

## Parenting Style of Mexican, Mexican American, and Caucasian–Non-Hispanic Families: Social Context and Cultural Influences

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To begin accounting for cultural and contextual factors related to child rearing in Mexican-descent (MD; Mexican American and Mexican immigrant) families in the United States, the current study examined parenting practices in 2-parent families of Mexican, MD, and Caucasian–non-Hispanic (CNH) parents. Parents in all groups reported using authoritative practices more often than authoritarian strategies. MD parents reported greater use of authoritarian practices than Mexican and CNH parents. Results suggest that previously found cultural variations in parenting between MD parents and CNH parents may be more related to the ecological context of MD families than to an affiliation with Mexican culture. Clinicians should explore the positive qualities of authoritative parenting in MD families along with the potential motivations for using authoritarian strategies.

*keywords:* parenting, Mexican American, culture, Hispanic American, socialization, intact families

Hispanic Americans comprise the largest minority group in the United States, yet not much is known about how cultural and contextual factors influence parenting practices in this population and Mexican-descent (MD) families in particular (Hill, Bush, & Roosa, 2003). To contribute to the literature aimed at separating the influence of Mexican culture on child rearing from contextual factors, we examined parenting practices of Mexican, Mexican immigrant (MI), Mexican American (MA; i.e., born in the United States), and Caucasian–non-Hispanic (CNH) parents within and across groups. When referring to MI and MA families collectively, the referent MD is used.

The ecological context in which families live and the cultural background of the parents shape family socialization processes (Garcia Coll et al., 1996; Harrison, Wilson, Pine, Chan, & Buriel, 1990). Minority families of various ethnicities in the United States face similar ecological chal-

lenges (e.g., poverty, segregation, racism) and may respond to these challenges by developing adaptive strategies with implications for socialization goals and developmental outcomes (Garcia Coll et al., 1996; Harrison et al., 1990). Although challenges for minority families may be similar, variations in cultural values, beliefs, and behavior patterns may influence how child-rearing practices evolve to meet these challenges (Garcia Coll et al., 1996). In understanding parenting practices of MD parents in the United States, it is important to separate the effects of being an ethnic minority in the United States from associating oneself with Mexican cultural beliefs and values. Culture-bound socialization techniques may have been in place before immigration to the United States but could have been altered in the process of adjusting to a new and potentially challenging culture (Zayas & Solari, 1994).

In the context of MD families in the United States, authoritarian parenting emphasizing respect for authority has been proposed to be consistent with Mexican culture and to serve an adaptive function (e.g., Knight, Virdin, & Roosa, 1994). Although studies have found that MD parents use some authoritarian practices (Escovar & Lazarus, 1982; MacPhee, Fritz, & Miller-Heyl, 1996), the findings in the literature are inconsistent about whether these parents are more likely to display an authoritarian parenting style (Hill et al., 2003; Staples & Mirande, 1980).

Variation in immigration status and involvement in the acculturation process may contribute to inconsistent findings regarding child-rearing practices of MD families. How-

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ever, the relationships between parenting practices and acculturation and between parenting practices and immigrant status (e.g., immigrants vs. native born) remain tangled (Buriel, 1993; Buriel, Mercado, Rodriguez, & Chavez, 1991; Dumka, Roosa, & Jackson, 1997; Hill et al., 2003; Samaniego & Gonzales, 1999). Greater specificity in the operationalization of acculturation may help clarify the influence of culture on parenting practices of MD families. In the current study, we focused on the acculturation strategy of assimilation, which refers to seeking contact and interactions with another cultural group while retracting from an original cultural identity (Berry, 2003).

The gender of the child being reared is another factor that has been generally neglected in research on possible cultural variations in parenting style in MD families. Although the literature is clear that MD parents treat boys differently than girls to socialize them according to specific cultural gender roles (e.g., Diaz-Guerrero & Rodriguez de Diaz, 1993), it is less clear whether MD parents emphasize one parenting style (e.g., authoritarian) over another based on the gender of the child (Buriel, 1993; Samaniego & Gonzales, 1999). In the current study, we explored whether the gender of the child was related to parenting style across cultural and minority status groupings.

The objective of the study was to help unravel the effects

of Mexican culture on parenting style from immigrant status and living in an ethnic minority context. To this end, the study included Mexican families from the Mexico City region and MI, MA, and CNH families. Considering the traditional Mexican cultural value of respect for authority (Zayas & Solari, 1994), we expected the Mexican, MI, and MA parents to report a more authoritarian parenting style than the CNH parents. We hypothesized that the CNH parents would report a more authoritative parenting style than parents in the other groups (Dornbusch, Ritter, Leiderman, Roberts, & Fraleigh, 1987). No specific hypotheses were made regarding the relationship between assimilation to CNH culture and parenting styles.

## Methods

### Participants

This is a study of two-parent families, including 150 children and each of their mothers and fathers ( $n = 300$ ). Children between the ages of 10 and 14 were selected for the current study. In the entire sample, 82% of the children were between 10 and 12 years old, and only 5 children were 14 years old. Descriptive information for the sample is presented in Table 1.

Table 1  
*Description of Sample and Comparison of Demographic Variables by Ethnic Group*

Variables	Mexican ( $n = 49$ )	Mexican immigrant ( $n = 37$ )	Mexican American ( $n = 13$ )	Caucasian non-Hispanic ( $n = 51$ )	$F(3, 146)$
Children					
Age					2.91
<i>M</i>	11.10	11.60	11.70	11.70	
<i>SD</i>	1.01	1.12	1.32	1.10	
Age range	10–13	10–13	10–14	10–14	
Boys (%)	57.10	54.10	46.20	51.00	
Mothers					
Age					6.60***
<i>M</i>	38.20 <sub>a</sub>	37.43 <sub>a</sub>	40.20	41.84 <sub>b</sub>	
<i>SD</i>	6.30	4.50	6.20	4.13	
Age range	27–54	29–47	33–51	31–52	
Education <sup>a</sup>					28.51***
<i>M</i>	11.40 <sub>a</sub>	8.73 <sub>b</sub>	13.10 <sub>a,c</sub>	15.60 <sub>c</sub>	
<i>SD</i>	4.40	3.40	2.50	2.90	
Fathers					
Age					7.10***
<i>M</i>	40.00 <sub>a</sub>	39.20 <sub>a</sub>	41.50	43.80 <sub>b</sub>	
<i>SD</i>	5.91	4.40	6.72	4.30	
Age range	27–55	30–50	33–52	32–52	
Education <sup>a</sup>					29.81***
<i>M</i>	11.51 <sub>a</sub>	8.11 <sub>b</sub>	13.23 <sub>a,c</sub>	15.80 <sub>c</sub>	
<i>SD</i>	4.20	4.20	3.00	3.30	
Income <sup>b</sup>					
<i>M</i>	8,785	37,941	60,384	62,549	
<i>SD</i>	5,701	19,814	22,216	22,591	
SES					16.10***
<i>M</i>	8.80 <sub>a</sub>	3.50 <sub>b</sub>	5.60 <sub>b</sub>	5.80 <sub>b</sub>	
<i>SD</i>	5.60	1.80	2.10	2.10	

*Note.* Means in the same row with different subscripts are statistically different at the .005 level. SES = Socioeconomic status derived by dividing a family's total household monthly income by the monthly income that would be earned by one person working full time at the minimum wage of the country where the family resided.

<sup>a</sup> Number of school years completed. <sup>b</sup> Annual income measured in U.S. dollars.

\*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

## Procedure

Data presented here were gathered as part of a larger collaborative project between R. Enrique Varela and colleagues in Mexico, in which 154 children and each of their parents ( $n = 308$ ) participated (Varela et al., 2004). In that project, families participated in a data collection session lasting approximately 90 min after parent informed consent and child assent forms were signed. Procedures consisted of administration of questionnaires to the parents and children (including the parent-completed Parental Authority Questionnaire [PAQ] and Cultural Lifestyles Inventory [CLI] and the child-completed CLI used in the current study), followed by brief interviews with the children and a parent-child interaction task. MD families were asked their language preferences, and the session was conducted based on these preferences. Because some of the MD parents had low literacy levels, it was necessary for the investigator to read some questionnaire items to them. Thirty six percent of parents and 94% of children completed the questionnaires in English, and the remainder of participants in this group completed the questionnaires in Spanish. For the current study, data from 4 Mexican families were omitted because of these families' extremely high socioeconomic status (SES).

The Mexican families were from Mexico City, and the MD families (MI and MA) and CNH families were from urban settings in Kansas, Oklahoma, and northern Texas. Approval from institutional review boards in academic centers in both countries and participating school districts was obtained before conducting the study. All Mexican and CNH families were recruited from public schools by a standard procedure that included mailing a letter to the families followed by a telephone call from a research assistant at each respective university.

Approximately 48% of the eligible Mexican families and 43% of the eligible CNH families contacted agreed to participate. Approximately 45% of the MD families were recruited through public schools, and approximately 55% were recruited through churches by word of mouth. Sixty percent of the MD families contacted agreed to participate. During the recruitment process, families in all the groups were told that the purpose of the study was to examine cultural values, beliefs, and behaviors in relation to emotions of children. The majority of families in all three groups who declined participation stated a lack of interest in the study on the part of the child or both parents and a lack of time as the two major reasons for not participating.

The families were recruited and selected for the study based on several criteria. Both parents had to be the biological parents of the child or the primary caretakers of the child since infancy and had to be living in the home with the child. The children could not have a psychiatric diagnosis, be taking any psychotropic drugs, including stimulants, or be involved in psychological services. The CNH children, their parents, and grandparents had to be born in the United States and not of Hispanic, Asian, African American, or Native American descent. MI parents had to be first-generation immigrants, but their children could have been born in Mexico or the United States. The number of years that MI parents had been in the United States ranged from 0.80 to 35.00 ( $M = 13.60$ ,  $SD = 8.43$ ) for mothers and 2.60 to 32.00 ( $M = 14.63$ ,  $SD = 8.60$ ) for fathers ( $t = .49$ ,  $p = ns$ ). The MA parents, as well as their children, had to be of Mexican origin but born in the United States. The Mexican parents and their children had to be born in Mexico, living in Mexico, and of Mexican origin.

## Measures

*Parental Authority Questionnaire.* Based on Baumrind's (1971) parenting prototypes, the PAQ is a 30-item questionnaire

that measures three parenting styles (Buri, 1991): (a) authoritarian (emphasizes unquestioning obedience from children and enforces rules through power assertion); (b) authoritative (sets clear expectations for children and makes more use of reasoning to achieve adherence to rules); and (c) permissive (nondirective, places few demands on children). Buri (1991) reported good psychometric properties for the PAQ in CNH samples. To allow comparison of parenting practices for girls and boys, mothers and fathers were instructed to rate their parenting practices for the specific child participating in the study.

We translated the PAQ from English to Spanish through a committee approach (Marin & Marin, 1991). First, R. Enrique Varela, Juan Jose Sanchez-Sosa, and Angelica Riveros, who are psychologists and fully bilingual, translated the PAQ to Spanish independently. Then, the three translators met and reviewed all items to discuss their face validity across cultures and any disagreements in translation. Differences in translation were minimal and were reconciled through consensus.

*Cultural Lifestyles Inventory.* The CLI measured self-reported assimilation to CNH culture by the MD parents and their children. The 29 items of the CLI assess three dimensions of acculturation (cultural resistance, cultural shift, and cultural incorporation) in five domains, including English language use (intra- and extrafamily), social affiliation and activities, familiarity with culture-related activities, and cultural pride. Mendoza (1989) reported good psychometric properties for the CLI with samples of bilingual MA adolescents and adults.

The CLI scoring system was altered to derive one overall assimilation score. This represents the extent to which MD parents and children living in the United States seek out and participate in CNH culture while retracting from their own culture in the five areas mentioned above. Values of 1 to 5 were assigned to the multiple-response choices; lower scores indicated lower assimilation (Berry, 2003). The scores were summed across items and divided by the number of items to produce an average score. Although the CLI was developed using populations older than 15 years, the majority of the items appeared appropriate for children ages 10 to 14 years (e.g., "What language do you use when you speak with your parents?"). For the current study, two items not relevant for children were omitted and one item was modified for suitability.

## Results

### Analytic Strategy

First, preliminary analyses were conducted comparing the four cultural groups (Mexican, MI, MA, and CNH) on demographic variables using a series of analyses of variance (ANOVAs). Second, because the PAQ has not been validated with a Hispanic population, we examined its cross-cultural validity in two domains: item equivalence and functional equivalence (Hui & Triandis, 1985). To this end, a maximum-likelihood confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) for each group was conducted, followed by comparisons of the correlations among subscale scores across the groups. Third, authoritative and authoritarian parenting practices of mothers and fathers in the four cultural groups were compared in a series of four 2 (gender of child)  $\times$  4 (group) analyses of covariance (ANCOVA) procedures, controlling for group differences in demographic variables. Fourth, the relative use of authoritative versus authoritarian parenting practices within each cultural group was compared using

paired-sample *t* tests. Finally, regression analyses assessed whether parenting practices of the MD group were related to gender or age of the child, parental education, parental immigration, or assimilation to U.S. culture.

*Preliminary analyses.* Univariate ANOVAs indicated group differences in several demographic variables (see Table 1). Follow-up comparisons between the groups revealed that CNH parents were older and reported more years of education than the Mexican and MI parents. The MI parents had fewer years of education than the parents in the Mexican and MA groups. Finally, the Mexican group reported a higher SES than the other three groups.

To examine a possible role of language use in parenting styles of the MD group, *t* tests comparing parenting style scores between parents who completed the questionnaires in English and those who completed them in Spanish were conducted. No differences were found in these analyses. As a validity check, we compared child and parent assimilation between MIs and MAs using *t* tests. In all comparisons (child, mother, and father assimilation), MAs reported significantly more assimilation to U.S. majority culture.

*Factor analysis of PAQ.* To conduct a CFA, it was necessary to combine the MI and MA groups into a single category (MD) and to include both mother and father reports in the analyses to obtain a minimally acceptable ratio of respondents to number of items. This allowed approximately 100 cases per group (Mexican, MD, and CNH) for the 30 items of the PAQ. Given the modest number of cases per variable, we used the Bentler-Bonett nonnormed fit index (NNFI), which is not strongly influenced by sample size (Marsh, Balla, & McDonald, 1988).

The CFA for the full sample and each group using the three PAQ subscales produced fit indexes ranging from .79

(unacceptable) to .88 (mediocre). A fit index of 1.00 is an exact fit and is considered a fit better than with any other model. Because the model fit across groups was not tenable and because most of the misfit appeared to originate from the Permissiveness scale as a result of poor internal consistency and low loadings of items onto this construct, a CFA using only items of the Authoritative and Authoritarian scales was run. This two-factor model produced an exact fit for the MD group (NNFI = 1.00) and a very close fit for the full sample (NNFI = .99), the Mexican group (NNFI = .98), and the CNH group (NNFI = .97), providing evidence for the item equivalence of these two subscales across the cultural groups. Authoritarian and Authoritative scale internal consistency coefficients (Cronbach's alpha) for the Mexican, MD, and CNH groups were .81 and .90, .83 and .93, and .89 and .91, respectively. Latent correlations between Authoritarian and Authoritative scales were  $-.48$  for the Mexican group,  $-.16$  for the MD group, and  $-.33$  for the CNH group. These correlations do not differ significantly from each other,  $\chi^2(34, N = 299) = 33.35, p = .50$ , indicating these two scales relate to each in a similar manner across groups, thus providing some evidence for the functional equivalence of the two-factor model of the PAQ. For the remainder of the analyses, only the Authoritarian and Authoritative scales of the PAQ were used.

*Comparison of parenting practices between cultural groups.* After controlling for parent and child age, SES, and parent education as covariates (Table 2), between-group differences for authoritarian parenting by both mothers,  $F(3, 136) = 4.33, p < .01, \eta^2 = .09$ , and fathers  $F(3, 136) = 7.30, p < .01, \eta^2 = .14$ , were found. Follow-up comparisons between cultural groups found that MI mothers and MA mothers reported more authoritarian parenting than

Table 2  
Mean Scores on Self-Reported Mother and Father Parenting Scales by Group and Gender of Child Reared

Variables	Mexican			Mexican immigrant			Mexican American			Caucasian non-Hispanic		
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>
Mother												
Authoritarian												
Boys	26.36	6.34	28	32.70	5.20	20	34.50	7.71	6	29.46	7.00	26
Girls	27.90	4.84	21	29.90	6.40	17	31.57	6.00	7	25.28	6.12	25
Total	27.02 <sub>a</sub>	5.74	49	31.41 <sub>b</sub>	5.90	37	32.92 <sub>bx</sub>	6.71	13	27.41 <sub>y</sub>	6.90	51
Authoritative												
Boys	41.82	5.11	28	41.82	4.30	20	42.83	2.70	6	41.58	4.20	26
Girls	39.05	4.80	21	40.12	3.40	17	40.29	3.30	7	40.76	6.90	25
Total	40.63	5.12	49	41.05	3.93	37	41.46	3.21	13	41.18	5.70	51
Father												
Authoritarian												
Boys	28.04	6.30	28	33.60	5.50	20	35.50	6.00	6	28.19	6.10	26
Girls	26.62	6.80	21	31.90	5.92	17	33.00	6.80	7	24.28	7.00	25
Total	27.43 <sub>a</sub>	6.50	49	32.81 <sub>b</sub>	5.70	37	34.15 <sub>bx</sub>	6.31	13	26.27 <sub>y</sub>	6.80	51
Authoritative												
Boys	40.14	5.03	28	40.10	3.80	20	40.67	4.41	6	39.81	3.30	26
Girls	38.33	5.00	21	40.30	3.84	17	38.73	3.73	7	35.96	7.40	25
Total	39.37	5.00	49	40.20	3.80	37	39.38	4.10	13	37.92	5.90	51

Note. Means in the same row with different subscripts (a and b or x and y) differ for group. Thus, Mexican immigrant and Mexican American fathers are higher in authoritarian practices than Mexican fathers, and Mexican American fathers are higher in authoritarian practices than Caucasian non-Hispanic fathers.

Mexican mothers ( $ps < .05$  and  $.01$ , respectively) and MA mothers reported more authoritarian parenting than CNH mothers ( $p < .05$ ). A similar pattern was observed with fathers: MI fathers and MA fathers reported being more authoritarian than Mexican fathers ( $ps < .01$  and  $.01$ , respectively), and MA fathers reported being more authoritarian than CNH fathers ( $p < .01$ ).

Gender of child differences were found for mother authoritarian style,  $F(1, 136) = 5.49, p < .05, \eta^2 = .04$ , father authoritarian style,  $F(1, 136) = 6.15, p < .05, \eta^2 = .04$ , and mother authoritative style,  $F(1, 136) = 3.97, p < .05, \eta^2 = .03$ . Overall means were higher for boys than for girls in these three areas. Post hoc analyses examining these differences within each cultural group revealed that CNH mothers and fathers reported being more authoritarian when the target child was a boy ( $p < .05, p < .05$ , respectively) and CNH fathers reported being more authoritative when the target child was a boy ( $p < .05$ ). Gender of child differences were not statistically significant in follow-up comparisons for the other cultural groups.

Because father education and mother education were significant predictors as covariates in the ANCOVAs examining father authoritarian and mother authoritative parenting styles, respectively, two follow-up analyses were conducted to gauge whether between-group differences in parental education might explain these group differences in parenting. In the first, groups were divided into high and low father education categories based on the median split for each group, and a  $4$  (group)  $\times$   $2$  (education) ANOVA was run, with father authoritarian parenting style as the dependent variable. In the second analysis, parents within each group were divided into high and low mother education categories, and a  $4 \times 2$  ANOVA was run, with mother authoritative parenting style as the dependent variable. Significant interaction terms would mean that the relation between ethnic group and the dependent variable (father authoritarian or mother authoritative parenting style) differed between education groups. However, interaction terms were not significant for these analyses. Consequently, the group differences in parenting style do not appear to be explained by differences in parent education.

*Relative use of authoritative and authoritarian parenting styles within each cultural group.* Results of paired-sample  $t$  tests indicated that mothers and fathers in all groups reported more authoritative than authoritarian parenting styles in rearing their children.

*Factors related to parenting style in the MD group.* Four hierarchical regressions were conducted to assess the influence of individual and contextual factors on the parenting styles of MD parents living in the United States (Table 3). Dependent variables were authoritarian and authoritative parenting styles for fathers and mothers. Parent assimilation, child assimilation, and immigrant status (MI vs. MA) did not explain statistically significant amounts of variance in any of the parenting variables when entered on the second step. In the full model, age and gender of child contributed significantly to the prediction of father authoritative parenting and mother authoritarian parenting, respectively. Fathers reported being more authoritative with older chil-

Table 3  
Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analyses for Variables Predicting Parenting Practices in the Mexican-Descent Group ( $n = 50$ )

Variable and predictors	SE B	$\beta$	F	$\Delta R^2$
Father authoritarian				
Step 1			0.48, <i>ns</i>	.03, <i>ns</i>
Age of child	0.77	.01		
Gender of child	1.90	-.20		
Father education	0.25	-.23		
Step 2			0.71, <i>ns</i>	.06, <i>ns</i>
Father assimilation	2.33	.001		
Child assimilation	2.18	.23		
Group status	3.22	-.09		
Father authoritative				
Step 1			1.26, <i>ns</i>	.08, <i>ns</i>
Age of child	0.49	.31*		
Gender of child	1.20	-.02		
Father education	0.16	-.05		
Step 2			1.43, <i>ns</i>	.09, <i>ns</i>
Father assimilation	1.47	.08		
Child assimilation	1.34	.34		
Group status	2.03	.36		
Mother authoritarian				
Step 1			2.68, <i>ns</i>	.15, <i>ns</i>
Age of child	0.75	-.28		
Gender of child	1.75	-.31*		
Mother education	0.32	.08		
Step 2			1.44, <i>ns</i>	.02, <i>ns</i>
Mother assimilation	2.50	.28		
Child assimilation	2.46	-.18		
Group status	3.16	.01		
Mother authoritative				
Step 1			1.74, <i>ns</i>	.10, <i>ns</i>
Age of child	0.47	.19		
Gender of child	1.08	-.27		
Mother education	0.20	-.16		
Step 2			1.31, <i>ns</i>	.05, <i>ns</i>
Mother assimilation	1.55	.54		
Child assimilation	1.53	-.26		
Group status	2.00	.12		

Note. Group status was dummy coded 0 = Mexican American, 1 = Mexican immigrant. Gender of child was coded 0 = male, 1 = female.

\*  $p < .05$ .

dren, and mothers reported being more authoritarian with boys.

## Discussion

To summarize, CNH parents reported less authoritarian parenting than MA parents. However, contrary to expectations, we found no differences in authoritarian parenting style between Mexican and CNH parents, and MI and MA parents reported more authoritarian parenting than Mexican parents. All between-group differences were not influenced by the age or gender of the child being reared. There were no significant group differences in authoritative parenting.

The current findings raise the possibility that ethnic minority status, rather than affiliation to Mexican culture, contributes to greater use of an authoritarian parenting style in MD families living in the United States. One strength of the study is the inclusion of a sample from Mexico as a

strategy to assess parenting practices of families who are affiliated with Mexican culture yet are not an ethnic minority in their social context. Congruent with previous literature (e.g., Escovar & Lazarus, 1982; Knight et al., 1994), MD parents reported being more authoritarian than CNHs. However, the current findings suggest that these differences are not necessarily related to an affiliation with Mexican culture, level of assimilation, immigration status, SES, or education level.

The finding that parents in all groups reported being more authoritative than authoritarian with their children aggregates increasing evidence that some MD parents in the United States use a parenting orientation that combines controlling, harsh practices with a more reason-oriented and accepting style (e.g., Hill et al., 2003). Although our sample was relatively small, the results suggest that such practices may vary for fathers and mothers, depending on the age and gender of the child, respectively.

The current results should be considered in light of the study's limitations. First, although highly informative, self-report instruments are subject to reporting biases and may not provide a full picture of parenting practices. Future studies should explore the relationship between culture and parenting practices by using alternate methods of parenting assessment, such as behavioral observations. Second, the sample of MA parents was relatively small, and between-group differences relating to this group should be interpreted with caution. Although the similarity between our findings and previous work in this area lends confidence that our results are not idiosyncratic, using a larger MA sample and a broader age range would increase the certainty of our findings. This is particularly important when considering the within-group differences in the MD group related to age and gender. Third, although there is good evidence for the item and functional equivalence of the two-factor model of the PAQ, other forms of cross-cultural validity (e.g., scalar equivalence) should be explored in the future and include larger samples of MIs and MAs. Larger samples of mothers and fathers should also be included in future studies. In the current study, data from MI and MA fathers and mothers were combined in the CFA, masking the contributions of each cultural group and gender.

Finally, the current results may vary from previous research because our sample was composed of intact families. That is, the majority of research in this area heretofore has used single-parent families or collected data from only one parent, typically mothers. For instance, findings indicating a negative relationship between authoritarian practices and acculturation may be applicable for single-parent families but not for intact families. It is possible that the use of controlling strategies may be more adaptive for low acculturated single parents than for more acculturated parents or parents in an intact family environment. Although our findings may be applicable to the majority of Hispanic families in the United States who have children younger than 18 (i.e., 68% of these families are married couples with their own children; U.S. Census Bureau, 2002), future research should tease out the effects of family structures, in the context of acculturation type and levels, on parenting styles.

Despite these limitations, the results have potential implications for parenting and clinical applications. Clinicians should be aware that MD parents may amplify their use of authoritarian strategies with their children as part of a broader response to being an ethnic minority in the United States (Harrison et al., 1990) with antecedents that are yet unclear. Clinicians working with MD families should not immediately assume an authoritarian-based parenting approach by this group. Rather, the positive qualities of authoritative parenting should be explored in clinical settings along with an exploration of the potential motivations for using authoritarian approaches as well. If MD parents in the United States do use stricter parenting methods as a response to ecological challenges, it may be helpful to examine further the adaptive functions and potential negative repercussions of these practices.

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