

Effects of Acculturation on Parenting Styles and Child Responsiveness Among Spanish and English-Speaking Latinos

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Acculturated Latino parents have been found to display more authoritative parenting practices similar to mainstream Anglo-American parenting behaviors (Grau et al., 2009; Falicov, 1998; Fontes, 2002; Hill et al. 2003). Contrastingly, less acculturated Latino parenting behaviors have been described as more controlling and strict, consistent with an authoritarian parenting style (Buriel, 1993; Chun & Akutsu, 2003; Cabrera et al., 2006; Grau et al., 2009). However, use of controlling behavior and intrusiveness among less acculturated parents has been linked to less negative outcomes than its use among more acculturated parents (Gonzalez et al., 2000; Grau et al., 2009; Ispa et al., 2004).

The purpose of this study is to explore how cultural norms and levels of acculturation influence parenting styles and child responsiveness within English- and Spanish-speaking Latino families when the children have been referred for mental health services because of their difficult-to-manage behavior.

Results showed that when parents were commanding; their child was less emotionally responsive and involving with their parent regardless of acculturation level. Interestingly, English speaking Latino parents who used a high amount of questions had children who were more emotionally responsive and involving with their parents, which was a result not seen with Spanish speaking Latino dyads. These findings suggest that acculturation level does influence parenting styles and these differences should be taken into consideration when evaluating a parent-child relationship.

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