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The Father's Role in Risk and Resilience Among Mexican-American Adolescents

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Research suggests fathers are important to adolescent well-being, yet there is limited information regarding how fathering is associated with adolescent risk and resilience in Mexican American families. This cross-sectional study utilized a structural equation model to examine whether parent-child alienation mediated the relations between parental displays of warmth and hostility and the outcomes of adolescent resilience and delinquency in Mexican American families ($N = 272$). Results indicated that adolescent-perceived alienation from parents was a significant predictor of both resilience and delinquency. Additionally, alienation mediated the relations between father warmth and resilience and father warmth and delinquency, as well as the relations between mother hostility and adolescent outcomes. Implications for theory and practice are discussed.

Public Policy Relevance Statement

Mexican American adolescents face many negative factors that heighten their risk for future problems, namely delinquency. Little is known regarding the mechanisms responsible for promoting resilience, a protective factor against the risks faced by Mexican American adolescents. Our findings suggest that close parent-child relationships may be one mechanism responsible for promoting resilience and decreasing delinquency; thus, policies targeting delinquency prevention and interventions should include family based interventions aimed at improving positive parenting behaviors and parent-child closeness.

Ecological theories (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) and frameworks (Cabrera, Fitzgerald, Bradley, & Roggman, 2014) postulate that fathers contribute to adolescent development through positive direct and indirect processes. Current understanding of how Mexican American fathers influence adolescent outcomes is limited (Cabrera, Aldoney, & Tamis-LeMonda, 2014), a

gap that is particularly notable given most Mexican American adolescents reside in two-parent homes with their fathers (Karberg, Guzman, Cook, Scott, & Cabrera, 2017). Although father-focused research has proliferated, most research on parenting has essentially been that of mothering in middle-class Caucasian families (Pleck & Pleck, 1997). Given the dearth of Mexican American father-focused research, this study aimed to increase understanding of how paternal engagement in warm and hostile behaviors are associated with adolescent resilience and delinquency, mediated by parent-adolescent alienation, in Mexican American immigrant families. Acquiring such knowledge is important to theory development that can inform interventions for Mexican American adolescents who face unique challenges that increase the risk of developing behavioral health problems.

Theoretical Framework

In the present study, we draw on Cabrera et al.'s (2014) expanded model of father-child relationships, an ecological-based framework for understanding fathers' influence on child development. Multiple contextual factors, such as father's personal history, father's characteristics, family context, and father's parenting behaviors are posited to impact the father's influence on child development. Cabrera et al. (2014) suggested that these contextual

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factors indirectly (e.g., fathers' support to mothers reduce maternal stress; thus, increasing positive maternal parenting) and directly influence child development. Of the factors included in the expanded model, we focused on *fathers' parenting behaviors* (e.g., warmth and hostility) and the *family context* (e.g., adolescent gender and age, socioeconomic status [SES], and adolescent-parent alienation) to understand how these contextual factors are related to adolescent resilience and delinquency.

Risk and Resilience in Mexican American Youth

Mexican American youth, relative to their non-Latino peers, exhibit high rates of delinquent behaviors, including carrying a weapon to school and consuming alcohol and other drugs (Bird et al., 2001; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2016). Engagement in delinquent behaviors has serious implications, as juvenile offending often leads to high school dropout, low college enrollment, and recidivism (Fernández-Suárez, Herrero, Pérez, Juarros-Basterretxea, & Rodríguez-Díaz, 2016; Kirk & Sampson, 2013). In light of these findings, the study of resilience, which has been defined as overcoming serious threats to healthy development and experiencing positive outcomes despite exposure to such threats (Masten, 2001), may be particularly important in informing prevention and intervention efforts for Latino youth.

Findings from the few studies that have explored resilience in Mexican American youth suggest both individual characteristics and relational factors are involved. Chapin (2015) found that support from family and friends, emotion regulation, and adaptability contributed to resilience in Mexican American boys, and another study found that strong connectedness to family buffered against neighborhood risks (Ernestus & Prelow, 2015). Such findings are in accordance with resilience theories, which postulate that resilience is a relational phenomenon reinforced through family relationships (Walsh, 2003). Specifically, parental warmth and support, and good parent-child relationships, have been identified as protective factors that promote resilience (Emery & Forehand, 1996). On-the-other-hand, poor parental monitoring and parent-child alienation can lead to increased risk of delinquency (Atherton, Conger, Ferrer, & Robins, 2016; Caldwell, Beutler, An Ross, & Clayton Silver, 2006). Studies of Latino youth are predominantly deficit-oriented (Kuperminc, Wilkins, Roche, & Alvarez, 2009); therefore, we know far more about Mexican American youth adversity than we know of resilience. Understanding how to promote resilience is crucial given Mexican American adolescents are exposed to risk factors that compromise healthy development, such as discrimination, negative stereotyping, and language brokering (Falicov, 2014; Kim, Hou, & Gonzalez, 2017). For example, a recent study of Mexican American adolescents who acted as translators for their parents (Kim et al., 2017) found that parent-adolescent closeness and adolescent resilience helped to mitigate the negative psychological effects of feeling burdened by their translating roles.

Latino Fathering

Research suggests Latino men are highly engaged and emotionally invested fathers. Cabrera, Hofferth, and Chae (2011) found

Latino fathers exhibited higher levels of engagement with their children compared with White fathers, and another study found Mexican-origin fathers viewed emotional quality (i.e., love, respect, and pride), involvement, and role modeling to be integral aspects of fathering (Perez-Brena, Cookston, Fabricius, & Saenz, 2012). Additionally, a review of Latino father involvement (Cabrera & Bradley, 2012) revealed that involvement was associated with competence, positive adjustment, and improved social functioning in youth, characteristics important to adolescent resilience.

Warmth

Warm parent-child interactions, operationalized as supporting, listening to, and attempting to understand one's adolescent, have been directly related to positive adolescent outcomes in studies with Mexican Americans. One such study found parental warmth significantly reduced alcohol use while positively affecting the parent-adolescent relationship (Mogro-Wilson, 2008). In their study of Mexican American families, Perez-Brena et al. (2012) found adolescents of highly emotionally involved fathers exhibited the best adjustment over 3 years compared with adolescents whose fathers were harsher and more discipline-focused.

Hostility

Parental hostility, or fighting, arguing with, and criticizing one's child, is one manifestation of authoritarian parenting (Baumrind, 1966). Several studies of Latino families found that authoritarian parenting was associated with negative consequences for youth including mental health issues, academic problems, and delinquency (Calzada et al., 2015; Calzada, Huang, Anicama, Fernandez, & Brotman, 2012; Kim et al., 2018; Vidourek, King, Merianos, & Bartsch, 2016). Paternal hostility, specifically, has been found to predict teacher-reported child externalizing problems (Carrère & Bowie, 2012) and child adjustment problems (Parke et al., 2004).

Parent-Adolescent Relationship Quality: Alienation

Recent scholarship suggests that fathers develop close relationships with their children. Fathers also become more alienated as children approach adolescence because of normative increases in child autonomy. For example, Rodríguez, Perez-Brena, Updegraff, and Umaña-Taylor (2014) found that Mexican American paternal warmth toward adolescents is lower than with their younger children, and Mexican American fathers have reported that emotional distance from their children increases over time (Taylor & Behnke, 2005). Conversely, another study showed that Mexican American fathers remain highly involved in their adolescents' lives, albeit to a lesser degree than mothers (Updegraff, Delgado, & Wheeler, 2009). Increases in parent-adolescent distance and conflict are normal during adolescence, though adolescents' need for closeness and support from parents remains (Liddle, Rodriguez, Dakof, Kanzki, & Marvel, 2005). Attachment research supports the importance of parent-child closeness by suggesting that alienation can be detrimental to adolescent well-being (Moretti & Peled, 2004).

High quality parent–child relationships are important protective factors against the development of mental health problems (Anderson, 2018; Hair, Moore, Garrett, Ling, & Cleveland, 2008). Adolescent-reported closeness to fathers has been associated with abstinence from alcohol (Habib et al., 2010), whereas alienation from parents has been associated with increased drug and alcohol use (Rusby, Light, Crowley, & Westling, 2018). Adolescent–parent alienation is of interest in this study given the importance Mexican culture places on the family and findings supporting a link between Latino family closeness and decreased deviance and violence (Estrada-Martínez, Padilla, Caldwell, & Schulz, 2011; Gil, Wagner, & Vega, 2000).

Prominent evidenced-based interventions designed to prevent and reduce adolescent delinquency, such as Multidimensional Family Therapy (MDFT), emphasize enhancing parent–adolescent emotional connectedness to promote lasting change (van Der Pol et al., 2017). One way this is achieved is through increased positive, and decreased negative, parent–adolescent interactions. Parenting behaviors such as warmth and hostility have been associated with parent–child relationship quality (i.e., Mogro-Wilson, 2008; Rodríguez et al., 2014), suggesting that how parents interact with their adolescents influences whether adolescents seek proximity to or distance from their parents. Therefore, understanding predictors of parent–child alienation is critical, as alienation may be a primary mediator between parenting behaviors and adolescent proclivity toward resilience or destruction.

The Present Study

The present study aimed to investigate relations between fathering and youth outcomes in Mexican American families of adolescents. We were particularly interested in paternal behaviors that shape and reflect the emotional context of the father–adolescent relationship. Thus, our model examined how paternal warmth and hostility influence adolescent delinquency and resilience, mediated by parent–adolescent relationship quality (i.e., whether the adolescent feels closer to, or more alienated from, their parents). Given the well-documented role of parental monitoring as a predictor of delinquency (Martinez, 2006; Rusby et al., 2018), we include it as a control variable. Also, drawing on Cabrera et al.'s (2014) expanded model, which acknowledges the importance mothers have on fathering, we examined parenting behaviors of both parents. By including mothering behaviors in our conceptual model, we examined which fathering behaviors were significant after accounting for mothering. Additionally, we considered differences based on adolescent gender because of evidence suggesting that girls and boys differ in how they are influenced by relationships with their parents (Jeynes, 2016; Reeb & Conger, 2009; Russell & Saebel, 1997).

We hypothesized that adolescent-perceived alienation from parents mediated the relations between parental warmth and hostility and adolescent resilience and delinquency. We expected that increased parental warmth would be associated with decreased alienation from parents, which in turn would be associated with increased resilience and decreased delinquency. In contrast, we expected increased parental hostility would be associated with increased alienation, which in turn would be associated with decreased resilience and increased delinquency. We also hypothesized a direct relationship between alienation and resilience

and delinquency, such that increased alienation would be negatively associated with resilience and positively associated with delinquency.

Method

Participants

Data were drawn from a larger study of 604 Mexican American families that was approved by the institutional review board of the University of Texas at Austin, Protocol Number: 2015–01-0006, Title: “Collaborative Research: Mexican American Language Brokers’ Multiple Levels of Stress and Academic and health outcomes.” In the present study, our primary interest was examining fathers’ potential unique contributions to adolescent resilience and delinquency within intact families; thus, we only included cases of intact families in which fathers opted to participate resulting in the total study sample of 272 father, mother, and adolescent triads. We compared intact families with fathers who did and did not participate. Among the families whose fathers participated, mothers were more likely to be employed full- or part-time, and fewer were homemakers, $\chi^2(7) = 19.02, p < .01$. Mothers in families whose fathers participated also reported slightly higher economic stress, $\chi^2(8) = 35.26, p < .01$.

Fathers in the study were on average 41 years old ($SD = 6.40$) and the majority were employed (93.4%). Mothers were on average 38 years old ($SD = 5.72$) and less than half were employed (45.1%). Fewer than half of the adolescents were female (47.4%) and were on average 12 years old ($SD = 1.00$). Most parents were Mexican-born (>98%) while most of the adolescents were United States born (73.2%).

Procedure

A nonprobability sampling technique was used to recruit participants through public records, school presentations, and community recruitment in and around a metropolitan city in central Texas from 2012 to 2014. Families qualified for the study if parents were of Mexican origin, with a child in middle school who had the responsibility of translating for at least one parent. Family visits were scheduled if families met these qualifications and provided parent consent and child assent. Interviews were conducted by bilingual and bicultural interviewers. Interviews were prepared in both English and Spanish (first translated to Spanish and then back-translated to English). Both Spanish and English were presented on the same questionnaires. The interviews took approximately 2 h to complete. Each participating family was compensated \$60.

Measures

Parenting measures. Parental warmth and hostility were assessed using father and mother self-reports of measures adopted from the Iowa Youth and Families Project (Ge, Best, Conger, & Simons, 1996). Each measure utilized a Likert scale ranging from 1 (*never*) to 7 (*always*). Higher scores reflected higher levels of warmth and hostility. *Parental warmth* consisted of seven items

including, "Let your child know that you appreciate him/her, his/her ideas, or the things he/she does," "Help your child do something that was important to him/her," "Listen carefully to your child's point of view," "Let your child know you really love him/her," "Ask for your child's opinion about an important matter," "Have a good laugh with your child about something that was funny," and "Act supportive and understanding towards your child" (father $a = .80$, mother $a = .79$). *Parental hostility* consisted of six items and assessed parents' engagement in hostile behaviors toward the adolescent including, "Shout or yell at your child because you were mad at him/her," "Get into a fight or argument with your child," "Get angry at your child," "Criticize your child or his/her ideas," "Argue with your child whenever you disagree about something," and "Insult or swear at your child" (father $a = .79$, mother $a = .80$).

Parent-adolescent alienation. Parent-adolescent alienation was assessed using the eight-item alienation subscale of Armsden and Greenberg's (1987) Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment. Adolescents reported their sense of alienation from their parents on a scale of 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Items included, "I have to rely on myself when I have a problem to solve," and "I don't get much attention from my parents." Higher scores indicated greater parent-adolescent alienation ($a = .78$).

Adolescent outcomes. *Resilience* was measured by adolescent self-report of three items from the Connor and Davidson (2003) Resilience Scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Items included, "I can deal with whatever comes," "I am not easily discouraged by failure," and "I tend to recover easily after an illness or hardship." Higher scores indicated a greater sense of resilience ($a = .68$). *Delinquency* was measured by adolescent self-report using an adapted 14-item measure of the "rule-breaking behaviors" subscale of the Youth Self-Report (Achenbach & Rescorla, 2001). Items were measured on a 3-point scale (0 = *not true* to 2 = *often true or very true*) and included, "I lie or cheat," and "I run away from home." Given the low levels of delinquent behaviors reported, each delinquency behavior was dichotomized, such that a score of 0 reflected no delinquent behavior and a score of 1 indicated delinquent behavior, whether occasional or frequent. Scores were then summed together with higher scores indicating greater engagement in delinquent behaviors.

Covariates. Adolescent age, adolescent gender (male = 0, female = 1), family economic stress, and parental monitoring were included in the models as covariates. Economic stress was measured with two items: "Think back over the past 3 months. How much difficulty did you have with paying your bills?" Responses ranged from 1 (*a great deal*) to 5 (*none at all*), and "Think back over the past 3 months. Generally, at the end of each month, how much money did you end up with?" with ratings ranging from 1 (*more than enough*) to 5 (*very short*). Mean scores of parents' reports on these two items were taken (after reverse coding the first item) to indicate family economic stress, with higher scores reflecting more economic stress. Parental monitoring consisted of four items including, "During the day, do you know where your child is and what he/she is doing?," "Do you know who your child

is with when he or she is away from home?," "Do you talk to your child about what is going on in his/her life?," and "Do you know if your child comes home or is in bed by the set time?" (father $a = .76$, mother $a = .71$).

Analytic Plan

Descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations of the study sample and study variables were analyzed using SPSS 25. Structural equation model (SEM) estimations were conducted using SPSS/AMOS 23 using maximum likelihood estimation. The indirect effects were tested using the bootstrap estimation approach with 1,000 samples. Our SEM model tested for the mediating effect of adolescent perceived alienation from parents on the relationship between the exogenous variables of paternal and maternal warmth and hostility, and the endogenous variables of adolescent resilience and delinquency. We reported two absolute fit indices: chi-square (χ^2) and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), and one incremental fit index: comparative fit index (CFI). Nonsignificant χ^2 values ($p > .05$) are considered ideal for continuous data (Hu & Bentler, 1999). Acceptable RMSEA values are $<.05-.08$ (Byrne, 1998). Invariance testing was conducted to assess for differences between girl and boy adolescents. Because of the overall lack of significant differences found between girls and boys, we estimated one SEM model.

Results

Descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations of study variables are shown in Table 1. Results of the SEM model (see Figure 1) indicated a good model fit, $\chi^2(30) = 35.29, p > .05$; CFI = .99; RMSEA = .02. In accordance with our hypothesis, alienation was significantly negatively associated with resilience and significantly positively associated with delinquency. Paternal warmth was significantly negatively associated with alienation and maternal hostility was significantly positively associated with alienation. Paternal monitoring was marginally associated with delinquency ($p = .07$). No other mothering or fathering behaviors were significantly directly related to adolescent outcomes.

Significant indirect effects of parental warmth and hostility to resilience and delinquency are displayed in Table 2. Alienation was found to mediate the relationship between father warmth and resilience and delinquency, such that paternal warmth was indirectly associated with increased adolescent resilience through alienation as well as indirectly associated with decreased delinquency through alienation. Alienation was also found to mediate the relations between mother hostility and resilience and delinquency, such that hostility exhibited by mothers was associated with increased delinquency and decreased resilience by way of alienation. Invariance testing by adolescent gender indicated that the structural path estimates did not significantly vary by gender ($\Delta\chi^2(26) = 35.14, p > .05$).

Discussion

Scholarship increasingly recognizes the importance of fathers to child development. Yet, there has been limited attention to how fathering relates to adolescent risk and resilience in Mexican-

Table 1. Means, SDs, and Bivariate Correlations of Study Variables (*N* = 272)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	<i>M</i> (%)	<i>SD</i>
1. Warmth (PR)	.13	.23	.15	.03	.04	.01	.03	.02	5.81	.87
2. Hostility (PR)	.23	.13	.05	.09	.04	.13	.01	.09	2.13	.91
3. Alienation (AR)	.09	.23	—	.38	.21	.08	.05	.09	2.48	.63
4. Delinquency (AR)	.16	.20	.38	—	.07	.05	.12	.07	2.76	2.02
5. Resilience (AR)	.02	.05	.21	.07	—	.10	.08	.03	3.51	.66
6. Gender (AR) (female)	.02	.09	.10	.05	.10	—	.05	.09	(47.4)	—
7. Age (AR)	.12	.02	.05	.12	.08	.05	—	.15	12.35	1.00
8. Economic stress	.06	.14	.10	.07	.03	.09	.09	—	2.25	.39
<i>M</i> (%)	6.10	2.52	2.48	2.76	3.51	(47.4)	12.35	2.25	—	—
<i>SD</i>	.75	1.00	.63	2.02	.66	—	1.00	.39	—	—

Note. PR = parent report; AR = adolescent report. Descriptive statistics and correlations above the diagonal are for father–adolescent dyads, below the diagonal are for mother–adolescent dyads, and on the diagonal are for mother–father dyads.
 $p < .05$. $p < .01$. $p < .001$.

origin families. Given the high level of exposure to risk factors experienced by Mexican American youth, such research is critical to informing theory and practice that supports healthy youth development. The present study drew on Cabrera et al.’s (2014) expanded model of father–child relationships to develop a conceptual model which posits that parent–child relationship quality is a primary determinant of the extent to which an adolescent may exhibit resilience or delinquency. Further, our model suggests that the impact that parental engagement in warm and hostile behaviors have on adolescent outcomes are a result, at least in part, of how the behaviors influence an adolescent’s perception of the parent–child relationship quality. Thus, we posited that in addition to adolescent-perceived parent–child alienation being directly related to resilience and delinquency, alienation from parents would also mediate the relations from the exogenous parenting variables to the endogenous adolescent outcomes. Our findings suggest that pater-

nal warmth may be particularly important to adolescents’ perceptions of the parent–adolescent relationship quality and, thus, indirectly associated with both resilience and delinquency in Mexican American adolescents.

Although not all structural paths were found to be significant, our results supported our conceptual models. As expected, alienation from parents, as perceived by adolescents, was a significant determinant of both resilience and delinquency. Consistent with our hypotheses, alienation mediated the relations between father warmth and adolescent outcomes, as well as mediated the relations between mother hostility and adolescent outcomes. These findings are compelling, as this information sheds light on potential underlying mechanisms responsible for the positive outcomes related to positive parenting and the negative outcomes that stem from harsh parenting. While the cross-sectional nature of our study precludes assumptions of causation, our findings suggest that mother–child

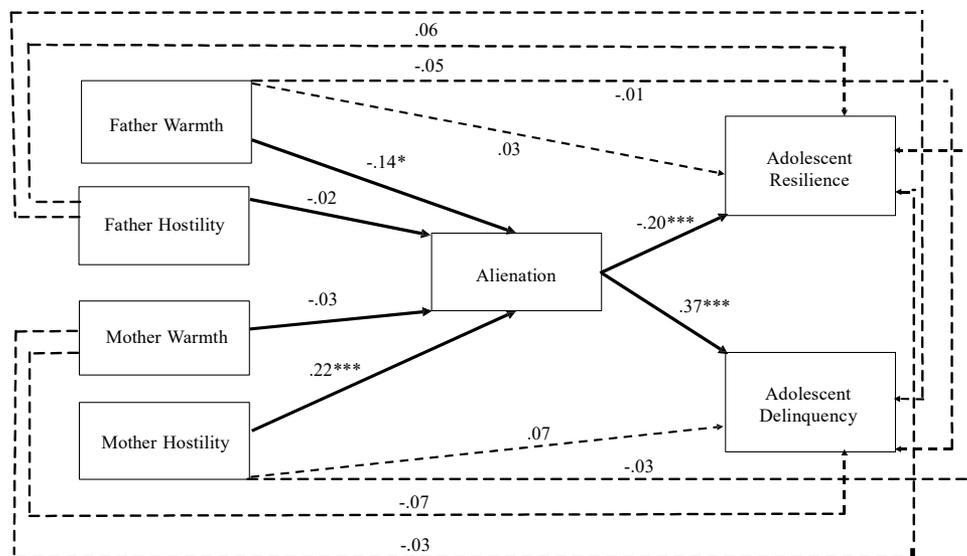


Figure 1. Standardized coefficients of parent reports of warmth and hostility to adolescent reports of resilience and delinquency, mediated by adolescent perceived alienation from parents after controlling for parental monitoring, adolescent age, adolescent gender, and family economic stress. Dashed arrows represent nonsignificant pathways. $p < .05$. $p < .001$.

Table 2. *Test of Indirect Effects for Parenting Behaviors to Adolescent Resilience and Delinquency*

Paths			Indirect	Direct	Total
Father warmth	↓ Alienation	↓ Resilience	.028	.029	.057
Father warmth	↓ Alienation	↓ Delinquency	.053	.059	.112
Mother hostility	↓ Alienation	↓ Resilience	.044	.027	.071
Mother hostility	↓ Alienation	↓ Delinquency	.081	.079	.159

Note. Standardized coefficients of significant indirect paths are presented. Only significant pathways are shown.
 $p < .05$. $p < .01$.

hostility makes adolescents feel more alienated from their parents, while father–child warmth makes them feel more connected. Feeling connected, in turn, was associated with higher resilience and less delinquency in the Mexican American adolescents in our study. Our results support previous research that underscores the importance of parent–child relationship quality to healthy adolescent functioning (Anderson, 2018; Hair et al., 2008). Indeed, a robust literature links harsh parenting to negative youth outcomes, such as behavior problems (e.g., Benson, Buehler, & Gerard, 2008) and impaired academic achievement (e.g., Kim, Wang, Orozco-Lapray, Shen, & Murtuza, 2013), and parental warmth to positive youth outcomes, including resilience (Perez-Brena et al., 2012) and reduced alcohol use (Mogro-Wilson, 2008).

Overall, fathers in the present study demonstrated to be positively involved with their adolescents. Fathers exhibited high levels of warmth and monitoring and relatively low hostility. Previous studies with Mexican American fathers reinforce that they are highly engaged and value their role as fathers (Cabrera et al., 2011; Taylor & Behnke, 2005; Updegraff et al., 2009). All of the fathers in our study resided with their adolescents and their adolescents' mothers, which, according to Cabrera et al.'s (2014) expanded model, is an important family context factor that contributes to youth outcomes. A large-scale study of Latino fathers in the United States (Karberg et al., 2017) found that most of these fathers resided with their children and female partners, and that such characteristics are associated with father involvement. Thus, our findings support previous research that reflects high levels of positive father involvement in Latino populations.

The expanded model also suggests that fathers are both unique from and similar to mothers, and that fathering, and mothering is often complementary. In our study with adolescents, Mexican-origin fathers' and mothers' parenting behaviors were similar, but how their behaviors were associated with adolescent outcomes was different. Adolescent perceptions of parent–child alienation were primarily influenced by the warmth of their fathers and the hostility of their mothers.

Resilience research (Daspe, Arbel, Ramos, Shapiro, & Margo-lin, 2018; Emery & Forehand, 1996; Perez-Brena et al., 2012) suggests that parental warmth and positive parent–child relationships are integral to promoting adolescent resilience. Our findings extend this literature to *paternal* warmth, which emerged as significant even after controlling for maternal warmth. Specifically, we found that when fathers exhibit warmth, youth feel closer to their parents and in turn, demonstrate higher levels of resilience and lower levels of delinquency. A previous study (Suizzo et al., 2017) conducted predominantly with Mexican American adoles-

cents also found an indirect relationship between paternal warmth and adolescent resilience. Their findings revealed that paternal warmth contributed to adolescent emotional and academic functioning by way of increasing adolescents' positive self-beliefs. Collectively, such results underscore the importance of investigating the potential underlying mechanisms by which fathering influences adolescent risk and resilience.

As per our conceptual model, we investigated the role of adolescent perceived alienation from parents on resilience and delinquency. In concert with our hypothesis, we discovered that alienation emerged as a salient determinate of both alienation and delinquency. Parent–child alienation is of concern within Mexican American families given substantial evidence demonstrating that parent–youth cultural distance (i.e., acculturation gaps) is associated with impaired youth functioning (Marsiglia, Nagoshi, Parsai, Booth, & Castro, 2014; Myers et al., 2009; Schofield, Parke, Kim, & Coltrane, 2008). It is essential, then, to understand specific parent–child interactions that promote adolescent–parent closeness in Mexican American families so to mitigate the negative effects stemming from acculturation as well as normative developmental processes. Our finding of low levels of delinquent behavior in early adolescence is a promising finding. It will be important to for those working with Latino families to continue to facilitate positive parenting practices and parent–child closeness so as to avoid negative outcomes as adolescents get older and approach adulthood.

Limitations and Future Directions

A strength of the present study was the use of father, mother, and adolescent reports, which allowed for a more comprehensive assessment of parenting and its potential influence on adolescent wellbeing. In addition, by controlling for mothering behaviors, we were able to examine how Mexican American fathering behaviors are related to adolescent functioning above and beyond those of mothers. However, our study examined only a few aspects of fathering, and father involvement, as conceptualized by Cabrera et al.'s (2014) expanded model, is highly complex and contextual. Including additional contextual factors that emphasize the effects that cultural nuances have on Mexican American fathering (e.g., respeto, familismo, language brokering, acculturation gaps, and occupational demands), would greatly add to our understanding of the complimentary and unique contributions fathers make to adolescent well-being (Kim et al., 2017; Martinez, 2006; White, Zeiders, Gonzales, Tein, & Roosa, 2013). Also, our study utilized a sample of intact Mexican American families in the southern part of the United States. Therefore, generalizing findings to other Latino and Mexican American families with varying sociodemographic characteristics should be done with caution.

Despite these limitations, our study provided insight into family processes that may serve as risk and protective factors for Mexican American adolescents, which can inform theory and clinical interventions to reduce adolescent delinquency and bolster resilience. Fathering behaviors emerged as both distinct and complementary to mothers, consistent with tenets of the proposed theoretical framework used to conceptualize fathering in the present study (Cabrera et al., 2014). However, more research is needed to explore whether fathers engage in behaviors that are unique to mothers and that differentially influence their children's outcomes.

While our results support the general notion that fathers play an important role in shaping family processes and adolescent development, the underlying mechanisms acting to promote parent–adolescent relationship quality and adolescent resilience remain understudied. Qualitative studies would be useful in further elaborating conceptual models of fathering, such as Cabrera et al.’s expanded model. Results suggest that interventions to improve Mexican American adolescent outcomes should not simply address specific parenting behaviors, such as parental hostility and warmth only, but should also address any detachment issues occurring within the parent–adolescent relationship. Finally, clinical models that engage the entire family system, namely both parents in families with involved fathers, are likely to be the most appropriate and impactful in working to support the needs of Mexican American adolescents.

Keywords: Mexican American fathers; adolescent risk; adolescent resilience; parent–adolescent alienation

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