, which extends multiple regression to nonindependent data, we were able to examine links within the family context while taking into account the clustered nature of the data (i.e. adolescent sibling pairs within families). There are several types of nested data structures for mediation models, and our data included predictors and mediators measured at the family-level (Level 2) with criterion variables measured at the individual-level (Level 1) (i.e., $2 \rightarrow 2 \rightarrow 1$ model). We used SAS Proc Mixed (9.1) to estimate a series of mixed models that examined the links between parents' occupational conditions (predictors), parents' well-being (mediators), and adolescents' reports of parent-adolescent relationship qualities (criteria). Each set of analyses included three models to estimate the mediation effects. *Model 1* estimated the total effects of parents' occupational conditions on parents' well-being. This model was an OLS regression model as all of the variables were at Level 2 (because they were family-level phenomena, shared by the two siblings). *Model 2* estimated the total effects of parents' occupational conditions on parent-adolescent relationship quality. This was a mixed model with parents' occupational conditions at Level 2 and parent-adolescent relationship quality at Level 1. *Model 3* estimated the effects of parents' well-being on relationship quality, and the direct effects of occupational conditions on relationship quality controlling for parents' well-being. This was also a mixed model with well-being and occupational conditions at Level 2 and relationship quality at Level 1. In all of the analyses, Level 2 variables were grand mean centered (i.e., centered on the sample mean), and Level 1 variables were group mean centered (i.e., centered on each family's mean). The program PRODCLIN was used to calculate the 95% confidence intervals (CI) of the indirect effects (*ab*) (MacKinnon, Fritz, Williams, & Lockwood, 2007).

Analyses were conducted separately for each criterion (i.e., warmth, conflict, disclosure) and mediator (i.e., depressive symptoms, role overload) variable. Separate models were also conducted for mothers and fathers to investigate the independent contributions of mothers' and fathers' occupational conditions and well-being on mother- and father-adolescent relationship quality. To limit the number of analyses, we included all predictors (i.e., self-direction, hazardous conditions, physical activity, and work pressure) and centered controls (i.e., adolescent gender, birth order, family SES) in each of the models. This resulted in five separate sets of models (i.e., 15 total) for mothers and fathers. Adolescent gender (i.e., $-.5$ = female, $.5$ = male) and birth order (i.e., $-.5$ = younger sibling, $.5$ = older sibling) were entered as Level 1 variables, and family SES was entered as a Level 2 variable. Parents' work hours were tested as controls, but were not included in analyses, as they were not related to any of the criteria. Correlations and descriptive statistics for study variables are in Table 1.

Parent-Adolescent Warmth

Depressive symptoms—Figure 1 illustrates the results of the mediation models that evaluated if parental depressive symptoms accounted for the association between parents' occupational conditions and adolescents' reports of parent-adolescent warmth, conducted separately for fathers and mothers. In the *father* models, sibling birth order was related to warmth, indicating that younger siblings described higher levels of warmth with fathers than did older siblings. Fathers' *work pressure* was positively linked to depressive symptoms, and depressive symptoms were negatively linked to father-adolescent warmth. The indirect effect for fathers' work pressure was significant indicating that the link between work pressure and warmth was mediated by depressive symptoms. In the *mother* models, *self-direction* was negatively and *work pressure* was positively linked to depressive symptoms, and depressive symptoms were negatively linked to warmth. The indirect effects for self-direction and work pressure were significant indicating full mediation.

Role overload—Figure 2 illustrates the results of the mediation models that evaluated if parental role overload accounted for the associations between parents' occupational conditions and adolescents' reports of parent-adolescent warmth, separately for mothers and fathers. Fathers' *hazardous conditions* were negatively and *work pressure* was positively linked to role overload, and role overload was negatively linked to warmth. The indirect effects for hazardous conditions and work pressure were significant indicating full mediation. In the *mother* models, *work pressure* was positively associated with role overload, with no other significant findings.

Parent-Adolescent Conflict

Depressive symptoms—The next set of mediation models evaluated if parental depressive symptoms accounted for the links between parents' occupational conditions and adolescents' reports of conflict with fathers and mothers. In the *father* models, the only new findings to emerge were the positive link between depressive symptoms and conflict, $\gamma = .01$ (.01), $p < .05$, and the significant indirect effect for *work pressure*, $ab = .02$ (.01), $p < .05$, 95% CI [.00, .05], indicating full mediation. The new findings to emerge in the *mother* models were a positive link between depressive symptoms and conflict, $\gamma = .02$ (.01), $p < .05$, and the significant indirect effects for *self-direction*, $ab = -.003$ (.00), $p < .05$, 95% CI [-.01, -.00], and *work pressure*, $ab = .11$ (.05), $p < .05$, 95% CI [.10, .22], indicating full mediation.

Role overload—The models that were used to evaluate if parental role overload accounted for the association between parents' occupational conditions and father- and mother-adolescent conflict revealed no significant mediation effects, and no new findings emerged.

Parent-Adolescent Disclosure

Depressive symptoms—The next set of mediation models evaluated if parental depressive symptoms accounted for the associations between parents' occupational conditions and adolescents' reports of disclosure with fathers and with mothers. In the *father* models, new findings that emerged included a negative link between depressive symptoms and disclosure, $\gamma = -.01$ (.00), $p < .05$. The indirect effect for *work pressure* was significant indicating full mediation, $ab = -.02$ (.01), $p < .05$, 95% CI [-.04, -.00]. In the *mother* models, new findings included significant links between sibling birth order, $\gamma = .16$ (.08), $p < .05$, and gender, $\gamma = -.36$ (.08), $p < .05$, with disclosure. Older siblings reported higher levels of disclosure to mothers than younger siblings, and girls disclosed more than boys. Mothers' depressive symptoms were negatively related to disclosure, $\gamma = -.02$ (.01), $p < .05$.

The significant indirect effects for *self-direction*, $ab = .003$ (.00), $p < .05$, 95% [CI .00, .01], and *work pressure*, $ab = -.11$ (.05), $p < .05$, 95% [CI $-.21, -.00$], indicated full mediation.

Role overload—The models evaluating if parental role overload accounted for the associations between parents' occupational conditions and adolescents' reports of disclosure to fathers and to mothers revealed no significant mediation effects, and no new findings emerged.

Adolescent Gender as a Moderator

Adolescent gender (i.e., girls = 0, boys = 1) was tested as a moderator of the relations between parents' occupational conditions and parent-adolescent relationship quality and between parent well-being and parent-adolescent relationship quality. There was a significant interaction between adolescent gender and mothers' self-direction, indicating that self-direction was positively related to disclosure for daughters but not for sons, $\gamma = .02$ (.01), $p < .01$. As this was the only significant interaction, it may be due to Type I error.

Discussion

Work-family spillover and family-stress process models served as the foundation of the present study that explored the mediational role of Mexican American parents' depressive symptoms and role overload on the links between parents' occupational conditions and parent-adolescent relationship qualities. Whereas the bulk of empirical research has focused on structural indicators of occupational conditions, such as work status, work hours, or income, and economic stress in relation to parent-adolescent dynamics, this study went beyond those indicators to investigate the objective characteristics of parents' occupations that link to emotions that spill over to parent-adolescent relationships. This study is one of few studies that have examined the O*Net objective measures of parents' occupational attributes (e.g., Goodman et al., 2008). Moreover, studies of European American professional, middle-class workers and their families (e.g., MacDermid et al., 2005) dominate the extant work-family literature. This study contributes to the diversity of this literature by focusing on Mexican American parents in a range of occupations, and, to our knowledge, this is the first study to examine mediational processes between work and parent-adolescent relationships for these families. Much of the previous research also has focused solely on maternal employment with a lack of attention to the role of fathers in understanding work-family linkages; this study made an important contribution by examining both mothers and fathers.

For both mothers and fathers, depressive symptoms were an important mediator of the association between work pressure and parent-adolescent warmth, conflict, and disclosure. As expected, higher levels of mothers' and fathers' work pressure were related to more depressive symptoms, which were in turn related to lower levels of warmth and disclosure and higher levels of conflict in the parent-adolescent relationship. Theoretically, these findings are consistent with the ideas of spillover and family stress models (Conger et al., 2000; Repetti, 1987) in that stressful work conditions, specifically high demands at work, are associated with family functioning through parents' feelings of distress. It is important to note that the findings for fathers are incongruent with the one other study (Crouter et al., 2006a) including Mexican American families that found fathers' work pressure was not related to depressive symptoms. That study examined the links between fathers' work pressure and reports of depressive symptoms from all family members and did not explore fathers' depressive symptoms as the mechanism linking work and parent-adolescent relationship qualities. This indicates the need to replicate the findings that link parents'

occupational conditions with parent-adolescent relationships and individual functioning in Mexican American families.

For fathers only, role overload emerged as a significant mediator of the link between both work pressure and hazardous conditions and parent-adolescent warmth. Father work pressure and hazardous conditions were related to higher levels of father role overload that, in turn, was related to lower levels of father-adolescent warmth. These findings are consistent with work-family spillover (Repetti, 1987) and family stress models (Conger et al., 2000), that when there are high demands at work or hazardous conditions, fathers feel overwhelmed with all they have to do and the demands on their time. Under these conditions, adolescents report lower levels of warmth from fathers. These patterns are inconsistent with previous research on European American samples that found these associations for both parents (Crouter et al., 1999; Katz & Piotrkowski, 1983; Ransford et al., 2008). Perhaps, under these conditions, Mexican American mothers seek out additional resources, such as extended family support, which may buffer the effects of work on their relationships with their adolescents.

For mothers only, occupational self-direction, as measured objectively (i.e., via the O*Net ratings), was negatively associated with depressive symptoms; the less opportunity mothers had to exercise self-direction on the job, the more depressive symptoms they reported. Mothers' depressive symptoms mediated the links between occupational self-direction and warmth, disclosure, and conflict in mother-adolescent relationships. These results are consistent with Kohn's predictions that occupational self-direction is related to psychological functioning and indirectly to parenting behaviors (Kohn & Schooler, 1978). However, we did not find these associations for fathers and are not sure why it operates differently for mothers. Even at the bivariate level, there is a robust correlation between self-direction and depressive symptoms for mothers, and less of one for fathers.

Limitations and Future Directions

This study includes some methodological shortcomings. First, this study is correlational and included cross-sectional data. The use of longitudinal designs would allow the investigation of the direction of effects and causality. However, we strengthened our cross-sectional design by incorporating multiple methods and reporters through the inclusion of mothers' and fathers' reports of work and well-being, objective measures of occupational attributes, and adolescents' perspectives on parent-adolescent relationship dynamics. Second, we examined mothers and fathers separately, as this was the first study of its kind with Mexican Americans. Future research should examine the reciprocal relations of mothers' and fathers' occupational conditions on self and partner well-being and parent-adolescent relationships as family systems theory has emphasized the consideration of mutual influences among family members and subsystems (Cox & Paley, 2003). This would help to understand complex processes occurring in Mexican American households, given that 69% of Latino families include two parents (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).

Family systems theory and related empirical work (Cox & Paley, 2003) suggests that future research should explore the role of other family relationships (e.g., marital, parent-sibling relationships) in the context of work-family spillover. For example, parent work pressure may spill over to the parent-adolescent relationship not only through parent well-being, but also through marital strife, which disrupts parent-adolescent relationship quality (e.g., Conger et al., 2000). As such, we have taken a first step in describing mediational processes linking parent occupational conditions and parent-adolescent relationship quality for this cultural group. Replications of our findings could incorporate Mexican American families from different geographic locations or with different family structures to foster the generalization of findings to other subgroups of this population.

Conclusion

The findings from the current study advance our understanding of work-family connections in Mexican American families in several important ways. First, of the occupational conditions studied here, *work pressure* was the only dimension linked to both mothers' and fathers' well-being, and in turn, parent-adolescent relationship quality. Parents who experience greater pressures at work reported lower levels of well-being, and in turn, young adolescents reported more conflict and less warmth and disclosure with their parents. Second, *depressive symptoms* were an important pathway linking maternal and paternal occupational conditions to parent-adolescent relationship qualities. Our findings suggest that an indicator of overall psychological well-being (i.e., depressive symptoms) may be a more important mediator than parents' subjective feelings of role overload. Third, our findings underscore the need to examine how parents' occupational conditions offer both benefits (e.g., self-direction) and risks (e.g., work pressure), as much prior research has focused on negative aspects of parents' work (e.g., stress, pressure, long hours). Although family researchers have commonly used spillover and family stress hypotheses to describe the transfer of *stressors* from one context to the next, based on our results, research should also focus on the implications of advantageous work experiences on aspects of parent well-being and parent-adolescent relationships. Future efforts will be important to guide theoretical models and empirical research that allows us to understand the complex associations linking positive and negative aspects of parents' work to family relationship processes.

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Figure 1.

Mother and father mediation models of occupational conditions, depressive symptoms, and adolescent report of parent-adolescent warmth. Father unstandardized path coefficients (standard errors) are indicated by F ($n = 239$), and mother unstandardized path coefficients (standard errors) are indicated by M ($n = 160$). For controls, only significant paths are included to simplify the figure. Bold paths and coefficients indicate significant mediation. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Figure 2. Mother and father mediation models of occupational conditions, role overload, and adolescent report of parent-adolescent warmth. Father unstandardized path coefficients (standard errors) are indicated by F ($n = 239$), and mother unstandardized path coefficients (standard errors) are indicated by M ($n = 160$). For controls, only significant paths are included to simplify the figure. Bold paths and coefficients indicate significant mediation. [†] $p < .10$. * $p < .05$. *** $p < .001$.

Table 1

Correlations and descriptive statistics for study variables.

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1. Self-direction	–	–.26**	–.56**	–.13	–.31**	–.06	.06	.06	–.10	.08	.10	.05	.48**
2. Hazardous conditions	–.27**	–	.62**	.17*	.16*	.07	.06	–.11	–.01	.25**	.12	–.17*	–.45**
3. Physical activity	–.38**	.68**	–	.18*	.25**	.01	.01	–.04	.07	.10	–.07	–.09	–.65**
4. Work pressure	–.12	.07	.08	–	.43**	.44**	–.14	–.09	.08	.05	–.10	–.08	–.22**
5. Depressive symptoms	–.14*	.15*	.19**	.17**	–	.45**	–.12	–.29**	.28**	.17*	–.27**	–.19*	–.34**
6. Role overload	–.02	–.06	.02	.31**	.27*	–	–.04	–.11	.12	.07	–.10	–.08	–.03
7. Parent-y warmth	.01	–.08	–.07	–.04	–.23**	–.14*	–	.36**	–.26**	–.04	.57**	.18*	.08
8. Parent-o warmth	.04	–.04	–.08	–.06	–.24**	–.13*	.32**	–	–.14	–.46**	.20**	.46**	.09
9. Parent-y conflict	–.13*	.09	.11	.16*	.20**	.08	–.15*	–.10	–	.02	–.33**	–.06	–.19*
10. Parent-o conflict	.03	.06	.01	.06	.08	.02	–.11	–.17**	.07	–	.06	–.22**	–.04
11. Parent-y disclosure	–.08	–.00	–.03	.07	–.11	.00	.50**	.25**	–.11	.06	–	.16*	.17*
12. Parent-o disclosure	.03	–.08	–.11	.00	–.10	.02	.21**	.65**	–.07	–.20**	.19**	–	.09
13. Family SES	.30**	–.45**	–.54**	–.18**	–.26**	–.09	.07	.18**	–.20**	.01	.06	.09	–
<i>M</i> (mothers)	46.93	25.79	55.12	2.54	15.91	3.24	3.91	3.93	2.69	2.65	3.02	3.18	.19
<i>SD</i> (mothers)	11.62	12.52	22.23	.70	10.18	.86	.75	.79	.90	.88	.76	.81	.79
<i>M</i> (fathers)	49.61	46.64	60.41	2.83	12.54	3.03	3.85	3.58	2.68	2.56	3.01	3.01	–.01
<i>SD</i> (fathers)	10.39	16.72	17.76	.64	8.16	.92	.77	.99	.99	.94	.74	.78	.83

Note: Mothers above the diagonal ($n = 160$ –163), and fathers below the diagonal ($n = 239$ –240). O = older sibling; Y = younger sibling.

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.