



# Examining Ethnic Differences in Parenting Styles in Latino and Caucasian Populations

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## ABSTRACT

- The purpose of this study is to explore the effect of cultural norms on the link between parenting styles and parenting stress.
- In this study, we ask whether authoritarian parenting and discipline styles, found to be more normative in the Latino culture, are less likely to be associated with high levels of parenting stress in Latino parents than in Caucasian parents.
- The study sample consisted of 410 Caucasian and 152 Latino parent-child dyads.
- Results showed that, as expected, Latino parents scored higher on the Authoritarian Parenting values scale than Caucasian parents. However, results of analyses showed that for both groups, more authoritarian parenting style predicted greater dysfunction in the parent-child relationship. For Caucasian men who scored high on the CAPI created parenting values scale, this relation predicted higher levels of stress within the parental role.

## INTRODUCTION

- Latino parenting styles have often been described as more strict and authoritarian than both Caucasian and African-American parents (Zayas, 1992; Fontes, 2002).
- Latinos have also been noted to value closeness, dependence, obedience, and family loyalty; characteristics contrasting those of dominant Anglo-American culture valuing autonomy and independence (Falicov, 1998; Fontes, 2002).
- Many concerns have risen regarding reporting biases with minorities being over-represented in reports to social services, resulting in conclusions that minority children have greater risk for child maltreatment. As researchers continue to investigate cultural differences in parenting strategies, disagreement among cultural norms remains on which styles of parenting and discipline are to be considered harsh or abusive (Rodriguez, 2007).
- Culturally relativist approaches suggest some parenting styles may be productive for some ethnic groups while detrimental to others (Rodriguez, 2007).
- Hill, Bush, and Roosa (2003) and other studies posit that within Latino communities, parental strictness which has been described as a combination of parental warmth and hostile control, serves to facilitate family harmony and supports the value of familism held within Latino culture.
- Consequently, it is important that variation in parenting styles and views on discipline be understood by clinicians and service providers treating families of different ethnic background by understanding the cultural meaning and impact parenting styles have within the culture they are practiced.

## PURPOSE & HYPOTHESIS

- The purpose of this study is to explore the effect of cultural norms on the link between parenting styles and parenting stress.
- In this study, we ask whether authoritarian parenting and discipline styles, found to be more normative in the Latino culture, are less likely to be associated with high levels of parenting stress in Latino parents than in Caucasian parents.
- We propose that Caucasians and Latinos will answer differently on the re-organized parenting value scale reflecting parenting values and discipline. In concordance with the literature, we believe that Latinos will report a more disciplined and strict view of parenting than Caucasians.
- We aim to examine the relation of parenting values affect on reporting parental stress.

## METHOD

### Participants

- Participants were 562 English speaking parent-child dyads; 410 Caucasian and 152 Latino parent-child dyads who were referred to Parent-Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT) because of the child's externalizing behavior problems.
- Dyads were selected according to the caregiver's ethnicity and included if they were the primary caregiver of the child.
- Children were 2 to 8 years of age, with a mean age of 4.36, and there were 65.8% Latino and 58.0% Caucasian.

### Procedure

- When dyads enter PCIT, parents fill out a battery of assessments that will provide therapists with information that assesses dysfunction and stress in parent-child relationships, common child behavior problems, and the parents potential to abuse their child.

### Measures of Risk

- Undergraduate, graduate and doctoral level researchers each evaluated the Child Abuse Potential Inventory (CAPI), which is a 160 item measure looking at parent abuse potential with various subscales (Milner, 1986), for items that represent different aspects of being a parent; discipline, parenting views and specific actions a parent would take. Items that were chosen out of the 160 items on the measure by the four investigators and were then tested for inter-rater reliability. The inter-rater reliability of the raters was found to be Kappa = .91.
- Items were chosen if they represented thoughts or actions that discriminated between authoritarian and authoritative parenting styles, e.g., discipline, views on acceptable child behaviors. An example of an item representing parenting would be: "Spanking that only bruises the child is okay." Answers are either disagree or agree, and are scored dichotomously, such that higher scores equal a higher amount of agreement.
- 29 out of the 160 items were chosen by the investigators as being representative of parenting and discipline. A test of internal consistency was run on the 29 items, and Cronbach's alpha was .80. For our purposes, we have named this reorganized item scale, the Authoritarian Parenting Values Scale.
- Authoritarian Parenting Values scores on this separate scale were then correlated with their scores on the Parenting Stress Index (Short Form) (Abidin, 1995) which is a 36 item measure that addresses parent-child dyads that may be experiencing stress and are at risk for developing a dysfunctional relationship.

## METHOD cont.

- The PSI (SF) contains three subscales addressing:
  - Parental Distress: How much stress the parent feels in the parental role.
  - Dysfunction between parent and child relationship: If the parent-child relationship is strained.
  - Stress with Child: How much stress is involved in caring for the difficult child.

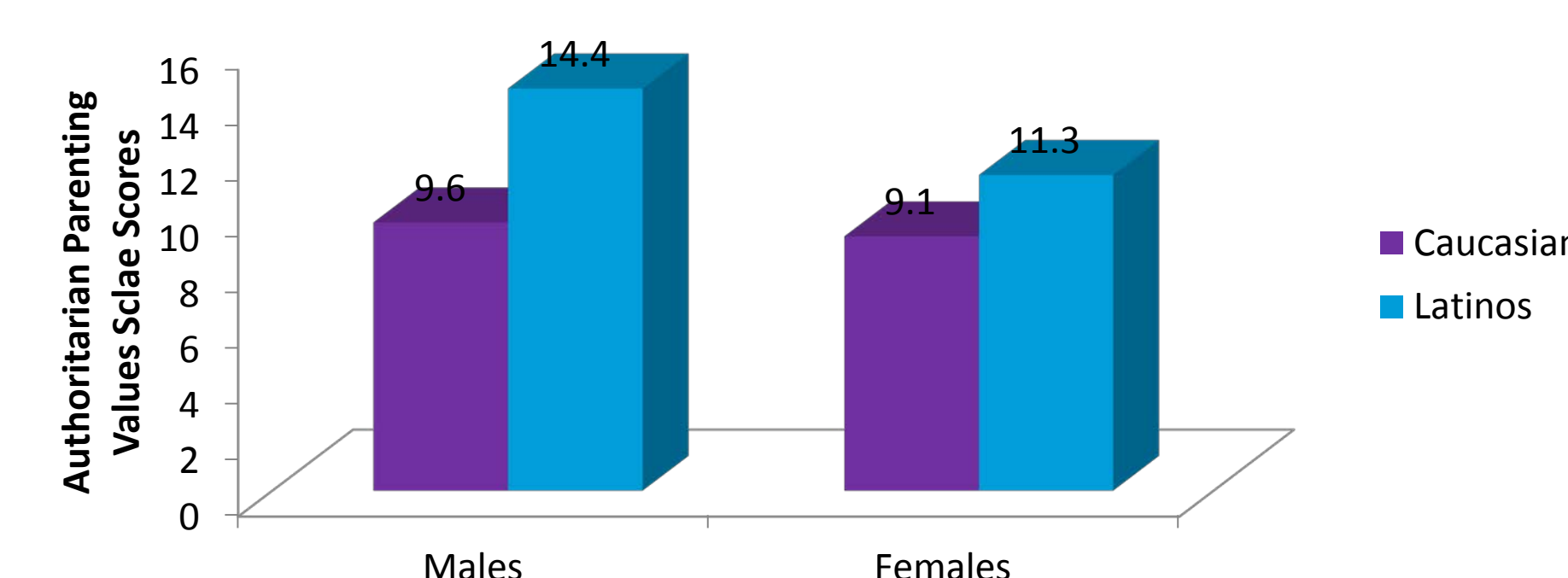
## RESULTS

### Descriptive Statistics for Latinos and Caucasians

Characteristic	Latino N = 152	Caucasian N = 405
Marital Status % Single	54.7	64.6*
Caregiver educational attainment % High School or less	81.1	76.7
Physical Abuse History (%)	25.2	34.9*
Neglect History (%)	46.3	51.2
Domestic Violence History (%)	65.9	60.6
Substance Abuse History (%)	49.5	54.3
Mean age of Mother in years (SD)	28.44 (5.6)	28.74 (6.1)
Mean age of Father in years (SD)	32.50 (7.1)	34.25 (7.7)
Sex of Parent (% Female)	81.0	79.0

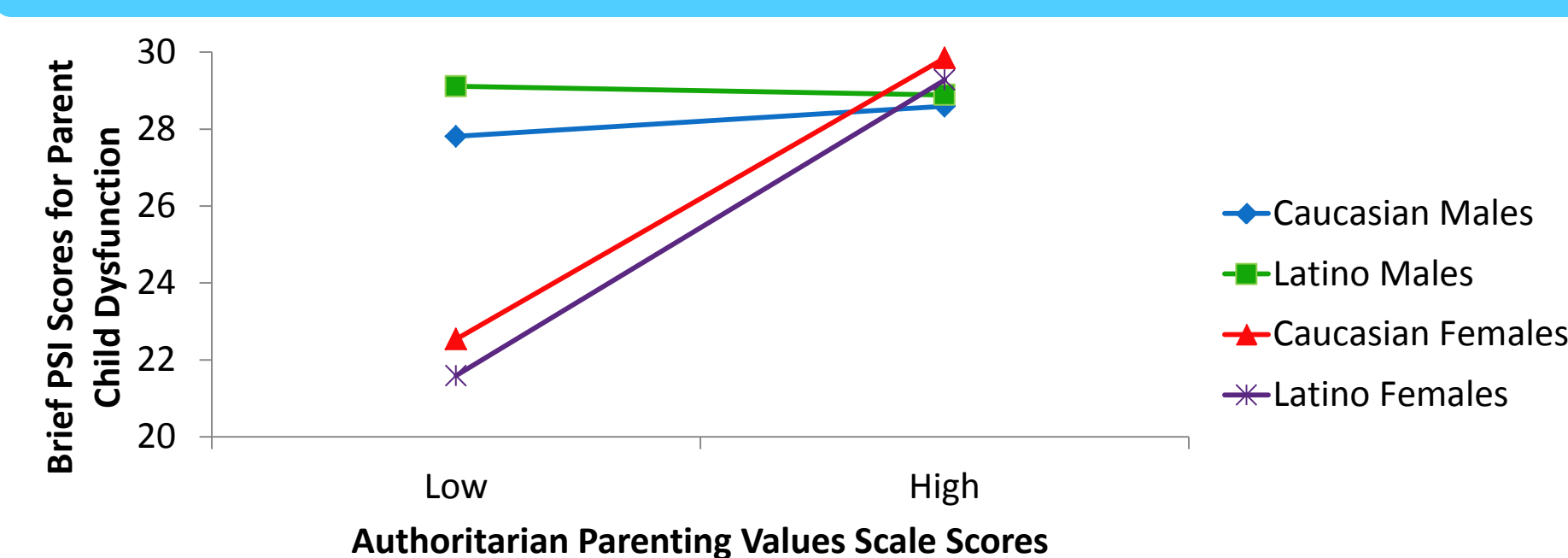
Note. Caucasians were significantly more likely to be in single and more likely to have history of physical abuse,  $p < .05$

### Means for CAPI Parenting Values Scale for Latinos and Caucasians



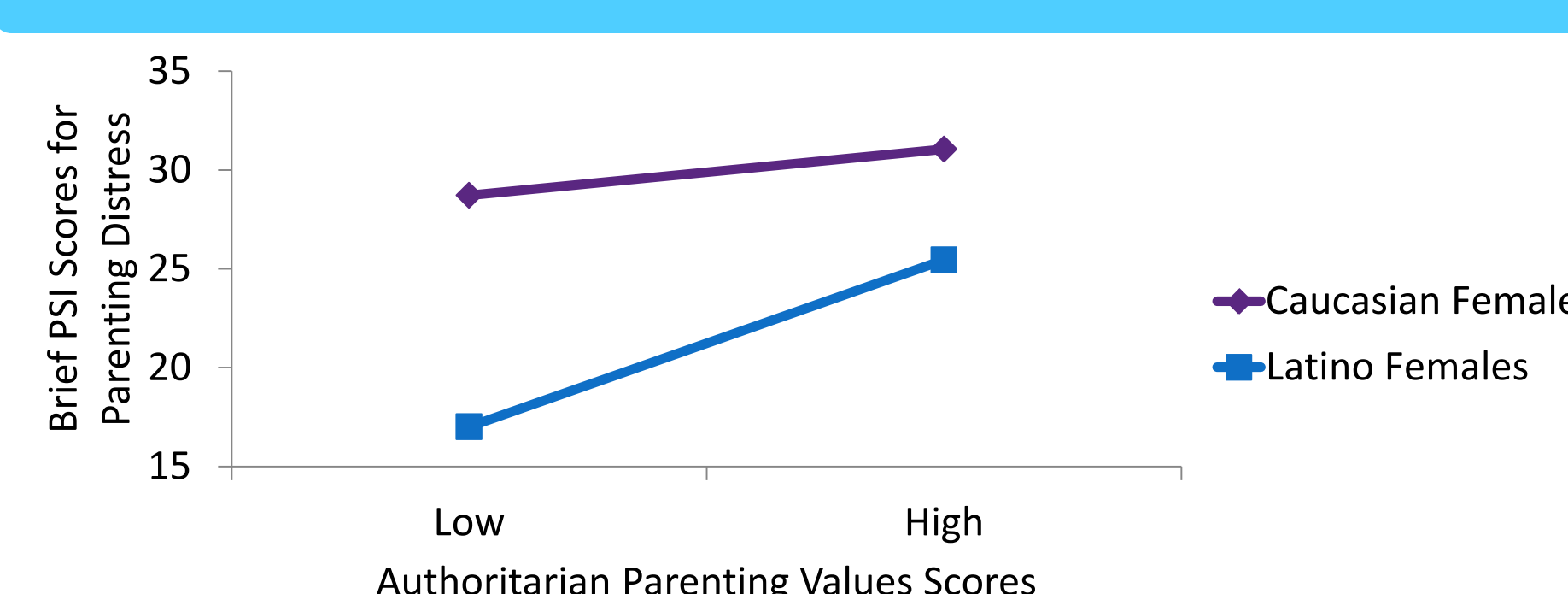
- An Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was performed examining Latino and Caucasian males and females mean scores on the authoritarian parenting values scale. Results showed a significant differences between Latino & Caucasian parents' authoritarian parenting values scores,  $F(1,886) = 79.910, p < .001$ .

### Parent Values Scale Scores with Brief PSI Parent Child Dysfunction



- Regression analysis were performed looking at how scores on the CAPI parenting values scale might predict dysfunction in the parent-child relationship. For Caucasian and Latino females, higher Authoritarian Parenting Values scale scores significantly predicted greater reports of parent-child dysfunction. However Authoritarian parenting values and parent-child dysfunction was unrelated in Caucasian and Latino fathers.

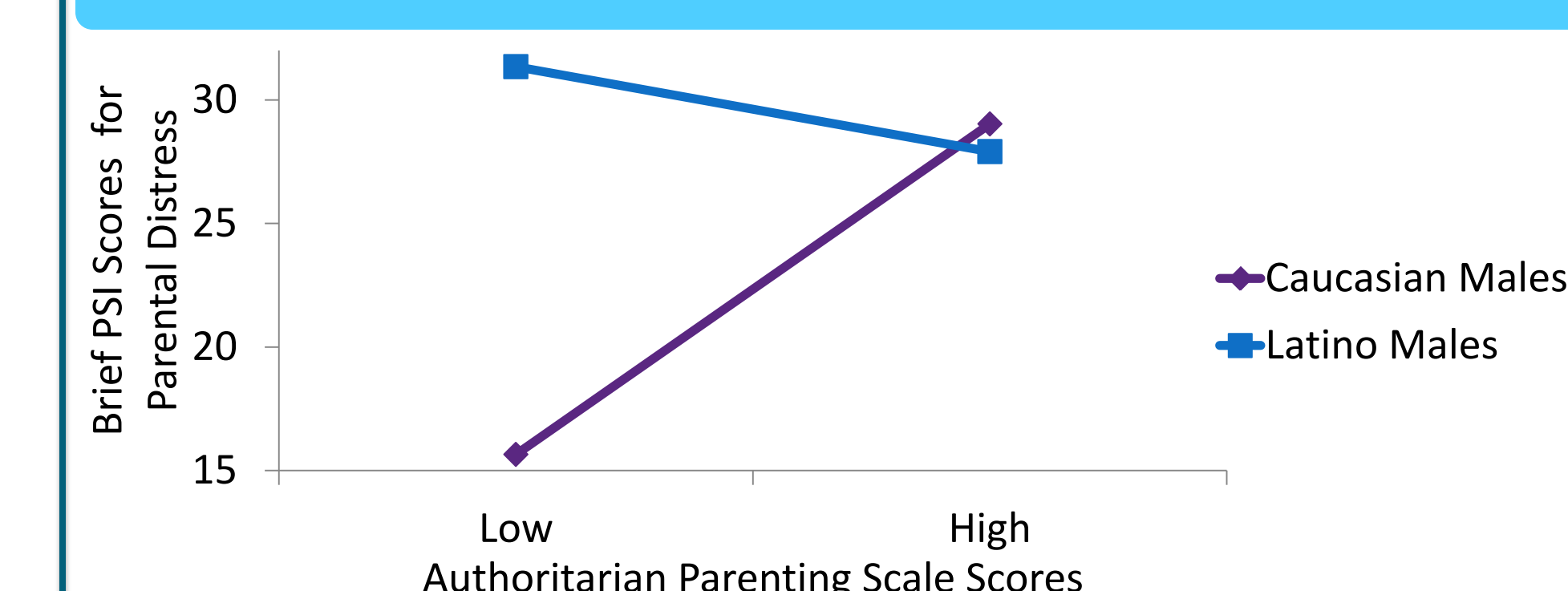
### Parent Values Scale Scores with Brief PSI Parent Distress for Moms



- Increasing scores in authoritarian parenting values predicted increases in parental distress in both Latino and Caucasian women.

## RESULTS cont.

### Parent Values Scale Scores with Brief PSI Parent Distress for Dads



- To examine how parenting views might affect how much stress the parent feels in the parental role, regression analysis were performed. Results showed that although Latino males expressed more authoritarian views, these views were not associated with stress in the parental role. However, in Caucasian males, higher scores on the authoritarian parenting values scale predicted more stress in the parental role.
- We observed that more authoritarian parenting styles tended to be associated ( $p=.09$ ) with greater parental distress in both Caucasian and Latino women.
- We also examined how parenting views might affect how the parent perceives the amount of stress involved with caring for the child. However, we did not find any significant ethnic differences of parenting views on the stress of caring for the difficult child.

## DISCUSSION

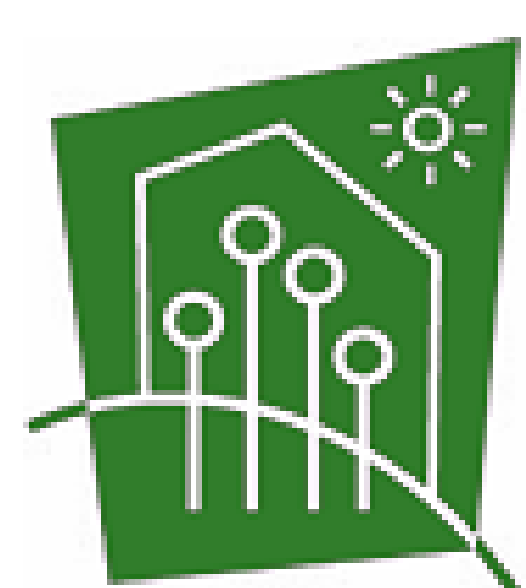
- The purpose of this study is to explore the effect of cultural norms on the link between parenting styles and parenting stress.
- Results showed that overall, Latino mothers and fathers showed a more disciplined and strict (authoritarian) view of parenting than Caucasians.
- Results suggested that authoritarian views may be indicators of risk (e.g., a perception of dysfunction in the parent-child relationship, and parental distress) in Latino women, as research has shown in Caucasian women. In contrast, in Latino fathers, more authoritarian views did not seem to be related to risk and stress in the parent-child relationship, while Caucasian fathers' more authoritarian beliefs predicted greater parental distress.
- Our findings support previous research showing that Latinos had more strict and disciplined view of parenting than Caucasians. However, findings showed mixed support for the thought that authoritarian views would not be associated with risk for the parent-child relationship (e.g., Hill, Bush & Roosa, 2003). On the contrary, we found clear associations between authoritarian values and parent-role risk in Latino mothers. Fathers did not show clear associations between authoritarian parenting values and parent-role risk. It may be that Latino families expect and allow fathers, but not mothers, to express more power and control.

## LIMITATIONS/FUTURE

- This study's sample was from a clinical population with significant risk histories. In the future a greater representation of Latinos and more fathers are needed.
- To control for results based on the same child, mothers and fathers were evaluated separately. Future studies could compare how parents of the same child view their behaviors.

## CLINICAL IMPLICATIONS

- These findings suggest a need to evaluate culture as a part of assessing risk and issues in the parent child relationship.



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