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.

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 styles, 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 (Rodrigues, 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 familialism 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.

METHOD

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

RESULTS

- Descriptive Statistics for Latinos and Caucasians
- An Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was performed examining Latino and Caucasian parent-child dysfunction. However, findings showed mixed significant ethnic differences of parenting values and discipline. In concordance with the literature, we found the following significant differences between Latino and Caucasian parents’ authoritarian parenting values scales: $p=.09$, $p=.001$.
- Latino males were significantly different on the following scales reflecting lower levels of pain?