Gift and Sacrifice: Parental Involvement in Latino Adolescents’ Education

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Although myriad studies document the benefits of parental involvement in education on various indicators of children’s academic performance, less research examines parental involvement among adolescents in low-income Latino families. Incorporating a multidimensional conceptualization of parental involvement, this study examined the relation between parental involvement and academic outcomes in a sample of 223 low-income, Latino adolescents. Results indicated that three types of parental involvement (gift/sacrifice, future discussions/academic socialization, and school involvement) had significant, positive associations with academic outcomes. Moreover, our results suggest that parents’ stories about struggles with poverty and immigration are an important component of parental involvement, contributing to adolescents’ desire to succeed academically and “give back” to parents. Additionally, our findings indicated that the positive relations between parental involvement and academic outcomes were stronger for immigrant youth and for those with higher endorsements of the Latino cultural value of respeto (respect).

Keywords: adolescence, education, immigrant, Latino, parental involvement

Countless indicators of academic performance reveal that Latino youth are among the least educated children in the United States. According to data from the National Center for Education Statistics (2007) and the U.S. Bureau of the Census (2007), Latino youth have lower achievement test scores, higher drop out rates, and lower college attendance compared with European American and African American youth. Certainly, a large part of the educational underperformance of Latino youth can be attributed to poverty, as well as enrollment in lower quality schools, English language difficulties, and institutional practices of discrimination (Ceballo, Huerta, & Epstein-Ngo, 2010; Eamon, 2005; Suárez-Orozco, Rhodes, & Milburn, 2009). The Latino population in the United States is disproportionately young and poor and thereby is susceptible to the many adverse effects of economic hardship (Eamon, 2005). This article focuses on the educational values and effort of a predominantly Dominican American sample of Latino adolescents. Latinos who trace their ethnic origins to the Dominican Republic comprise 20% of the Latino population in the Northeastern United States, with 45% of Dominican children under 18 living below the poverty line compared with 9% of non-Latino White children (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2007).

For several decades, researchers, educators, community advocates, and policymakers have extolled the benefits of parental educational involvement for all children. Across all grade levels, a wealth of studies specifically link parental involvement in education with higher grade point averages, achievement in reading and mathematics, academic motivation, and school engagement, even while controlling for prior academic achievement (Alfaró, Umaña-Taylor, & Bamaca, 2006; Ceballo et al., 2010; Cooper & Cronstoe, 2007; Cronstoe, 2001; Fan, Williams, & Wolters, 2012; Henry, Cavanagh, & Oetting, 2011; Hill et al., 2004; Hill & Tyson, 2009; Seginer, 2006). Yet, parental involvement in education tends to decline into the middle and high school years (Cronstoe, 2001; Hill & Tyson, 2009) and shifts from activities such as providing assistance in classrooms and helping with homework to attending school events and providing encouragement for academics (Seginer, 2006). Perhaps this is in response to adolescents’ growing needs for autonomy or because parents feel less equipped to assist with more complex school material. Even so, this decline in parental involvement highlights the need to better understand the nature of parental involvement that does continue into adolescence.

In Grolnick and Slowiacek’s (1994) framework, parental involvement is defined as the resources parents dedicate to their children’s education. Put simply, parental involvement encompasses, “parents’ interactions with schools and with their children to promote academic success” (Hill & Tyson, 2009, p. 741). To date, the preponderance of research on parental involvement has been conducted with middle- to upper-income, European American parents of elementary school-age children. A paucity of research focuses on families with high school students, racial/ethnic minority youth, or youth who are scholastically underachieving (Fan et al., 2012). By extension, little research examines parental involvement among Latino families; moreover, the research con-
ducted with Latinos has overwhelmingly focused on Mexican Americans (Hill & Torres, 2010; Ibáñez, Kuperminc, Jurkovic, & Perilla, 2004). Our study directly addresses these gaps in the literature by examining parental involvement in education among a sample of Latino, primarily Dominican, adolescents from low-income families.

**Defining and Operationalizing Parental Involvement**

Despite increasing recognition that parental involvement in education is a multidimensional construct, measures of parental involvement have remained remarkably static (Fan et al., 2012; García Coll et al., 2002). Even worse, no precise and consistent operational definition of “parental involvement” has emerged in the literature; consequently, measures of parental involvement differ drastically across studies. Traditionally, researchers classified parental involvement into two distinct categories: school-based and home-based involvement (Hill & Tyson, 2009; Seginer, 2006; Shumow & Miller, 2001). The vast majority of studies, regardless of children’s developmental level, assess school-based involvement, such as discussions with teachers, attendance at school events, volunteering in schools, and attending parent–teacher conferences (Cooper & Crosnoe, 2007; Henry et al., 2011; Hill et al., 2004). On a practical level, a number of barriers prevent poor, Latino parents from engaging in these more traditional, school-based forms of parental involvement, including but not limited to demanding job schedules, inaccessible transportation, a lack of English language fluency, and unfamiliarity with the American educational system (Ceballo et al., 2010; Cooper & Crosnoe, 2007; Leidy, Guerra, & Toro, 2010). Nonetheless, some research points to positive links between traditional school-based parental involvement and academic outcomes among Latino youth (Kuperminc, Darnell, & Alvarez-Jimenez, 2008; Plunkett, Behnke, Sands, & Choi, 2009).

With respect to home-based parental involvement, several studies find home-based involvement to be associated with positive academic outcomes among Latino youth (Cooper, Ceballo, Suizzo, & Pituch, 2010; Eamon, 2005; Valadez, 2002). Immigrant parents tend to prefer home-based parental involvement, limiting their participation in schools (Seginer, 2006). Parent–child discussions about school-related matters and educational advice-giving are one of the greatest sources of in-home parental involvement; moreover, such discussions are significantly related to better academic performance among Latino, middle, and high school students (Fan et al., 2012; Hill et al., 2004; Plunkett et al., 2009; Valadez, 2002). Accordingly, among Latino students, Valadez (2002) found that parent–child discussions about school predicted enrollment in advanced math classes, and Eamon (2005) reported that more school-related discussions with parents was associated with higher reading and math achievement.

In a recent meta-analysis, Hill and Tyson (2009) reported evidence for the positive effects of parental involvement on the academic achievement of children in middle school. Their results confirmed the importance of academic socialization, namely discussions that entail communicating educational expectations, values, or utility, fostering educational aspirations, linking school subjects to current events, and discussing learning strategies or future goals. Whereas both home-and school-based involvement were related to academic achievement in middle school, academic socialization had a stronger and more positive relation to achievement (Hill & Tyson, 2009). In line with these findings, we expect that discussions about school and academic socialization will be positively related to the academic values and effort of Latino adolescents in high school as well.

In conjunction with school- and home-based parental involvement, researchers typically include parental aspirations and/or expectations in studies of parental involvement and document strong associations between parental aspirations/expectations and academic outcomes (Juang & Silbereisen, 2002). By many accounts, Latino parents express high educational aspirations for their children (Hill & Torres, 2010). Across a nationally representative sample of European American, African American, Asian American, and Latino students, parental aspirations for children’s education was positively associated with students’ academic motivation (Fan et al., 2012). Similarly, in a meta-analysis, Fan and Chen (2001) reported that parental aspirations for children’s education emerged as the strongest predictor of academic achievement.

**Broadening Conceptualizations of Parental Involvement**

Although the preponderance of research in this field has addressed school-based parental involvement, many researchers call for new studies to examine parental involvement in education as a multidimensional construct (Fan et al., 2012; Henry et al., 2011). Hence, our study does not simply assess school-related involvement, but incorporates a more expansive view of parental involvement. This may be particularly important when examining parental involvement among high school students rather than students in middle school where parental help tends to focus on classroom activities and homework. Additionally, it is noteworthy that some studies suggest that more traditional, school-based forms of parental involvement are less effective with racial/ethnic minority youth. With data from the National Education Longitudinal Study (NELS), Valadez (2002) reported that although traditional measures of school-based involvement (e.g., PTO participation and supervising homework) were positively associated with European American students’ math performance, these types of parental involvement had no impact on the performance of Latino students. Utilizing NELS data, Desimone (1999) similarly reported that traditional parental involvement was a better predictor of achievement for European American and middle-income students than for Latino and low-income youth.

Qualitative and ethnographic research has helped to broaden notions of what “counts” as parental involvement in education, illuminating nontraditional strategies practiced by low-income, Latino parents in support of their children’s education (Ceballo, 2004; López, 2001; Menard-Warwick, 2007; Sy, 2006). Examples of nontraditional parental involvement include finding children a quiet work place in overcrowded homes, excusing children from chores in order to do schoolwork, exposing children to the low-paid farm work available to people without an education, and making personal or financial sacrifices in support of children’s schooling. Such practices correspond with the sociocultural context in which many poor, racial/ethnic minority families reside. Thus, in order to more fully understand parental involvement in low-income, Latino families, the current study assesses an array of...
parental involvement activities, extending beyond more traditional measures of school-based parental activities (e.g., assisting with schoolwork, attending school events).

The Cultural Context: Gender, Immigrant Status, and the Value of Respeto

Including cultural factors is a critical component of examining the academic-related outcomes of Latino youth (Alfaro et al., 2006). Attending to such specific cultural factors is another contribution made by the present article. Moving beyond the well-established link between parental involvement and educational outcomes, our study tests whether adolescents’ gender, immigrant status, and endorsement of respeto moderate this relation. Because studies indicate that Latina adolescents have better academic performance than Latino males (Henry, Merten, Plunkett, & Sands, 2008) and some researchers have found effects for parental academic support among same-sex parent–adolescent dyads (Alfaro et al., 2006), we examine gender as a moderator in the current analyses. We expect that the relations between parental involvement and educational outcomes will be stronger for girls than for boys.

A growing number of studies now indicate that Latinos of later generations, whose families have been in the United States longer, perform worse academically than their earlier generation, immigrant counterparts (foreign-born adolescents and adolescents of foreign-born parents) (Hill & Torres, 2010; Perreira, Fulgni, & Potochnick, 2010; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). This phenomenon, whereby early generation youth exhibit more positive academic outcomes than their later generation peers, is referred to as the “immigrant paradox” (García Coll & Marks, 2009). It is a starkly countercultural finding, because as children and families acculturate to the United States, they typically gain social and economic resources. Yet, some research indicates that the relation between parental involvement and academic outcomes is stronger among immigrant youth than among their later generation peers (Hill & Torres, 2010; Plunkett et al., 2009). In accordance with the “immigrant paradox,” we hypothesize that positive relations between parental involvement and adolescents’ academic values and school effort will be stronger for immigrant adolescents compared with their nonimmigrant peers.

Despite the tremendous heterogeneity found among Latinos (e.g., immigration histories, socioeconomic statuses, acculturative stresses), the Spanish language and certain cultural values are often identified as shared commonalities (Cruz-Santiago & Ramirez Garcia, 2011). Nevertheless, few studies attend to the cultural values embedded in Latino family processes; our study makes an important contribution by doing so. Notably, the theoretical framework developed by García Coll and colleagues’ (1996) emphasizes the role of culturally unique values as providing racial/ethnic minority youth with a potentially protective “adaptive culture.” In the current study, we focus on the traditional cultural value of respeto (respect). Respeto emphasizes decorum and politeness, especially toward older individuals and professionals, with the goal of facilitating harmonious interpersonal relationships (Calzada, Fernandez, & Cortes, 2010; Cauce & Domenech Rodriguez, 2002). Compared with European American families, Latina mothers and children place a higher value on indicators of respect (Dixon, Graber, & Brooks-Gunn, 2008; Fulgni, 1998; Hill & Torres, 2010). We contend that with greater valuing of respect for parents, Latino adolescents are more likely to be influenced by parental efforts in support of educational pursuits. We hypothesize that there will be a stronger link between parental involvement and academic-related outcomes among adolescents with higher endorsements of respeto compared with those with weaker endorsements.

The Current Study

Acknowledging the multidimensional nature of parental involvement, we examine a number of different types of parental involvement and seek to confirm the use of a multidimensional model of parental involvement—as experienced and understood by Latino adolescents themselves. It is important that across racial/ethnic and socioeconomic groups, adolescents’ perceptions of parental involvement matter more for indicators of achievement than parental reports (Desimone, 1999). Our study addresses three main research questions. First, which of the various forms of parental involvement in education are identified by low-income Latino adolescents as meaningful and coherent clusters of parental activity? Second, what types of parental involvement are most closely associated with adolescents’ academic-related outcomes, specifically educational expectations, values, and school effort? A large body of research confirms the substantial role played by these particular educational outcomes. Expectancy-value models of motivation (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002) point to the importance of educational values for academic performance and motivation. Likewise, research on achievement goal orientations highlights the importance of academic effort in bolstering school performance (e.g., Elliot, McGregor, & Gable, 1999; Pintrich, 2000). Our final question examines whether adolescents’ gender, immigrant status, and endorsement of respeto influence or moderate the relation between parental involvement and our three academic outcomes.

Method

Participants

Primary data were collected with 223 Latino 9th graders attending three schools in the northeastern United States. The sample consists of 137 female and 86 male students, with an average age of 14.5 years (SD = .69). Sixty-one percent self-identified as Dominican and 17% identified as Puerto Rican. Other ethnicities reported by the adolescents included Colombian, Cuban, and Mexican. Most of the students were born in the United States (76%), whereas most of the students’ mothers were born outside the United States (80%). The mean level of schooling for mothers was a high school diploma. According to student reports, 38% of mothers had pursued some form of postsecondary education. Fifty-four percent of students reported speaking “mostly Spanish/some English” at home, whereas 31% said they used “mostly English/some Spanish” in their homes.

The sample was drawn from three schools: one parochial and two public high schools, located in low-income, urban neighborhoods. At the parochial school, 91% of the students identified as Latino. The school served a well-established Latino community and the socioeconomic backgrounds of the students were representative of this community. The average family income in this
school district was $33,000 and 85% of the students at this school qualified for free or reduced lunch.

Located in the same city as the parochial school, one of the public high schools is subdivided according to student career interests. Our participants attended the health and human services (HHS) and the math, science and technology (MST) subdivisions. Eighty-two percent of the total student population in HHS and 77% of the students in MST were eligible for free or reduced lunch. Thirty-one percent of Latino individuals in this district lived below the poverty threshold compared with 12% of the entire U.S. population (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2007). The second public school was also located in a well-established Latino community. The economic conditions of this community were similar to those of the other city in this study, with 35% of Latinos in this school district living below the poverty threshold (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2007) and 96% of the student population eligible for free or reduced lunch. Overall, students at the three schools resided in 28 different census tracts indicating a geographically representative sample.

Procedure

Once school approval was obtained, bilingual recruitment letters and consent forms were sent home with students from all three schools. Students with valid consent forms completed a self-report questionnaire during the regular school day. Before beginning the questionnaire, students signed an assent form indicating their willingness to participate in the study. All adolescents were given the option to take the questionnaire in Spanish; Spanish versions of the questionnaire had been translated and then back-translated by native Spanish speakers. Seven students in our sample opted to take the Spanish version of the questionnaire with assistance from a bilingual graduate student and bilingual school teachers as needed. Directions for the questionnaire were read aloud to the students and several graduate and undergraduate research assistants supervised the entire questionnaire administration. Students received a $30 gift certificate to a local movie theater or mall as a token of appreciation for their participation.

Measures

Demographic characteristics. Adolescents completed a demographic questionnaire where they reported on their age, gender, school attended, and whether they were born abroad or in the United States. A separate variable was created for each of the three schools and dummy-coded in order to control for school in the regression analyses. The parochial school was the referent for this set of dummy variables. Adolescents also reported on the highest school grade completed by their mothers. Responses to this question ranged from 1 (grammar school: Grades 1–8) to 6 (graduate/professional degree).

Parental involvement. Parental involvement in education was measured with two existing scales and several items specifically designed for this study. The first set of items was drawn from the Educational Socialization Scale (ESS; Bempechat, Graham, & Jimenez, 1999). This scale consists of 17 items tapping communication of parental values and beliefs about education to their children in addition to the emotional tone surrounding parental reactions to children’s academic performance. Response options ranged from 0 (never) to 4 (almost every day). Cronbach’s alpha was .87 for this set of questions. The second set of items was drawn from the Parent School Involvement Scale (PSIS; Steinberg, Lamborn, Dornbusch, & Darling, 1992). This scale consists of five items assessing parental involvement in children’s schoolwork and school activities. An additional five items were modified from Cooper and Crosnoe’s (2007) parental involvement in education scale to assess frequency of parents’ contact with teachers and school committees. Response options for these 10 items ranged from 1 (never) to 4 (often), and the Cronbach’s alpha was .75 for this scale. A final set of nine questions was specifically designed for this study to assess parents’ use of positive emotional support for academic work and the extent to which students are motivated to do well academically in order to “give back” to their parents. An ESS scale, “Guilt,” consists of two items: “I feel badly because my parents work so hard to give me a good education” and “I feel badly that my parents have to work so hard.” In order to counter the negative sense of guilt imbued in these questions, three of the nine questions we designed tapped positive motivation emerging from parental sacrifice, “Gift/Sacrifice.” Cronbach’s alpha was .84 for these questions.

Mother’s educational aspirations. Mother’s educational aspirations were assessed with the question, “How far does your mother want you to go in school?” Response categories ranged from 1 (finish some high school) to 5 (graduate from law, medical, or graduate school).

Respeto. Respeto was assessed using a seven-item measure of respect for authority figures within the family (Fuligni, Tseng, & Lam, 1999) in addition to three items assessing respect for professionals like teachers. Response options ranged from 1 (not at all important) to 5 (extremely important) on items such as, “How important is it to . . . treat your parents with great respect?” and “. . . treat professionals like teachers, lawyers, and doctors with respect?” Cronbach’s alpha for this sample was .79.

Academic indicators.

Educational expectations. Educational expectations were assessed with the question “How far do you actually think you will go in school?” Response categories ranged from 1 (finish some high school) to 5 (graduate from law, medical, or graduate school).

Educational values. Measured by students’ indication of the importance of education to them, educational values was assessed using a five-item scale developed by Fuligni, Witkow, and Garcia (2005) and included items such as, “It is important for me to do well in school” and “It is important to go to college.” The average was calculated as the final score, with higher scores reflecting greater valuing of education. Fuligni et al. (2005) reported an internal consistency of .84 for Latino adolescents in their sample; the Cronbach’s alpha for our sample was also .84.

School effort. School effort was measured using students’ self-report of the amount of effort they expend on schoolwork. This four-item scale was adapted from Steinberg and colleagues (1992) and included the following questions: “How often do you really pay attention in class?” “How often do you hand in your homework on time?” “How often do you complete all assigned reading and homework before quizzes and tests?” and “How often do you study before a quiz or test?” Response options ranged from 1 (never) to 5 (almost always). Items were averaged to create a mean score, and the Cronbach’s alpha was .75 for our sample.
**Results**

**Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)**

The data were analyzed in three stages. In addressing our first research question to illuminate the types of parental involvement identified as salient by Latino adolescents, an Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was conducted for all parental involvement items using principle axis factoring (PAF) with oblique rotation. The EFA identified six distinct components of parental involvement among our sample of Latino adolescents. In their principle component analysis of the ESS using a multiethnic sample, Bempechat et al., (1999) found that the ESS consists of five distinct factors: ESS Future (here, referred to as Future Discussions), ESS Effort, ESS Guilt (here, referred to as Guilt/Sacrifice), ESS Shame, and ESS Teach. Our results indicated the presence of similar factors with three exceptions. First, in our factor analysis the items for ESS Shame did not load onto any factor. Second, with our inclusion of the PSIS, we found that ESS Teach subdivided into two subscales: School Involvement and Home Involvement. Third, the three items added to capture academic motivation to “give back” for parental sacrifices contributed to an additional subscale: Gift/Sacrifice. The six items that were added to assess positive emotional support for academic work cross-loaded onto several factors and therefore were excluded from the final EFA. A more detailed discussion of the EFA follows.

Recent reviews and meta-analyses call into question the use of principle components analysis in conducting an EFA (Henson & Roberts, 2006; Russell, 2002). Fabrigar, Wegener, MacCallum, & Strahan (1999) argue that PAF is the most favorable extraction method in cases where the data is not normally distributed. Because the results measuring parental involvement were skewed to the right (toward reporting greater parental involvement), we selected PAF as the extraction method. Because oblique rotation is appropriate when factors are hypothesized to correlate with one another (Russell, 2002), promax rotation was used because it is an oblique rotation procedure that yields results equal to those found in a varimax rotation when factors are uncorrelated (Fabrigar et al., 1999; Russell, 2002). All EFA analyses used correlation matrices and were conducted using SPSS 17.0.

Before conducting the EFA, the data were examined to ensure that factor analysis was appropriate. Because the ESS and PSIS use slightly different response values, the last two response options in the ESS scale, *most of the time* and *almost every day* were combined into one response, *often*, to match the response options of the PSIS ranging from 1 (*never*) to 4 (*often*). A correlation matrix containing all parental involvement items revealed that two items, “My parents make me feel ashamed if I do badly in school” and “My parents feel ashamed if I do badly in school” were correlated with fewer than two-thirds of the other items. These two items were thus removed from future EFA analyses.

Following Thompson and Daniel’s (1996) recommendation that multiple decision rules be used in determining the number of factors to be extracted, two different criteria were used. The first criterion was the scree test (Cattell, 1966). Results from the scree test indicated that six factors were present. However, because of the subjectivity of the scree test, a second criterion was also used: parallel analysis (O’Connor, 2000). Parallel analysis often performs better than the scree test and is arguably the most accurate method for determining the number of factors to be extracted from a given set of items (Henson & Roberts, 2006; Russell, 2002). Parallel analysis, using methods developed by O’Connor (2000), indicated that there were seven factors present. Alternatively, the Kaiser criterion (Kaiser, 1960) identifies factors as those with eigenvalues greater than 1.0 and is the most commonly used method. However, some researchers question the accuracy of this method because of its tendency to extract too many factors (Fabrigar et al., 1999; Russell, 2002). In our data, there were eight factors with eigenvalues greater than 1.0.

When the number of factors is unclear, researchers recommend running multiple factor analyses to determine the best factor structure. Consequently, we compared six- and seven-factor solutions for our data. Examination of the seven-factor structure indicated multiple cross-loadings of the six emotional support items. Examination of the six-factor structure indicated that the six emotional support items failed to load onto any of the remaining factors. After eliminating these six items, a new EFA was conducted. The scree plot for the new EFA with 28 items indicated the presence of seven factors, parallel analysis revealed six factors, and eigenvalues indicated six factors. In interpreting all factor structures, items with loadings greater than .60 were retained. The eigenvalue for the first factor not retained was .933. The six-factor solution explained 65% of the total variance in the original variables. Mean scores were calculated for the six factors, and all resulting subscales were found to be internally consistent. Cronbach’s alphas and factor loadings for the final set of 22 items are illustrated in Table 1.

The 28 items included in the final EFA yielded a Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy value of .87 indicating a “meritorious” sampling adequacy (Kaiser, 1974) that should yield distinct and reliable factors. Communalities for the items retained in our final EFA ranged from .39 to .79 (M = .58). Average communalities around .50 indicate that a sample size between 100 and 200 is necessary to reproduce population loadings (MacCallum, Widaman, Zhang & Hong, 1999; Russell, 2002), thus confirming that our sample size of 223 was sufficient.

**Main Effects**

The second stage of analyses examined the bivariate and multivariate associations between parental involvement and adolescents’ educational outcomes. Descriptive information and bivariate correlations for four controls (gender, age, immigrant status, and maternal education), six parental involvement scales, mothers’ educational aspirations, *respeto*, and three academic outcomes (educational expectations, educational values, and school effort) are illustrated in Table 2. The correlations indicated that parental involvement expressed as Gift/Sacrifice, Future Discussions, Guilt/Sacrifice, School Involvement, and Home Involvement were significantly related to all academic outcomes. Effort (parental involvement factor) was correlated with educational values ($r = .20, p < .01$), but not educational expectations or school effort.

To examine our second research question concerning the relations between parental involvement and academic outcomes, we performed three hierarchical regressions, one for each of the dependent variables: educational expectations, educational values, and school effort. In the first step of each model, we entered demographic control variables, including gender, age, immigrant status,
Table 1  
Exploratory Factor Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>α</th>
<th>Loading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gift/Sacrifice</td>
<td></td>
<td>I want to succeed in school so I can help my parents in the future.</td>
<td>.86</td>
<td>.711</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I am inspired to do well in school because my parents have sacrificed so much.</td>
<td>.827</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I want to do my best in school because my parents work so hard.</td>
<td>.871</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESS Future Discussions</td>
<td></td>
<td>My parents talk about different kinds of jobs I can have when I grow up.</td>
<td>.89</td>
<td>.628</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>My parents say it’s important to think about what I want to be in the future.</td>
<td>.811</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>My parents say it’s important to think about the kinds of things I’m interested in doing when I grow up.</td>
<td>.857</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>ESS Effort</td>
<td></td>
<td>My parents say it’s important to think about what I want to be when I grow up.</td>
<td>.874</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>My parents say I could do better in school if I worked harder.</td>
<td>.815</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>My parents say you can get smarter and smarter as long as you try hard.</td>
<td>.789</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>My parents say if I don’t do well on a test, it’s probably because I didn’t study hard enough or long enough.</td>
<td>.721</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>ESS Guilt/Sacrifice</td>
<td></td>
<td>My parents talk about different kinds of jobs I can have when I grow up.</td>
<td>.89</td>
<td>.796</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>My parents talk to my teachers or school counselors on the phone.</td>
<td>.773</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>PSIS School Involvement</td>
<td></td>
<td>My parents talk to my teachers or school counselors in person.</td>
<td>.773</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>My parents participate in a parent - teacher organization (PTO) or school committee.</td>
<td>.605</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESS Home Involvement</td>
<td></td>
<td>My parents talk to my teachers or school counselors on the phone.</td>
<td>.89</td>
<td>.796</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>My parents (or someone else at home) help me with math homework.</td>
<td>.89</td>
<td>.796</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>My parents (or someone else at home) help me with other homework (not math).</td>
<td>.855</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSIS</td>
<td></td>
<td>My parents help me with my homework.</td>
<td>.89</td>
<td>.796</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>My parents help me select courses for school.</td>
<td>.660</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>My parents look over and help me with school assignments.</td>
<td>.801</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Note.  ESS = Educational Socialization Scale; PSIS = Parent School Involvement Scale.

* Items specifically designed for this study.

maternal education, and two school dummy variables. Multivariate hierarchical linear regression analyses, displayed in Table 3, revealed that Gift/Sacrifice (β = .15, p < .05) and mothers’ educational aspirations (β = .35, p < .001) were significantly related to adolescents’ educational expectations. School Involvement was marginally related to educational expectations (β = .14, p < .10), Gift/Sacrifice (β = .37, p < .001), Future Discussions (β = .18, p < .05), and mothers’ educational aspirations (β = .23, p < .001) were significantly associated with educational values. With respect to school effort, Gift/Sacrifice (β = .21, p < .01), Future Discussions (β = .25, p < .001),...
and educational expectations. Similarly, based on the main effects, of the relations between these measures of parental involvement adolescents’ gender, immigrant status, and significantly associated with educational expectations, we tested School Involvement, and mothers’ educational aspirations were Based on main effect findings demonstrating that Gift/Sacrifice, in involvement and educational outcomes as displayed in analyses were used to examine adolescents’ gender, immigration status, and as moderators of the relations between Gift/Sacrifice, Future Discussions, Effort, and Home Involvement (measures of parental involvement) and school effort.

Gender as a moderator of parental involvement and educational outcomes. The first set of regressions explored gender as a moderator of the relations between parental involvement and educational outcomes. Results indicated that gender was a significant moderator of the relation between Gift/Sacrifice and educational values (β = -.43, p < .001) as well as between mothers’ educational aspirations and educational values (β = .29, p < .001). Simple slopes analyses (Holmbeck, 2002), shown in Figure 2, revealed that the association between Gift/Sacrifice and educational values was stronger for males (β = .80, t = 5.77, p < .001) than

Table 3
Multivariate Hierarchical Linear Regression Examining the Associations Between Parental Involvement and Academic Outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictors</th>
<th>Educational expectations</th>
<th>Educational values</th>
<th>School effort</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>SE</td>
<td>β</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender (0 = M, 1 = F)</td>
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<td>.14</td>
<td>.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-.14</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>-.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student U.S. born (1 = yes, 0 = no)</td>
<td>-.06</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>-.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maternal education</td>
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<td>.04</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 1</td>
<td>-.12</td>
<td>.19</td>
<td>-.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 2</td>
<td>-.10</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>-.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R²</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender (0 = M, 1 = F)</td>
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<td>.14</td>
<td>.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-.08</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>-.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student U.S. born (1 = yes, 0 = no)</td>
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<td>.15</td>
<td>.01</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maternal education</td>
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<td>.03</td>
<td>.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 1</td>
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<td>.18</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 2</td>
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<td>.15</td>
<td>-.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gift/Sacrifice</td>
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<td>.13</td>
<td>.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future Discussions</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effort</td>
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<td>.13</td>
<td>-.08</td>
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<tr>
<td>Guilt/Sacrifice</td>
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<td>.09</td>
<td>.00</td>
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<td>School Involvement</td>
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<td>.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home Involvement</td>
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<td>.11</td>
<td>-.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mothers’ aspirations</td>
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<td>.07</td>
<td>.25</td>
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<tr>
<td>Δ R²</td>
<td>.21***</td>
<td>.36**</td>
<td>.21***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R²</td>
<td>.24</td>
<td>.38</td>
<td>.25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Values in boldface indicate a significant relationship to another factor; see text.  
† p < .10. * p < .05. ** p < .01. *** p < .001.

p < .01), and Home Involvement (β = .17, p < .05) were positively related to school effort, whereas Effort (parental involvement factor) was negatively related to school effort (β = -.24, p < .01).

Moderation Analyses

In order to examine our third research question, moderation analyses were used to examine adolescents’ gender, immigration status, and respeto as moderators of the relation between parental involvement and educational outcomes as displayed in Figure 1. Based on main effect findings demonstrating that Gift/Sacrifice, School Involvement, and mothers’ educational aspirations were significantly associated with educational expectations, we tested adolescents’ gender, immigrant status, and respeto as moderators of the relations between these measures of parental involvement and educational expectations. Similarly, based on the main effects, gender, immigrant status, and respeto were tested as moderators of the relations between Gift/Sacrifice, Future Discussions, and mothers’ educational aspirations (measures of parental involvement) and adolescents’ educational values, and as moderators of the relations between Gift/Sacrifice, Future Discussions, Effort, and Home Involvement (measures of parental involvement) and school effort.

Figure 1. Hypothesized moderation models.
for females ($\beta = .27, t = 3.53, p < .001$), although it remained significant for both. With respect to maternal aspirations, simple slopes analyses, illustrated in Figure 3, indicated that, for females, mothers’ educational aspirations was positively related to educational values ($\beta = .26, t = 5.84, p < .001$), whereas for males, mothers’ educational aspirations was not significantly related to educational values ($\beta = -.01, t = -.19, p = ns$). Gender did not moderate the associations between parental involvement and either educational expectations or academic effort.

Immigrant status as a moderator of parental involvement and academic outcomes. The second set of regressions examined adolescents’ immigrant status as a moderator of the association between parental involvement and educational outcomes. Results demonstrated that immigrant status moderated the association between School Involvement ($\beta = -.31, p < .05$) (but not mothers’ educational aspirations) and adolescents’ educational expectations. Simple slopes analyses, depicted in Figure 4, revealed that the positive association between School Involvement and educational expectations was stronger for adolescents who were born outside the United States ($\beta = .64, t = 2.83, p < .01$) than for U.S.-born adolescents ($\beta = .21, t = 2.31, p < .05$).

Respeto as a moderator of parental involvement and educational outcomes. The third set of regressions examined respeto as a moderator of the association between parental involvement and educational outcomes. Findings demonstrated that respeto was a significant moderator in the association between mothers’ educational aspirations and adolescents’ educational expectations ($\beta = .15, p < .05$). As displayed in Figure 6, simple slopes indicated that the association between mothers’ educational aspirations and adolescents’ educational expectations was stronger for adolescents reporting higher levels of respeto ($\beta = .48, t = 5.55, p < .001$) compared with adolescents with less endorsement of respeto ($\beta = .23, t = 2.82, p < .01$).

Discussion

Because Latinos represent the largest and fastest-growing ethnic group in the United States, improving the educational performance of Latino youth must become a national imperative. Unfortunately, the high value that Latino parents place on educational attainment (García Coll et al., 2002; Hill & Torres, 2010; Plunkett & Bамaca-Gomez, 2003) does not translate into greater academic achievement for Latino youth. By focusing on a sample of Latino, predominantly Dominican, adolescents from low-income families, our study examined parental involvement in education with specific attention to cultural factors, such as immigrant status. More-
over, the specificity of our sample allowed us to explore several within-group differences. Altogether, our study addressed three research questions: (1) Which types of parental activities are identified by Latino adolescents as salient forms of parental involvement in education? (2) What kinds of parental involvement are positively associated with adolescents’ educational expectations, values, and school effort? (3) Do the relations between parental involvement and academic-related outcomes vary by adolescents’ gender, immigrant status, or endorsement of respeto.

With regard to our first research question, our findings support the recent call to reconceptualize parental involvement in education as a multidimensional construct whereby parents may engage in an array of different activities supporting children’s educational pursuits (Fan et al., 2012). Our sample of Latino adolescents identified six distinct and coherent components of parental involvement: Gift/Sacrifice, Future Discussions, Effort, Guilt/Sacrifice, School Involvement, and Home Involvement. As seen across several studies, our analyses identified factors of school- and home-based involvement as well as future discussions centering on “academic socialization” (Hill & Tyson, 2009; Seginer, 2006; Shumow & Miller, 2001). Two components of parental involvement, Gift/Sacrifice and Future Discussions, may be especially salient to low-income, Latino youth since they tap a desire to succeed academically that is motivated by parents’ hard work and sacrifice as well as parents’ communication about the value of education and future opportunities. These types of parental involvement are not dependent on learned knowledge or social resources. Indeed, immigrant and low-income parents may call on a number of nontraditional activities in support of their children’s education. Hence, the multiple and varied components of parental involvement endorsed by our sample suggest that relying on a narrowly defined construct of involvement, such as school-based involvement, will impede our understanding of parental involvement among poor, racial/ethnic minority families.

In response to our second research question, mothers’ educational aspirations and four types of parental involvement (Gift/Sacrifice, Future Discussions/Academic Socialization, School Involvement, and Home Involvement) emerged as having significant, positive associations with adolescents’ academic-related outcomes. The positive influence of discussions concerning academic socialization and school-based involvement on adolescents’ achievement, academic motivation, and school adjustment are consistent with prior findings in the literature (Hill & Tyson, 2009; Kuperminc et al., 2008; Plunkett et al., 2009). Although school-based parental involvement tends to decline in high school, parents’ presence at school events and programs may continue to be an important source of motivation and academic inspiration for Latino adolescents in low-income families. Also consistent with previous research, maternal aspirations for their adolescents’ educational attainment was positively related to educational values and school effort (Fan & Chen, 2001; Fan et al., 2012; Juang & Silbereisen, 2002). Thus, our findings confirm that Latino parents continue to play an influential role in their children’s educational beliefs and school effort during adolescence, at the beginning of high school.

In contrast to developing a sense of guilt for parental sacrifice, the notion of doing well academically in order to “give back” to parents who have sacrificed and worked hard (Gift/Sacrifice) had positive associations with adolescents’ educational expectations, educational values, and school effort. Many qualitative studies highlight the role of parental sacrifice as a source of educational motivation and inspiration for Latino, especially immigrant, students (Ceballo, 2004; Sánchez, Reyes, & Singh, 2006; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001). High-achieving Latino adolescents often value success in school as a means of contributing to their families of origin, as a way of returning a gift (Sánchez et al., 2006). Stories about parents’ struggles with poverty, immigration, and lack of education may provide an important and meaningful form of parental involvement. As such, sharing family stories and immigrant experiences may be an important, yet often overlooked, source of parental support for education.

Interestingly, two components of parental involvement that may capture potentially more negative aspects of parent–adolescent discussions, Effort and Guilt/Sacrifice, were not positively linked to academic outcomes. Relatedly, researchers have found that parent–child discussions about school problems are associated with negative academic performance (Fan et al., 2012). Of course, parental discussions about academic concerns may follow and not precede problematic school behavior; more longitudinal research is needed to tease apart the causal order of these relations. Future research must continue to examine multiple indicators of parental involvement over time, noting that indices are likely to differ across socioeconomic status and racial/ethnic groups.

Our third research question examined the roles of adolescents’ gender, immigrant status, and the endorsement of respeto in influencing the relations between parental involvement and adolescents’ academic outcomes. With the inclusion of this question, we gave serious consideration to the familial and cultural context of adolescents’ academic functioning. Gender played an important role in the relations between parental involvement in education and adolescents’ values about schooling. The link between mothers’ aspirations and adolescents’ educational values existed for female but not male adolescents. Here, same-sex identification between mothers and daughters may have a particularly strong pull for girls’ approaches to school and future career paths. The importance of same-sex parent–adolescent dyads was also reported by Alfaro and colleagues (2006) who found that mothers’ academic support was related to girls’ (but not boys’) academic motivation. Conversely, the link between Gift/Sacrifice and educational values was stronger for male compared with female adolescents. For males, traditional gender roles about masculinity and providing for one’s family may bolster the desire to “give back” and provide for one’s
parents via academic/career success. By some accounts, Latino parents are likely to espouse traditional gender role norms (Raffaelli & Ontai, 2004).

Supporting “immigrant paradox” effects on the educational attainment of Latino youth (Hill & Torres, 2010; Perreira et al., 2010; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001), our study provides corroborating evidence for the “immigrant paradox” among a mostly Dominican Latino sample. Specifically, we found that the positive relation between parental involvement (e.g., School Involvement and Gift/Sacrifice) and academic outcomes was stronger for immigrant, compared with nonimmigrant, youth. It may be that parental support for education carries greater weight among immigrant teenagers who have experienced the hardships of moving to a new country and are motivated to make the most of new opportunities. In contrast, youth who have been in the United States longer may have experienced greater racial and socioeconomic discrimination.

Our findings also revealed that the relation between mothers’ aspirations and educational expectations existed for adolescents who endorsed higher, rather than lower, values of respeto. On the whole, the associations between parental involvement and academic outcomes emerged more strongly among immigrant youth and those with higher endorsements of traditional cultural values. Values that promote the centrality of families, prior parental sacrifices, and opportunities to achieve academically may be especially protective for poor, immigrant youth. Cooper and Crosnoe (2007) found that among financially disadvantaged families, an increase in parental school involvement was associated with an increase in adolescents’ academic orientation; however, the opposite was true in more financially advanced families. These findings underscore the potential for parental involvement to serve as a protective factor, bolstering the academic attainment for adolescents from economically disadvantaged, immigrant homes.

As with all studies, it is important to note the limitations inherent in the current investigation. First, all of our measures were self-reported by adolescents, and as such, they represent only one perception of parents’ investment in education. Second, the cross-sectional nature of our data prevents us from making any claims about causality. It may be, for example, that students’ academic performance influences parents’ involvement in their schooling. However, many studies support the notion that parents play a critical role in their children’s educational achievement (Henry et al., 2011; Hill & Tyson, 2009). Finally, our study did not use objective measures of academic achievement, such as test scores and grades. Future research should incorporate comprehensive assessments of parental involvement from multiple informants. Given the size and unique demographic composition of our sample, we offer preliminary findings that await replication with larger sample sizes and other Latino subgroups.

Notwithstanding these limitations, our study makes several important contributions to the literature by focusing specifically on a low-income group of primarily Dominican American adolescents, utilizing a multidimensional construct of parental involvement, and incorporating culturally specific measures in our analyses. In sum, we found that several different forms of parental involvement, specifically Gift/Sacrifice, Future Discussions, School Involvement, and Home Involvement, were positively associated with Latino adolescents’ academic values and effort. Moreover, culturally salient factors, such as immigrant status and the endorsement of respeto, played an important role in understanding the influence of parental involvement. Overall, our study underscores the importance of studying parental involvement in education by attending to specific sociocultural contexts. Parental involvement does not occur in a vacuum; rather, adolescents interpret and understand parental messages about education within their own specific situations, such as family histories of immigration, work, and sacrifice.

References


